

**ECOCRITICAL MOTIF AND CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES IN ZAKES MDA'S
NOVELS**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT TO THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
AWARD OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY DEGREE IN LITERATURE-IN-ENGLISH TO THE
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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this thesis has been read and approved as meeting the requirements of the Department of English, Faculty of Arts, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria for the award of Doctor of Philosophy degree in Literature-in-English.

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DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to God Almighty, the Giver of Life.

DECLARATION

I, Ojedoja, Sanjo Sunday, hereby declare that this thesis entitled Ecocritical Motif and Contemporary Challenges in Zakes Mda's Novels is a record of my research work. It has neither been presented nor accepted in any previous application for a higher degree. All sources of information have been specifically acknowledged.

In addition, the research work has been ethically approved by the University Ethical Review Committee.

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ABSTRACT

Issues on development have taken the central stage in post-apartheid literature in South Africa. Writers have tried to preempt developmental needs to cushion the adverse effect of apartheid. Zakes Mda is one of the leading novelists in this regard. Out of his popular works on various thematic concerns of post-apartheid South Africa, three were selected for this study, viz *The Heart of Redness*, *Ways of Dying* and *The Whale Caller*. This study aimed at exploring post-apartheid developmental challenges explored in the selected novels and the possible consequences of the options available on the environment using ecocriticism. The objectives of the study were to: (i) explain the centrality of nature in the exposition of Xhosa's culture in Mda's novels; (ii) examine how metaphor of land is central to the socio-economic challenges of modern South Africa explored in the novels; (iii) assess the divergence on the type of development suitable to post-apartheid South Africa; (iv) interrogate how Mda mediates between nature and modernity to canvass a new approach to peaceful co-existence in South Africa and; and (v) evaluate how human characters in Mda's selected novels relate to other natural phenomena.

The methodology was descriptive; mainly textual analysis. The study therefore adopted deep ecology model propounded by Naess, Devall and Sessions to bring out how literature and the environment relate in Mda's literary works. The researcher sourced for information from the internet and the library. The choice of Mda's novels were based on the novelist exploration of modern challenges encountered in post-apartheid South Africa and the centrality of natural resources on issues related to development in South Africa.

The findings of this study were that:

- i. Mda portrays Xhosa peoples' socio-economic and belief systems as products of their interaction with the natural environment;
- ii. land issues created the two conflicting groups of believers in the traditional ethos and unbelievers which originated from the colonial era;
- iii. Mda portrays Zim and Qukezwa as upholders of traditional culture (believers) while Bhonco and Xoliswa (unbelievers) represent foreign concept;

- iv. the novelist creates an interface between the two extreme groups of believers and unbelievers to channel a course for an ecological friendly development for South Africa; and
- v. Mda metaphorically reunites human and non-human characters of nature through dialogue to achieve an all-encompassing development.

The study concluded that to facilitate a nature friendly development as Mda canvasses a conscious adoption of the values Africans attach to the environment (they dwell in) should not be compromised. This is imperative because any replication of the apartheid wanton abuse of the environment for commercial appropriation shall portend worst consequences than the despotic regime. The study thus recommended that in order to mitigate the effect of the apartheid experience on South Africans, the reviewers of African novels should emphasise cultural based development in the region.

Word Count: 468

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

In view of the perceived meaning of the study of ecocriticism that serves as an academic discipline concerned with how literature and the environment relate to each other, and how nature is represented in literary works, it is not far fetched to observe the constant featuring of ecology in African novels and the process by which attention of critics have been drawn to the manner and way literary imagination has influenced thoughts about the natural world. The campaign undertaken by the environmental justice movement in African countries helps in haping of environmental ideologies which have found a fertile ground in literature. Mda among other African novelists (Nadine Gordimer, Andre Brink, Chinua Achebe, Olu Obafemi, Wole Soyinka, Ngugi wa Thiongo, Antjie Krog, Njabule Ndebele, Ivan Vladislavic and Etienne van Heerden etc.) has extensively explored the natural world to create awareness and advocate change through ecological laded images. Mda's critics have often focused on the importance of land to the people of South Africa while issues arising from land discourse are viewed by Mda as part of ecological phenomenon sacred to the Xhosa people of South Africa.

Vital (2008) states that in the 1990s when the government of the day was democratically elected, the visions of environmentalism changed drastically in South Africa. As at the era of apartheid in South Africa, environmentalism was characterized by a colonial interest in the conservation of nature as much green activity has been successful so far. However, many practices of activists or environmental organizations have proven to have damaging effects on the people of South Africa owing to the fact that the bureaucratic policies and theories implemented by the environmentalist movement are not appropriate, and the individual concerns of people, human needs, are not taken into consideration (Huggan, 2004). However, political activity in South Africa in this field is increasingly about making environmental

strategies ‘people-oriented’ (Vital, 2008). Therefore, new ways are sought to reconcile the demands of environmentalism with those of social justice like race, gender and class. The ethical objections, in fact, to environmentalism (the vast majority of poor people suffering from the environmental activities for instance) are often in conflict with active protection of the environment (pp. 297-313).

In the light of the above, contemporary concern with the environmental crisis and how humans and the natural environment interact is fundamental to ecocriticism. In addition, it is against this backdrop that Zakes Mda’s reconciliation and recognition for a symbiotic balance between nature and culture, modernity and tradition, class, gender and race will be examined in this thesis. Wilson (2008) argues that in some sense we need that connection: ‘[W]e are human in good part because of the particular way we affiliate with other organisms. They are the matrix in which the human mind originated and is permanently rooted, and they offer the challenge and freedom innately sought to the extent that each person can feel like a naturalist, the old excitement of the untrammelled world will be regained’ (p. 65).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

One of the things that attracts the researcher is the fact that Mda’s novels deal with the devastating effects of capitalist driven development of the land, especially as a result of deforestation and the replacement of the native flora with European varieties of plants. Mda’s characters strive to either return to an imagined traditional identity or struggle to define and occupy a hybrid space, and the presentation of the mortality and vulnerability of plant life functions in Mda’s novels as a mirror for nationalist survival.

The critics of Mda’s novels such as Wendy Woodward and Laura Wright have investigated on the importance of land as an identity to the people of South Africa. According to Said (1994) the land is recoverable at first only through the imagination: ‘As ecological imperative as Mda’s novels are, he has created in most of his writings for an identity with the ancestral land which the answer is to the imaginative recovery of a historical past when indigenous communities were displaced by violence of epistemic

proportions'. (p. 271). More so, it is pertinent to know that the positive portrayal of female characters, their active role in the communities depicted and the trenchant critiques of patriarchy through the portrayal of misuse of power at all levels by male protagonists, has been the major thematic pre-occupation in Mda's plays and can be found in all his novels to date. The way of writing of Mda is more lyrical and expressive unlike other South African writers like J.M. Coetzee whose writing style is neither lush nor decorative but who rather writes in a stark manner. Mda uses humour in a satirical way to present the socio-economic challenges facing South Africa to drive home points in his writing. Specifically, the research questions in this study were as follows:

- i. how the centrality of nature in the exposition of Xhosa's culture is explained in Mda's novels?
- ii. how metaphor of land is central to the socio-economic challenges of modern South Africa explored in the novels?
- iii. how is the divergence on the type of development suitable to post-apartheid South Africa is assessed?
- iv. in what way did Mda mediate between nature and modernity to canvass a new approach to peaceful co-existence in South Africa and? and
- v. how human characters in Mda's selected novels relate to other natural phenomena?

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study aimed at exploring post-apartheid developmental challenges explored in the selected novels and the possible consequences of the options available on the environment using ecocriticism. In specific terms, the objectives of the study were to:

- (i) explain the centrality of nature in the exposition of Xhosa's culture in Mda's novels;
- (ii) examine how metaphor of land is central to the socio-economic challenges of modern South Africa explored in the novels;

- (iii) assess the divergence on the type of development suitable to post-apartheid South Africa;
- (iv) interrogate how Mda mediates between nature and modernity to canvass a new approach to peaceful co-existence in South Africa and; and
- (v) evaluate how human characters in Mda's selected novels relate to other natural phenomena.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study will be on the three of Zakes Mda's novels; (*The Heart of Redness*, *The Whale Caller* and *Ways of Dying*). These novels will be carefully considered by identifying unique features which are typically South African, as this will be relevant to our proposed paradigm. This study is designed to locate a relevant indigenous identity base for African literature by fashioning a paradigm out of ecocriticism to address the contingency demand of the continent. Consequently, effort will be made to treat contemporary challenges such as race, gender, class, deep ecology, urbanization, urban natural roosting and biocentric features in Mda's novels.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The world is plagued with natural disasters as man finds it easier to destroy nature rather than embracing it. According to Bennet (2003) 'there is no way of existing in harmony with nature, and there never has been. Once we make human decisions on how to exist in our surroundings, we are already involved in socio-cultural (and again, theoretical) modes of thought' (p. 300). The benefits from this study will have a positive impact on literary students and researchers as it:

- i. enables the critic to examine the textualisations of the physical environment in literary discourse and to develop an earth-centered approach to literary studies;
- ii. advocates a rethinking of the commonly held beliefs and perceptions, and our versions of nature, towards creating a consciousness of the essential unity of life;

- iii. focuses on the textual strategies of literary texts in constructing an ecologically informed discourse about the ways in which humans interact with other life forms and also by launching a new ethic and aesthetic way of embracing the human and the natural;
- iv. provides the academic scholars the possibility of a new world;
- v. encourages the government agencies to embrace nature as a vast warehouse of natural resources that represents raw materials for commercial use, for example, a forest of trees is valued not for what it contributes to biodiversity or to increased air and water quality but for the products that can be manufactured from them.

There is scant evidence of the inclusion of literary readings and the representations of ecocriticism in our academic curriculum. Steenkamp (2015) acknowledges that ‘there is a dearth of studies on human-animal relations in the South African academy’ (p. 178). However, it is noteworthy that many research works have been carried out on Mda’s novels but a vast majority of them are not from ecocritical perspective. The researcher has also found out that out of the seven novels written by Mda to date, academic attention has been paid mainly to *Ways of Dying* and *The Heart of Redness* while little or no attention has been paid to other novels. In addition, an ecocritical perspective explicates Mda’s use of protagonists who are typically poor and ordinary people whose voices have been silenced under apartheid as Mda’s writing speaks directly to the constituencies of class, gender, location, race, caste or ideology. To this point, the researcher chose the works of Zakes Mda because of the novelist’s conscious attempt to project a solid African image in an eco-critical way. More so, Mda is one of the most remarkable contributors to the development of literature in Africa.

1.6 Research Methodology

The methodology in this study is descriptive; mainly textual analysis of Zakes Mda's novels, i.e. *The Heart of Redness*, *The Whale Caller* and *Ways of Dying*. The study therefore adopted deep ecology model propounded by Naess, Devall and Sessions to bring out how literature and the environment relate in Mda's literary works. The researcher sourced for information from the internet and the library. The choice of Mda's novels were based on the novelist exploration of contemporary challenges encountered in post-apartheid South Africa and the centrality of natural resources on issues related to development in South Africa. This work will involve a wide range of discussion and exposition on various degrees of contemporary challenges within the framework of ecocritical discourse. The focus of my analysis is Mda's quest for relevant cultural identity for African literature in general and fictional works in particular which shall be examined from ecological perspective.

1.7 Operational Definition of Terms and Concepts

Since ecocriticism is by nature interdisciplinary aspect of literature and the environment, it draws on environmental studies, the natural sciences, cultural and social studies. The awareness of ecocriticism has been there since the dawn of civilization. The Poets, artists, and thinkers have emphasized on the close relationship between nature and man from times immemorial. Human life is incomprehensible without the presence of wider nature. In the ancient times, man was aware of the indispensable relationship between nature and himself. He therefore protected, nurtured and cherished nature so that nature might protect and nourish the human race in return. The interdependence was highlighted in classical writing of both the east and the west. But new philosophies and new experiences have shifted the focus and made the European civilization more and more anthropocentric and bolstered the egotism of the human beings, making them believe that they are not only the best of God's creation, but are the monarchs of the entire visible world. This idea replaced the earlier concepts and sentiments that survival on earth is inconceivable without the

presence of the wider nature that nature is not there merely for the aesthetic pleasure or artistic satisfaction of the human beings but a precondition for the very survival of the human race.

As civilization grew more aggressive and arrogant, man began to despoil and exploit all aspects of nature for his self-aggrandizement, self-glorification and self-indulgence. He rifled the earth for metal, destroyed the trees for his habitats and for industry; he destroyed the natural beauty of landscape with the setting up of industrial establishments, polluting land, water and air. It is a black chapter in the story of human race where violence and exploitation were the main theme. Some artists and philosophers have objected to this mindless and senseless exploitation of nature and its wealth. Following this, Freud, as well as some modern writers of poetry and fiction have sought to bring nature into serious consideration. Whatever be the light of landscape they described, be it desert, sea, or wilderness, still they tried to link it with human character and human fate. Landscape in these works is present not for itself, as an inanimate and ineffectual plastic background for the tale but as something living, vibrant and affecting as well as conveying the emotion of the situation and the ideology of the writer. In this sense ecocriticism becomes interdisciplinary as it seeks to relate nature and man through variegated means and tries to look at the relationship from various view points; sociological, psychological, anthropological, scientific and philosophical. But before addressing those various points of view, there is a need to look at the way the relationship has suffered a gradation in terms of the central concerns.

(<http://www.asle.org/wp.content/uploads/ASLE/Primerdefiningecocriticismpdf>).

Garrad (2004) in his *Ecocriticism* lists out the various concerns of ecocriticism thus:

- i. Pollution
- ii. Wilderness
- iii. Apocalypse
- iv. Dwelling
- v. Animals

- vi. The Earth
- vii. Deep Ecology
- viii. Ecofeminism
- ix. Ecosphere
- x. Ecocide
- xi. Environmental Racism

i. Pollution

Ecocriticism helps define, explore, and even resolve ecological problems in this wider sense. The word *pollution* is derived from the Latin *polluere* meaning to defile. Until the seventeenth century it denotes moral contamination of a person, or acts thought to promote such contamination. This essentially interior or subjective definition is gradually transformed into an exterior or objective one – in fact, specifically on environmental definition. Pollution has various levels of representation from the implicit environmental to explicit environmental concerns. Environmental problems require analysis in cultural as well as scientific terms, because they are the outcome of an interaction between ecological knowledge of nature and its cultural inflection. Environmentalists are those who are concerned about environmental issues such as global warming and pollution--those who would not welcome radical social change. They value rural ways of life, such as hiking or camping. They are concerned about natural scarcity in or pollution of nature.

ii. Wilderness

Ecocritics interrogate whether the examination of place should be a distinctive category much like class, gender and race. Ecocritics examine human perception of wilderness and ecocriticism as the concept of wilderness in multiple ways. The idea of wilderness refers to the absence of humanity, yet wilderness has no meaning outside the context of the civilization that defines it. Wilderness is often viewed as a

sacredspace, a place of refuge, or even a condition that needs to be challenged. Wilderness is the landscape of ultimate authenticity. It integrates the entire habitat into an ecological community, which is mutually symbiotic. For example, the forest can be viewed as primeval entity, a dwelling and a teacher. The idea of wilderness, signifying nature, is a state uncontaminated by civilization. Wilderness has an almost sacramental value as it holds out the promise of a renewed, authentic relationship between humanity and nature, a post-Christian covenant, found in a space of purity, founded in an attitude of reverence and humility.

On the one hand, man is a lifelong wanderer and on the other he is always identified with the familiar physical and cultural environment. The later explanation results from the fact that man feels virtually threatened in the ecologically degraded world. The threat of the wilderness from logging, hydroelectric projects, wars and commercial tourism drives one into an increasingly alienated and paranoid state. Over-exploitation of natural resources and man's disregard of the air, water and soil that sustain him have given rise to the question of the survival of both man and earth. An awareness of this paranoia leads to a discussion of Apocalypse in modern literature.

iii. Apocalypse

Carson(1962) highlights the dangers of pesticide and sets off the great environmental debates of the twentieth century e.g. nuclear war, tidal waves, bio-engineering, global ecological disaster, (man-made or natural); the list is enormously diverse and apparently endless. Buell (1995)declares apocalypse as the single most powerful metaphor that the contemporary environmental imagination has at its disposal (p. 93).

iv. Dwelling

Since the sixteenth century, primitive people have been represented as dwelling in harmony with nature, sustaining one of the most widespread and seductive myths of the non-Europeanorder. Dwelling is

not a transient state; rather, it implies the long term imbrication of humans in a landscape of memory, ancestry and death, of ritual life and work.

v. Animals

Bentham (1748-1832) suggests that cruelty to animals is analogous to slavery and claims that the capacity to feel pain, not the power of reason, entitled a being to moral consideration. The Utilitarian principle of equality states that everyone is entitled to equal moral consideration, irrespective of family, race, nation or species. Midgley (1983) submission remains an excellent introduction to animal welfares. However, Liberationist criticism typically attempts to undermine the moral and legal distinctions between humans and animals, but takes for granted the difference between wild and domestic animals. Wild animals are linked to masculine freedom, while domestic animals are denigrated as feminine servants of human depredation.

vi. The Earth

Ross (1994) works on popular rather than literary culture, counts a photograph of the Earth taken by Apollo astronauts, amongst his images of ecology: 'In recent years, we have become accustomed to seeing images of a dying planet, variously exhibited in grisly poses of ecological depletion and circulated by all sectors of the image industry, often in spots reserved for the exploitation fare of genocidal atrocities (p. 171).

vii. Deep Ecology

Naess and Devall and Sessions (1995) have taken conceptual positions in their philosophy of nature that are quite problematic. Deep ecology proposes new norms of human responsibility to change the human exploitation of nature into co-participation with nature. The concept of Deep Ecology believes in the fundamental interconnectedness of all life forms and natural features. It believes that anthropocentric thinking has alienated humans from their natural environment and caused them to exploit it. Deep

ecologists argue that their principles are nothing new. They see themselves borrowing the ancient truths of pre-industrial and non-urban thinking. When deep ecologist calls for a return to nature, nature claims a normative role for him in working out an ecosophical approach to nature. By an ecosophy, Naess means a philosophy of ecological harmony or equilibrium.

The second norm of deep ecology is biocentric equality which affirms the equality of all things in the biosphere. Biocentric equality is intimately related to the all-inclusive self-realization in the sense that if we harm the rest of Nature then we are harming ourselves. There are no boundaries and everything is interrelated (p. 69). This is so because all organisms have equal right to live and blossom and to reach their own individual forms of unfolding and self-realization within the larger self... Biocentrism as a concept outlines the conviction that humans are neither better nor worse than other creatures but are simply equal to everything else in the natural world. Deep ecology movement has eight proposed platform principles of this philosophy:

- i. Human life forms are an integral part of the earth;
- ii. Human forms must expand to include more of the others;
- iii. There has to be an emotional relation with and response to nature and not merely a rational-intellectual relationship;
- iv. Both human and non-human life forms have intrinsic values;
- v. The value of non-human life is not dependent upon the usefulness of these life forms for humans;
- vi. While human life can flourish with smaller numbers of humans, for non-human forms to flourish, it requires smaller numbers of humans. That is, ecosystem in nature can only tolerate a certain level of human activity or interference;
- vii. The emphasis should be on appreciating the quality of life.

Deep Ecology is concerned with encouraging an egalitarian attitude on the part of humans not only toward all members of the ecosphere, but even toward all identifiable entities or forms in the ecosphere. Thus this attitude is intended to extend, for example, to such entities (or forms) as rivers, landscape, and even species and social systems considered in their own right (Sessions, 1995, p. 270). It is not being sentient that qualifies an entity or form for intrinsic value, but rather, it would seem, whatever kind of purposive organization one could claim to find equally in a single bird, a river, an entire species, a distinct ecosystem or an ethnic group. Gary Snyder (1970) represents a blending of deep ecology and social ecology. Social ecology means that social and environmental problems are intertwined.

Human beings achieve self-realization through participation in a creative and non-dominating human community. Since the early 1970's, Snyder has couched his ideal in terms of bioregionalism, a complex movement that centers on the distinctiveness of different local regions. Social ecology serves as an approach to evaluating the environmental and social thought of any writer. Deep Ecologists believe that nature possesses the same moral standing and natural rights as human beings. Thus Deep Ecology proposes a respect not only for all life forms but also towards landscapes such as rivers and mountains.

viii. Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism is a term coined in 1974 by the French Feminist Francoise D'Eaubonne. It is a philosophy and movement born from the union of feminist and ecological thinkers. D'Eaubonne's description focuses on the similarities or interconnectedness of the way women and nature are treated in paternalistic societies. This idea of a parallel between the treatment of women and treatment of nature is one of the hallmarks of ecofeminism. As there is no single definition of ecocriticism there is no single convincing definition of ecofeminism either.

Ecofeminism emphasizes the interconnectedness of all life. Ecofeminists argue that the domination of women and the domination of the environment are parallel in many ways if not altogether identical. If

deep ecology identifies the anthropocentric dualism of humanity/nature as the ultimate source of anti-ecological beliefs and practices, ecofeminism blames the androcentric dualism of man/woman. A deep ecologist believes in personal transformation through the cultivation of a biocentric perspective and expansion of one's identification to encompass all of nature. While sharing a biocentric perspective, ecofeminists have criticized deep ecology because of its masculinist bias. Deep ecologists deny the significance of gender and feminist analysis.

Deep ecology argues that man distinguishes humans from nature on the grounds of some supposed possession of an immortal soul or racial supremacy and assumes that he is superior to other forms of life. The Ecofeminist argues that man distinguishes men from women on the grounds of some alleged quality such as larger brain size and then assumes that this distinction confers on men superiority over women. The difference between deep ecology and ecofeminism is that while deep ecologists identify the problem as anthropocentrism, the ecofeminists identify the problem as androcentricism and hierarchial dualism. Similarly, deep ecologists' desired end is biocentrism. Whereas ecofeminists focus on patriarchy and their desired end is social design on feminist principles and beyond power.

The central premise of ecofeminism remains to be the suppression of women and nature. The dominations of women and nature are linked in various ways e.g. historically, materially, culturally, or conceptually. Ecofeminist school of thought believes that women have a special relationship with nature by virtue of their biological role and nature has to be liberated from the repressive male ethos.

ix. Ecosphere

Pearsall (1998) defines Ecosphere as the biosphere of the earth or the other planet, especially when the interaction between the living and non-living components is emphasized (p. 586).

x. Ecocide

Ecocide is the most predominant concern of the ecocritics. According to Collins Dictionary ecocide is defined as the destruction of the natural environment, especially when willfully done. Love (2003) identifies various modes of ecological disaster that take place in the physical environment: 'The disquieting fact is that we have grown inured to the bad news of human and natural disasters.... Actual instances of radiation poisoning, chemical or germ warfare, all rendered more threatening by the rise of terrorism. Industrial accidents like that in Bhopal, India, where the death toll lies between 20,000 and 30,000. Destruction of the planet's protective ozone layer. The over cutting of the world's remaining great forests. An accelerating rate of extinction of plants and animals, estimate at 74 species per day and 27,000 each year. The critical loss of arable land and ground water through desertification, contamination, and the spread of human settlement. Overfishing and toxic poisoning of the world's oceans (*pp.* 14-15). Much ecocriticism has been taken for granted that its task is to overcome anthropocentrism, just as feminine seeks to overcome androcentrism. Wilderness experiences, apocalyptic threats are supposed to provide the impetus or the example by which individuals come to an authentic selfhood oriented towards right environmental action. (<http://www.asle.org/wp.content/uploads/ASLE/Primerdefiningecocriticismpdf>).

xi. Environmental Racism

Social Scientists and environmental activists, including South Africans who were concerned about pollution began to use the term environmental racism in the 1980s, in the United States (Hamilton, 1995, p. 107). Literature and research on environmental racism and environmental justice is well established in the United States (Westra, 2008, p. 138). Chavis, Jr. and Lee (1987), find out that race has been a factor in the location of commercial hazardous waste facilities' and concluded that patterns of exposure of minorities to uncontrolled waste sites and commercial hazardous waste facilities were strong evidence of environmental racism (Hamilton, 1995, p. 107).

Chavis, Jr. defines environmental racism as the intentional siting of hazardous waste sites, landfills, incinerators and polluting industries in areas inhabited mainly by Blacks, Latinos, poor peoples, migrant farm workers and low- income peoples ... [he further contended that environmental racism] was an extension of institutional racism (Gosine and Teelucksingh, 2008, p. 4). He elaborated further that environmental racism is racial discrimination in environmental policy making, in the enforcement of regulation of laws, in the deliberate targeting of communities of colour for toxic waste disposal and the siting of polluting environment in the official sanctioning of the life-threatening presence of poisons and pollutants in communities of colour, in the history of excluding people from the mainstream environmental groups, decision making boards, commissions, and regulatory bodies (Ballard, 1993, p. 3). Ballard further defines environmental racism as any policy, practice or directive that differentially effects of disadvantages (whether intended or unintended) individuals, groups, or communities based on race or colour. (Ballard, 1996, p. 497 cited in Gosine and Teelucksingh, 2008, p. 41).

Gosine and Teelucksingh note a popular consensus among neo-conservatives that environmental racism is an outrage that doesn't exist, promotes by self-interested ethnic advocates... [and another] popular position is that a race or racism analysis will serve only to divide and fragment the environmental movement or detract it from primary concerns (2008, p. 5). However, despite critics there is strong empirical evidence that environmental racism is as credible notion (2008, p.5).

The Free Encyclopedia, defines Environmental racism as placement of low-income or minority communities in proximity of environmental hazardous or degraded environments, such as toxic waste, pollution and urban decay. While there are competing views as to an exact definition, the interplay between environmental issues and social indicators are relevant to its understanding. Some definitions hold that only intentional discrimination against minorities in issues regarding the environment is what constitutes environmental racism, while others focus on the presence of unfavourable environmental conditions for

minorities, intentional or not. A significant factor in creation of effective environmental segregation is the fact that low-income communities lack the organization and political power to resist introduction of dangerous technologies, as well as greater mobility of richer citizens away from areas falling into industrial and environmental decline. Historically, the term is tied to environmental justice movement that took place in the 1970s and 80s in the United States. (see en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmental_racism).

In addition, environmental racism refers to environmental policies, practices, or directives that differentially affect or disadvantage (whether intentionally or unintentionally) individuals, groups, or communities based on race or colour. Environmental racism is a form of institutionalized discrimination. Institutional discrimination is defined as actions or practices carried out by members of dominant (racial or ethnic) groups. Environmental racism buttresses the exploitation of land, people and the natural environment. It operates as an intra-nation power arrangement – especially where ethnic or racial groups form a political and/or numerical minority. For example, blacks in the United States form both a political and numerical racial minority. On the other hand, blacks in South Africa, under apartheid, constituted a political minority and numerical majority that take the lead in the political sphere of South Africa. (www.worlddialogue.org/content.php?id=1991). One can see that American and South African apartheid had devastating environmental impacts on blacks as this is what gives Mda the impetus to use the state of environmental racism in his novels as will be shown in this research. Also, environmental racism is often treated from an ecocritical perspective.

1.8 Biography of the Author: Zakes Mda

Zakes Mda is a South African from Eastern Cape. He was born Zanemvula Kizito Gatyeni. He spent his childhood in Soweto, and then moved to Lesotho to join his father in exile. He is one of the foremost South African writers who have produced plays, novels, poems, and academic articles in addition to being a musician and graphic artist. Mda is now a Professor of Creative Writing at Ohio University, but

continues to make frequent trips to his native South Africa to launch his novels and to work in community initiatives such as the bee-keeping project on the Pink Mountain described in his recent memoir, *Sometimes there is a Void*.

His works in both theatre and fiction have been compared to that of leading African writers, such as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Andre Brink, Njabulo Ndebele, J.M. Coetzee, Ivan Vladislavic, Antjie Krog and Etienne van Herdeen. Mda has had many years of experience in writing for theatre, and of using performance techniques to educate people for democracy. His self-invention as a novelist experimenting with narrative techniques begins with South Africa's transition to democracy. Mda investigates the roles of history, community and memory in reforging a new national identity. His novels thus contribute to the many debates around nation-building, memory and reconciliation since 1994, and the way it has influenced the construction of narrative. Mda's narratives dramatize the co-existence of competing versions of history. *Ways of Dying* dramatizes creative autonomy versus disempowerment. *The Heart of Redness* juxtaposes colonial bigotry against Xhosa customs and traditions. *The Whale Caller* addresses the invasive tourism, protection of nature and the struggle to negotiate capitalist and environmental values.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide a scholastic view of ecocriticism and a review of criticism of Zakes Mda's works. The researcher shall take ecocritical theory, here to mean various ways in which we imagine and portray the relationship between human beings and the natural environment. This chapter will, however, be categorized into the following sub-themes:

- i. Critical works of some scholars on ecocriticism;
- ii. Social Realism versus Magic Realism in Mda's Novels;
- iii. Place, Setting and Landscape in Mda's Novels;
- iv. Critical Works in Mda's Novels and the Environment;
- v. Theoretical Framework.

2.2 Critical Works of Some Scholars on Ecocriticism

Glotfelty (1996) defines ecocriticism as the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Buell's definition adds an ethical dimension to the field of ecocriticism, that is human production of literature as it implies 'responsibility' for the physical environment. Estok (2001) emphasizes that: 'ecocriticism has distinguished itself, debates notwithstanding, first by the ethical stand it takes, its commitment to the natural world as an important thing rather than simply as an object of thematic study, and, secondly, by its commitment to making connections. Ecocriticism may be many other things besides, but it is always at least these two'. (pp. 220-238).

Ecocriticism has been viewed by some as detrimentally anti-theoretical in its critical approach. Opperman (2003) characterizes the practice as being largely confined to the theoretically discredited parameters of literary realism; ecocriticism today finds itself struggling with hermeneutical closure as well

as facing an ambivalent openness in its interpretive approach. Much work in this promising field of ecoliterary studies does not go beyond simplistic contextual analyses of both literary and environmental texts. Despite all the attempts to define ecocriticism from a number of ecological perspectives, there is no guiding strategy of interpretation and no monolithic theory to support it. (pp. 7-35).

Buell (1995) states the claims of realism merit reviving so as to enable one to re-imagine textual representations as having a dual accountability to matter and to discursive mentation. Perhaps Estok's (2001) summary encapsulates the general view most succinctly: 'Given that ecocriticism is something that is supposed to change things, a healthy skepticism toward theory of the sort that spins off madly or that mesmerizes theory that would neuter ecocriticism, seems perfectly valid'. (pp. 220-38). Estok posits that the strong focus on examinations of representations of nature, implying an instrumental link between text and world, appears to be widely present: 'the ecocritic wants to track environmental ideas and representations wherever they appear, to see more clearly a debate which seems to be taking place, often part-concealed, in a great many cultural spaces. Most of all, ecocriticism seeks to evaluate texts and ideas in terms of their coherence and usefulness as responses to environmental crises'. (pp. 228-229).

Moreover, the initial focus on nature writing has expanded to examinations of representations of nature in writing ranging from children's literature to Shakespeare. Discussing the basic question 'What do ecocritics do?' Cohen (2004) stresses a general interest in representations of nature: 'Ecocriticism focuses on literary (and artistic) expression of human experience primarily in a naturally and consequently in a culturally shaped world: the joys of abundance, sorrows of deprivation, hopes for harmonious existence, and fears of loss and disaster. Ecocriticism has an agenda'. (pp. 9-36). Hence, the practice of ecocriticism is defined here as the identification of 'appropriate' representations of normatively defined responses to the environment in literature. Indeed, in a comparison between post-colonialism and ecocriticism, O' Brien (2001), explains the two fields as distinct: Postcolonial critics tend to avoid realist texts. Ecocritics

arguably display the opposite bias, preferring to focus on realist texts, or those which seem to promise the kind of connection between word and world which contemporary literary criticism seems to deny. (pp. 140-159).

As Cohen (2004) observes, if you want to be an ecocritic, be prepared to explain what you do and be criticized, if not satirized. (p. 10). Certainly, Cohen adds his voice noting that one of the problems of ecocriticism has been what he calls its 'praise-song school' of criticism. All ecocritics share an environmentalist motivation of some sort, but whereas the majority is nature endorsing, some are nature skeptical. In part, this entails a shared sense of the ways in which nature has been viewed to legitimize gender, sexual and racial norms (so homosexuality has been seen as unnatural, for example), but it also involves skepticism about the uses to which ecological language is put in ecocriticism; it can also involve a critique of the ways cultural norms of nature and the environment contribute to environmental degradation.

Garrard (2004) has viewed pastoral ecology as the notion that nature undisturbed is balanced and harmonious, while Philips (2003) has criticized the literary quality and scientific accuracy of nature writing in *The Truth of Ecology*. Similarly, there has been a call to recognize the place of the *Environmental Justice* movement in re-defining ecocritical discourse. In response to the question of what ecocriticism is or should be, Gomides (2006) offers an operational definition that is both broad and discriminating: 'The field of enquiry that analyses and promotes works of art which raise moral questions about human interactions with nature, while also motivating audiences to live within a limit that will be binding over generations'. (p. 16).

Garrard (2004), points out what drives the ecocritical enterprise as a dedication not only to literary analyses of environmental problems described in narratives and poems, but also the motivation by the ecocritic to work for the mitigation of the destruction of the natural world. As Garrard concludes, ecocriticism is a great-souled vision with its feet planted solidly on the ground (p. 182). His final words are

worthy of Ralph Waldo Emerson, the father figure of American transcendental naturalism and pragmatic fundamentalism. Typically, ecocritics have attacked the realities of pollution, environmental degradation, global warming, species extinction, and eco-ethnic injustices with the zeal and emotion that reflect in Thoreau's critique of a ruthless modernity, bent on by efficiency and profit.

Vogel (2008) makes the case that ecocriticism constitutes an 'economic school of thought' (p. 105) as it engages audiences to debate issues of resource allocation that have no technical solution. Nichols (2011) argues that the historical dangers of a romantic version of nature now need to be replaced by urbanatural roosting, a view that sees urban life and the natural world as closely linked and argues for humans to live more lightly on the planet, the way virtually all other species do.

Buell (1995) acknowledges that there is uncertainty about what the term exactly covers but argues that, if one thinks of it ...as a multiform inquiry extending to a variety of environmentally focused perspectives more expensive of concern to explore environmental issues searchingly than of fixed dogmas about political solutions, then the neologism becomes a useful omnibus term for subsuming a large and growing scholarly field. (p. 430). Buell's definition is valid, as far as it goes, and it continues both in the increasingly interdisciplinary tradition of inclusiveness and making connections and in maintaining an ethical stand for effecting change. As Branch, Johnson, Patterson and Slovic (1998) explain:

implicit (an often explicit) in much of this new criticism is a call for cultural change. Ecocriticism is not just a means of analyzing nature in literature; it implies a move toward a more biocentric world-view, an extension of ethics, a broadening of humans' conception of global community to include nonhuman life forms and the physical environment. Just as feminist and African American literary criticism call for a change in culture-that is, they attempt to move the culture toward a broader world-view by exposing an earlier narrowness of view

– so too does ecological literary criticism advocates for cultural change by examining how the narrowness of our culture's assumptions about the natural world has limited our ability to envision an ecologically sustainable human society. (p. xiii).

Ecocriticism is experiencing tremendous growth and development in these early years of its existence. In the short time since it first appeared as a movement, some of the initial concerns that marked its inaugural moments have already been answered. Given the veritable explosion of interest in the field, Glotfelty's concern in 1996 with the traditional failure of the literary profession to address 'green' issues, for instance, now seems something of a non-issue. Love (2003) paraphrasing Glotfelty's point, argues in his contribution to *The Ecocriticism Reader* that: 'Race, class, and gender are words which we see and hear everywhere at our professional meetings and in our current publications ... [but] the English profession has failed to respond in any significant way to the issue of the environment'. (p. 226). The view above is of the time past when Love knows, things are changing: the English profession is responding. Love (2003) has recently noted that the study of literature and the environment and the practice of ecocriticism have begun to assume an active place in the profession (p.65).

Tallmadge and Harrington (2000) point out that theory has taken the front seat in early ecocritical writing (largely because theory, it seems, can authorize and validate the approach), there are some misgivings about and distrust of theory among ecocritics. Hence, we hear Tallmadge and Harrington promising to give adequate theory but without spinning off into obscurantism or idiosyncrasy (xv), and Buell pledging to avoid what he terms mesmerization by literary theory (Buell, 1995, p. 111). Given that ecocriticism is supposed to change things, a healthy skepticism toward theory of the sort that spins off madly or that mesmerizes, theory that would, in a word, neuter ecocriticism, seems perfectly valid. Buell's (1995) approach, however, is to avoid the complexities of theory entirely, it seems, and to bridge the gap

between what he does, in fact, acknowledge as a theoretical problem: 'the relationship between text on the one hand and world on the other. He calls this bridge an aesthetic of dual accountability' (p. 98), which will satisfy the mind and the ethological facts. The way to achieve it, he maintains, is through a revival of the claims of realism. The claims of realism, he argues, merit reviving...so as to enable one to re-imagine textual representations as having a dual accountability to matter and to discursive mentation. (p. 92).

Nixon (2005) questions why these two fields of inquiry so seldom seem to intersect, given that one might have expected environmentalism to be more, not less, transnational than other fields of literary inquiry. Indeed, despite an increasing scholarly focus on the conjuncture of these fields of study, little has been published that links the two. Nixon (2005) posits several reasons for the dearth of scholarship in this area and concludes that postcolonial critics traditionally have shown little concern for environmental issues, viewing them, perhaps, as irrelevant and elitist as compared to the plight of oppressed peoples, while the environmentalist advocacy of an ethics of place has often resulted in hostility toward displaced human populations. Slaymaker (2007) directs the readers to the Nigerian poet Osundare's writings and the life and works of the Nigerian writer Ken Saro-Wiwa as examples of African writers who had committed themselves to ecoactivism. Slaymaker observes that while Soyinka does not share the ecoactivism of Osundare and Saro-Wiwa, he too has authored literary works that connect his love of place and his respect for culturally important natural sites around life. (p. 687). Slaymaker believes that the Kenyan writer Ngugi also emphasizes through his writings the natural relations of the Agikuyu to their land. (p. 688).

Caminero-Santangelo's *Different Shades of Green: Ecocriticism and African Literature* (2007) is another recent essay which shows how ecocriticism is being used to explicate the achievements of the most important writers of African Literature. He examines Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat*, for instance, as a work that can be aligned and in tune with nature over and against a corrupting, mechanized European modernity. (p. 703). Ngugi, in other words, is writing a work which romanticizes pre-colonial (especially animist)

societies as in harmony with nature. Both Slaymaker and Caminero-Santangelo do not mention Achebe at all in their essays tracing the links between ecocriticism and postcolonial African literature, but Achebe is among the pioneers of African writing in presenting a pre-colonial land exhibiting the close connections between nature and culture that was then disrupted by colonization. What Achebe does so splendidly in *Things Fall Apart* is to represent the intimate relations West Africans had with the natural world before things started to fall apart from them as a consequence of colonization.

Caminero-Santangelo (2007) also suggests that rather than following the path of deep ecology, which seeks to minimize the human-effect, African ecocriticism presents the need to think about the anthropocentric politics both of conservation in Africa and of the knowledge on which conservation is based. (p. 701). As a politically and socially based movement, African environmental studies bring(s) into bold relief the danger of subordinating human concerns to environmental concerns (p. 701). Marshall (1994) views ecocriticism as a general term for literary analysis informed by an ecological or environmental awareness. It studies the relationship between literature and nature through a range of approaches having little in common other than a shared concern with the environment. (Glotfelty, 1996, p. xix). Scheese (1994) posits that combining traditional literary methodologies with ecological perspectives, ecocriticism is most appropriately applied to a work in which the landscape itself is a dominant character, when a significant interaction occurs between author and place, character(s) and place. Landscape by definition includes the non-human elements of place – rocks, soil, trees, plants, rivers, animals, air – as well as human perceptions and modifications. (Glotfelty ASLE).

By examining the language and metaphors used to describe nature, ecocriticism investigates the terms by which we relate to nature. Adopting Commoner's (1971) first law of ecosystem, ecology that everything is connected to everything else, ecocritics presuppose that human culture, specifically its literature, is connected to the physical world, affecting nature as nature affects culture. (Glotfelty ASLE).

The important influence of literature on our conception is made clear by Nash (1967) who argues in *Wilderness and the American Mind* that civilization created wildernesses. As a cultural product itself, literature reveals the human relationship to the natural world by not only exposing conventional attitudes but also by providing alternative models for conceptualizing nature and its relation to human society.

McKibben (1989) argues in *The End of Nature* that human beings [have] become so large that they [have] altered everything around us. That we [have] ended nature as an independent force, that our appetites and habits and desires [can] now be read in every cubic meter of air, in every increment on the thermometer (p. 192). Glotfelty (1996) recognizes this profoundly different new relationship that humans have developed with the rest of the natural world, stating how we have reached the age of environmental limits, a time when the consequences of human actions are relied heavily on Marxist, posing the planet's basic life of support (ASLE). It is through an engagement with literary, ecological, philosophical, and political environmentalism that ecocritical practice distinguishes itself from Romanticism of the nineteenth century (Mazel, 2000, p. 137).

Sarver (1994) notes that ecocriticism does not constitute a new critical field, but has relied heavily on Marxist, poststructuralist, psychoanalytic, and historicist theories. Its greatest challenge – to fully engage the biological sciences – is yet to be met. McDowell (1996) views that English studies has long integrated 'soft' disciplines of history, philosophy, and anthropology in order to examine literature but has found it more challenging to engage the hard disciplines, partly because of the difficulties involved in acquiring adequate grounding in the sciences to follow multidisciplinary arguments (p. 372). Sarver (1994) fears that until such literary engagement with the biological sciences occurs, ecocriticism risks becoming just another jargon-filled critical literary field – another '-ism' in literary studies. Sarver (1994) and many ecocritical scholars like Fromm and Nichols recognize the need for literary criticism to address the pressing environmental issues of today. They agree that one way to do so is to focus our study of literature on texts

in which nature plays a dominant role: 'our profession must soon direct its attention to that literature which recognizes and dramatizes the integration of human with natural cycles of life'. (Love, 2003, p. 235).

Kroeber (1994) identifies that many ecocritics such as Rueckert, Kroeber, Mazel and others view current literary criticism as overly specialized, inaccessible even to some within the discipline, and generally irrelevant to the larger issues confronting the modern world; for those scholars, ecological literary criticism is an attempt to escape from the esoteric abstractness that afflicts current theorizing about literature, seiz[ing] opportunities offered by recent biological research to make humanistic studies more socially responsible (p. 1). As Rueckert (1996) explains, in literary study, there must be a shift in our locus of motivation from newness, or theoretical elegance, or even coherence, to a principle of relevance (p. 107).

Mazel (2000) declares ecocriticism as the analysis of literature as though nature is mattered. This study, it is argued, cannot be performed without a keen understanding of the environmental crises of modern times and this must inform personal and political actions; it is, in a sense, a form of activism. Many critics also emphasize the interdisciplinary nature of enquiry which is informed by ecological science, politics, ethics, women's studies, Native American studies, and history, among other academic fields.

In an insightful close reading of Douglas Livingstone's poem: A Tide in the Affairs of Station 18, Everitt (2005) convincingly argues for the poet's ecological orientation: '[Douglas Livingstone's] view of the land as his (and humanity's) greater home and the yearning for a symbiotic relationship and sense of place speaks of a deeper apprehension of nature'. (pp. 53-54). Everitt (2005) goes on to provide us with an ecologically informed approach to the poem, and offers us a working definition of ecocriticism as an analysis of literature's expression of humanity's place on Earth, our *oikos* or home. She implicitly includes the cultural (through literature) and the biological (through the Earth) as part of the jointly held greater ecosystem. This differs somewhat from the standard definition given before and proposes something more

specific than the mere study of the relationship between literature and the environment. Nevertheless, Everitt's account is still in line with the delineations in the aforementioned definition. According to Everitt (2005) a key message of Livingstone's poetry is that we must learn to revere and respect the Earth as our life-support system (Livingstone, 1991, p. 61).

Morrison (2008) perceives that the role of literature to dramatize ecological issues is foregrounded in the work of the South African writers. He therefore remarks:

Storytelling is an important social activity through which identities – individual or collective – are constructed and maintained. Though it may be individuals who tell stories, their stories are composed of larger cultural stories that are passed on, handed down, told and retold. Therefore, our narratives are located within a particular place and time and are shaped by the larger stories available to us – the 'factual' and the fictional, the conventional or the subversive. We draw off these in order to create our own coherent narratives. (p. 57).

According to Morrison, we should perceive our humanity as belonging in the world, rather than it belonging to humans ... If we see ourselves as interconnected and interdependent, then we will be able to see that what I do to the other I do to myself (p. 58). Thinking also about this interconnection, Vital (2005) asks:

How do we begin to tell the story of animals and humans, drawing the distinction in such a way that the lives of both can be opened to a fullness of being, while acknowledging both the deprivations of colonial pasts and the power exerted by an ever more dominant global civilization linked historically to European and American cultures and practices? (p. 306).

Introducing a special edition of *Current Writing* with an article entitled Animal presences, animal geographies, Wylie (2006) comments:

The symbiosis between the physical orientations of these sometimes astonishingly autonomous, coherent individual creatures around us – animals, wild and domestic – and their literary and psychological presences and effects in all our lives, is a relationship which holds the promise of endless avenues for reassessment of those lives. Any close reassessment is likely to confront us with, at the very least, our own troubling animalism, our accelerating destruction of most other species, and our potential for redemptive compassion. And what is the role of the written word – literature – in forging and expressing these relationships? (p. 1).

Everitt (2006) takes up Wylie's challenge and states that: 'I pin my hopes on the elusive but powerful human imagination. Perhaps literature can be used to persuade where environmental facts fail. After all, stories have been used as a didactic tool from the beginnings of human civilization. To put it another way, it is not knowledge of our biological and evolutionary heritage but, rather, our uniquely human capacity to make art which may reunite humankind with the rest of the natural world'. (p. 91). Bieder (2006) discussing stories that 'humanize' animals, comments: '[In these tales about bears] are situated cultural themes touching on origins, ancestors, taboos, identity, metamorphosis, greed, duty, spiritual power, breakdown of social order, respect for nature, cycle of life, and rebirth. They are tales that both bridge the boundaries between humans and bears and give cultural meaning to the bear. They also bridge the boundary between the past and the present' (p. 165). These stories, then, impinge on the lives of human beings because they help us understand the world and our place in it; they help us imagine ourselves and our relationships with the world around us. In these stories ... bears are powerful, sacred spirits;

ancestors; healers; shape shifters; lovers and mates. The stories ... are also about cultures exploring and reshaping environment (p. 166).

Honwana (1964), Coetzee (1983), Cartwright (2002), Woodward (2007) argue for these texts capacity to capture reader's attention in ways which, if they cannot prevent the killing of animals, will at least make humans aware of their complicity in these killings. These texts encourage the reader to imagine sharing the being another, who is condemned to death ... Constrained socially from quitting tables laden with the corpses of dead animals, we can, at the very least, tell stories of their deaths (Woodward, 2007, p. 310). Birkerts (1996) in his *Boston Book Review* presupposes treating literature as 'a means of moral instruction'. The questions he poses are in fact rather noteworthy in understanding the danger of falling into outdated modes of critical approaches while conducting eco-literary analyses. He asks: Can literature be usefully examined as having some bearing on man and his practical relation to the natural world? And: 'Can literature – should literature – serve as an agency of awareness? Should it be publicized to help advance the cause of natural environment?' (p. 4). Although ecocriticism can – and indeed should – explore the ways in which literature and ecology interact, it should not do so at the expense of naive reduction of literary texts into mere transcriptions of the physical world, and by polarization of literature itself. It is important to note that literature should not be used as a pretext for examining the ecological issues.

In other words, the task of putting literature in question in order to save nature implies a reductionist approach. Since poststructuralist theory has sharpened the focus on textual and inter-textual issues (Strehle, 1992, p. 2), the ecocritical reader cannot go back into perceiving literary texts as transparent mediums that un-problematically reflect phenomenal reality. Therefore, the true concern of ecocriticism ought not to be with obsolete representational models, but with how nature gets textualized in literary texts to create an eco-literary discourse that would help produce an inter-textual as well as an

interactive approach between literary language and the language of nature. But as Manes (1996) notes that to regard nature as alive and articulate has consequences in the realm of social practices (p. 15). Manes (1996) argues that knowledge about nature is always conditioned by historical and social formations of power. In this respect, what Rueckert calls, 'literary ecology' inquiries into the ways in which nature is marginalized, silenced, pushed in Manes' words, into a hazy backdrop against which the rational human subject struts upon (p. 16). This outlook shows that literary ecology is a projection of human ideas about human responsibility into the natural environment.

Nevertheless, eco-literary discourse can address how literary texts articulate the silence of nature, and to what consequences. Thus, ecocriticism can explore what we can call a discursively manipulated nonhuman world in literature, and discuss how it gets marginalized or silenced by, or incorporated into the human language. Legler (1997) offers an analysis of the cultural constructions of nature, which also includes an analysis of language, desire, knowledge, and power (p. 227). The verbal constructions of nature, either in its romanticized, idealized form, or as hostile wilderness, especially in poetry and fiction, usually lead to a binary way of either/or thinking that justifies the present catastrophic abuse of nature. To counter this, ecocriticism embarks upon the project of reconceptualising nature, not as an object of observation or interpretation, but as an active agency in its own right. Ecocritics like Donna Haraway, Diana Fuss, Patrick Murphy and Evelyn Fox Keller urge for a re-conception of nature as an active and speaking subject. For example, Fuss (1989) in *Essentially Speaking*, suggests that such a reconception of nature attributes to it a metaphorical status as a speaking and alive subject: 'It might be necessary to begin questioning the constructionist assumption that nature and fixity go together (naturally)' (p. 6).

Despite such problematic paradoxes, ecocritics recognize the need for reconstructing nature, not as the *Other* excluded from the realm of discourse, but as a subject which requires a non-dualistic perception and interpretation from a human position. A dialogue with nature is not possible in linguistic terms, but

constructing a new mode of understanding and perception that surpasses, if not eliminates, nature/culture dichotomy is. Gruen (1997) investigates that an ecocritical attempt to deconstruct the privileged human subjectivity in its dialogue with the language of nature might create a sustainable ecological vision in the reading and writing of literature. Although the distinction between nature and culture is quite problematic, it is a category humans have created to help us understand and order the world (p. 364). Eisler (1990) advocates a rethinking of our commonly held beliefs and perceptions, and our versions of nature, towards creating a consciousness of the essential unity of all life (p. 26).

Ecocriticism enables the critic to examine the textualisations of the physical environment in literary discourse itself, and to develop an earth-centered approach to literary studies. In this case, crossing of the boundaries between the human and the nonhuman spheres would enable the ecocritic to analyze the ways in which an ecological vision is addressed or subverted in literary texts. In such ecocritical approaches, the use of literary and ecological discourses would inevitably create a rich cross-fertilization when interconnections between the natural sciences and literary studies are laid bare. Yet it should be taken into consideration that translation across different discourses raises fundamental problems. Ecocriticism should focus on the textual strategies of literary texts in constructing an ecologically informed discourse about the ways in which humans interact with other life forms. In other words, Love (1996) observes that ‘ecocriticism can launch a new ethic and aesthetic embracing the human and the natural, but not through undermining the literary, textual, performative and linguistic properties of literature’ (p. 238).

Burgess (1996) points out that the English profession has failed to respond in any significant way to the issue of the environment, the acknowledgement of our place within the natural world and our need to live hopefully within it, at peril of our very survival (p. 226). Buell (1995) explores the experience of American pastoral in a variety of frames and contexts--social, political, gender-based, aesthetic, pragmatic, and environmental. He pays greater attention to the emergent threat of ecological holocaust, and identifies

environmental pressures as tending to increase the importance of pastoralism as a literary and cultural force in the future. In his book, *The Environmental Imagination*, Buell says that this study must be ‘conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis’ (p. 12). His work is thus primary to ecocriticism. His ecocritical approach can be seen in his outstanding work on Thoreau, which interprets Thoreau’s Nature writing and the formation of American culture.

Morton (1998) complements Buell’s work by pursuing the nature of nature in ecocriticism. Morton documents the changing definition of the word nature and, echoing Buell to a certain extent, suggests that nature can be anything. Kerridge’s (1998) definition suggests Glotfelty’s broad cultural ecocriticism that:

ecocritics want to track environmental ideas and representations wherever they appear, to see more clearly a debate which seems to be taking place, often part-concealed, in a great many cultural spaces. Most of all ecocriticism seek to evaluate texts and ideas in terms of their coherence and usefulness as responses to environmental crisis (p. 5).

The domain of ecocriticism is very broad because it is not limited to any literary genre. Apart from Lawrence Buell, Cheryll Glotfelty and William Howarth, Simon C. Estok, William Rueckert, Suellen Campbell, Michael P. Branch and Glen A. Love, are equally committed to ecocritical pursuit. Love (2003) has been teaching and writing for years with the intent of bringing communication between the natural sciences and the humanities closer together. What does human nature have to do with ecocriticism? This is the question at the heart of Love’s (2003) book *Practical Ecocriticism*. Thus:

At the beginning of the third millennium and of a new century often heralded as —the century of the environment, a coherent and broadly based movement embracing literary environmental interconnections, commonly termed

—ecocriticism is emerging ...Ecocriticism, unlike all other forms of literary inquiry, encompasses non-human as well as human contexts and considerations. On this claim, ecocriticism bases its challenge to much postmodern critical discourse as well as to the critical systems of the past (p. 3).

He begins with the premise that human behaviour is not an empty vessel whose only input will be that provided by culture, but is strongly influenced by genetic orientations that underlie and modify, or are modified by cultural influences (p. 3). Love's (2003) *Practical Ecocriticism: Literature, Biology, and the Environment* clearly outlines the issues the two cultures face together. He points out that a great deal of world literature deals with the pastoral and with the relationship between human and non-human beings. According to him, ecocritics are trying to read literature with a fresh sensitivity to the emergent voice of nature. Inevitably this voice can only be expressed, in literature at the least, through human representations of non-human creatures and landscapes. He focuses on ecocriticism as a multifarious approach:

What is emerging is a multiplicity of approaches and subjects, including under the big tent of environmental literature – nature writing, deep ecology, the ecology of cities, ecofeminism, the literature of toxicity, environmental justice, bioregionalism, the lives of animals, the revaluation of place, interdisciplinarity, eco-theory, the expansion of the canon to include previously unheard voices, and the reinterpretation of canonical works from the past (p. 5).

Buell (2005) defines ecocriticism as environmentally oriented study of literature and (less often) the arts more generally, and to the theories that underlie such critical practice (p. 138). He identifies two phases of ecocriticism, the first wave ecocriticism and the second wave ecocriticism or revisionist ecocriticism.

The first wave ecocritics focused on such genres as nature writing, nature poetry and wilderness fiction (p. 138). While the first-wave ecocritics upheld the philosophy of organism, the second wave ecocritics inclined towards environmental justice issues and a social ecocriticism 'that takes urban and degraded landscapes just as seriously as natural landscapes' (p. 22). Buell acknowledges the fact that western academy focuses on ecocriticism only as environmental criticism (p. 28).

It is not a mere exercise in analyzing nature in literature but a move towards a more biocentric world-view, an extension of ethics, a broadening of mans' concept of global community to include nonhuman life forms and the physical environment. Snyder (1990) uses the term 'Gift Economy' to bring a fresh perspective to the meaning of ecology. Snyder defines a gift economy as that which saves the world instead of depleting and devouring it. In this context, the role of a writer is of paramount importance: 'Art takes nothing from the world: it is a gift and an exchange. It leaves the world nourished' (p. 39).

Mazel (1996) declares that ecocriticism is the analysis of literature as though nature mattered. Our reading of environmental literature should help us realize that the concerns are not exclusively of the order of —Shall these trees be cut? Or shall this river be dammed? Important as such questions are but also of the order of —What have counted as the environment, and what may count? Who marks off the conceptual boundaries, and under what authority, and for what reasons? Have those boundaries and that authority been contested, and if so, by whom? With what success, and by virtue of what strategies of resistance? These are the levels on which Mazel would like to see ecocriticism theorize the environment (p. 143).

Rueckert (1978) who coined the term ecocriticism in his essay 'Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism' wrote that ecocriticism entails application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature; because ecology has the greatest relevance to the present and future of the world we all live (p. 107). Rueckert's definition includes all possible relations between literature and the physical

world. Some scholars question how one can contribute to environmental restoration, within one's capacity as a scholar of literature beyond arousing general awareness to the approaching crisis.

However, various approaches like environmental ethics, deep ecology, ecofeminism and social ecology have emerged as a result of scholars endeavour to understand and analyze the root causes of environmental degradation, and then to formulate an alternative view of existence, which will provide an ethical and conceptual basis for right relations with the earth. To this point, however, the researcher has deduced that one of the important features of ecocriticism is that it perceives nature and human culture as interwoven rather than as separate sides of a dualistic construct. Also, a viable ecocriticism must continue to challenge dualistic thinking by exploring the role of nature in texts more concerned with human cultures, by looking at the role of culture in nature and by attending to the nature-focused text as also a cultural literary text as it is evident in Mda's novels.

2.3 Social Realism versus Magic Realism in Mda's Novels

One of the methods Mda has adopted to blend the elements of the traditional past with the materialistic global culture of the present is that of magical realism. Cooper (1998) defines magical realism as 'the fictional device of the supernatural, taken from any source the writer chooses syncretized with a developed realistic, historical perspective' (p. 16). Cooper argues that magical realist writers such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Isabel Allende and Salman Rushdie are, nevertheless, 'not inserted within these indigenous, pre-technological cultures that provide their inspiration'. However, while these writers may not actually believe in the 'magic' they incorporate into their fiction, it would appear that Mda does and comments thus:

Some critics have called my work magic realism...I wrote in this manner because I am a product of this culture. In my culture the magical is not disconcerting. It is taken for granted...A lot of my work is set in the rural areas

because they retain that magic, whereas the urban areas have lost it to Westernization. (1997, p. 281).

It is this acceptance of the magical that allows him to imbue traditional black values and spirituality with a vitality that offers a redemptive hope for the present. Also, in *The Heart of Redness*, Mda explores the contrasts between the present Westernized urban black person, the rural areas where traditional beliefs are being contested and the past where traditional beliefs were still dominant but challenged by the two central events of Xhosa history – British imperialism and the Great Cattle Killing of 1857.

To examine conflicting values in the present modern South Africa, Mda's protagonist, Camagu, a Westernized returnee from exile, who travels from Johannesburg to a remote rural village, Qolorha-by-Sea has an encounter with the villagers and this makes him to gradually discover his Xhosa roots – the heart of redness – and is spiritually transformed, so that he attains a sense of community with the rural people. The narrative of past imperialism and the Cattle Killing is woven into the contemporary *bildungsroman* by means of flashbacks. The various villagers, both past and present, the prophets of the past and British imperialists, the modern urbanites and, above all, Camagu's consciousness, provide a polyphony of voices that allows Mda to present a richly complex and ironised debate about issues facing contemporary South African society and its historical, colonial antecedents. (www.tandonline.com/doi/abs/2001davidlloyd).

Mda's use of magical realism in his novels is not as pervasive and sustained as in the work of Latin American authors like Gabriel Garcia Marquez and his epigone Isabel Allende, but he uses it convincingly as a foil to undermine realism by effecting 'a site for cultural critique and change'. In line with Latin American experience, Mda (1997) claims:

In my culture the magical is not disconcerting. It is taken for granted. No one tries to find a natural explanation for the unreal. The unreal happens as part of reality. The supernatural is presented without judgment. (p. 281).

The presence of magical realism in Mda's fiction underlines and illustrates the essential duality of existence by suggesting other possible interpretations of reality. Furthermore, it contests the simplistic, orderly interpretation of historical documentation that only record one version of the South African past. In this sense, magical realism 'opens the door' to myth, which Ricoeur (2004) perceives as 'a disclosure of unprecedented worlds, an opening on to other *possible* worlds which transcend the established limits of our *actual* world.

Mda's settings are historically and geographically accurate, whether in the cityscapes of apartheid designed 'locations' or in the indigenous flora and fauna of such places as Nongqawuse's Valley in *The Heart of Redness*. The genre of magic realism is associated with the supernatural and with Latin-American writing, particularly that of Gabriel Marquez. Mda, however, explicitly rejects the notion that his use of magic realism is influenced by such writers as Marquez. Rather, he insists that magic realism is an *African* storytelling tradition: 'I wrote in this manner from an early age because I am a product of magical culture. In my culture, the magical is not disconcerting. It is taken for granted. No one tries to find a natural explanation for the unreal. The unreal happens as part of reality (Naidoo, 1997, p. 281). The reason is not far-fetched as Coetzee (1992) asks what prevents the South African writer from following the example of Don Quixote and entering the realm of faery. Coetzee replies: What prevents him is what prevents Don Quixote himself. The crudity of life in South Africa, the naked force of its appeals, not only on the physical level but at the moral level too, its callousness and its brutalities, its hungers and its rages, its greed and its lies, make it as irresistible as it is unlovable (pp. 98-99).

Warnes (2009) examines Mda's story-worlds to have plenty of the power, crudity, naked force ... callousness, brutalities, hungers, rages, greed and lies described by Coetzee (p. xxii). Warnes adds that we need only think of *Ways of Dying*, in which children of five are killed by 'necklacing' because they are accused of being informers, or *The Madonna of Excelsior*, where women like Popi and Niki are thrown into prison by a government blind to their humanity and impervious to their civil rights. Mda casts these characters into story-worlds that are potentially transformed by what Warnes calls 'the redeeming qualities of aesthetic communicated not through magic means, but through ordinary acts of imagination' (p. 82).

Warnes (2009) remarks that in *The Madonna of Excelsior* characters and situations are juxtaposed with those of the symbolist/expressionist world of painter Frans Claerhout because Claerhout represents a force that numinously rejoins the religious, the aesthetic and the possibilities of healing the wounds of the past (p. 83). What Mda achieves, therefore, is affectivity and a dignity denied for generations by the impositions of colonialism and apartheid (pp. 83-84). Mda's style is thus connected much less with the supernatural than with the transformative potentials of the human imagination. According to Barker (2008) Mda employs magic realism wherever the subject matter deals with extreme and inexplicable inhumanity or ontological rifts (p. 17). The critical debate around the function of magic realism in Mda's fiction is thus lively and extensive. Barker's view is that Mda's magic realism has to be understood as an *extension of*, rather than a *contradiction of*, his social realism. Barker agrees with Wenzel (2009) who remarks that the presence of magical realism in Mda's fiction underlines and illustrates the essential duality of existence by suggesting other possible interpretations of reality (p. 131).

In addition, Mda's novels signal a radical shift in literary representation in English by South African black writers. Mda has used magic realism extensively in his novels to construct alternative visions of reality. Moffett (1996) situates Mda's novels within the context of South African literature and asserts that 'the novels certainly mark a potential watershed in South African writing. They have several innovative

qualities that break new ground in current local fiction writing. Possibly the most striking of these is their use of magic realism, usually associated with Latin American novelists (p.14).

Kgositsile (1996) examines how Mda asserts the existence of the world of his characters as convincingly real. In this world, tradition and custom, myth and legend, the mysterious, the magical, historical events and actual personalities are inextricably intertwined. Mda renders them all as real, as palpable as the paper in your hands (p. 22). The view of the researcher is that critics, however, have not always recognized the importance of magic realism in Mda's literary work. Also, research has revealed that to date only three critics have alluded to the use of magic realism in Mda's novels. These are Moffett (1996), Kgositsile (1995) and Driver (1996). So, Mda should be applauded as a novelist as he has made foolproof of magic realism in his novels.

2.4 Place, Setting and Landscape in Mda's Novels

Coetzee (1988) examines the concept of landscape as 'both topographical and aesthetic in its reference' (p. 40) which has exerted a heavy influence on South African ecocriticism. This strain of the discourse draws on Coetzee's classic study *White Writing*. Coetzee maps out how early colonial artists such as William Burchell who pleaded for the aesthetic value of South African landscapes in spite of their unsuitability for the European picturesque, which demanded 'distant mountains, a lake in the middle distance, and a foreground of rocks, woods, broken ground, cascades or ruins' (p. 40). Despite Burchell's ostensible quest for genuinely 'African beauty', Coetzee insists that Burchell's aesthetic 'is but a modified European picturesque' (p. 41). So it seems that Cecil Rhodes was far from unique in his desire to make South Africa seem more like home.

Coetzee identifies landscape representation as a process of colonialists inserting themselves into the South African context by reading the landscape against and, inevitably, in terms of European aesthetic – and, we would add, environmental – categories. Despite the influence of Coetzee's study which critically

apprehends the role of landscape-oriented ecocriticism too often lapses back into lyrical admiration for the pastoral and the wild. Martin (2010) writes, 'When localism becomes insular, or situatedness myopic and relativist, the broader social/economic/historical/geographic (and son on) environments in which a place arises are obscured, and ...the place-based initiative can become...incorporated into the very system it seeks to challenge' (p. 114). Martin's article inadvertently reveals that acknowledging a globalized landscape does not prevent the retrogressive tendencies that she associates with parochial representations of place. It also displays more than a trace of the foodie escapism that tempts residents of and visitors to the Cape Winelands, where tastings are a daily ritual-and taste can become an ethos in its own right.

Schama (2009a) examines Mda's story-worlds as both rooted in specific carefully observed places and suffused with the memories of those who have inhabited those places. From the perspective of Mda (2009a) says, 'I have written elsewhere that I usually see a place and immediately decide that it is so beautiful or so ugly that it deserves a novel. The next question is: 'what character would live in a place like this and what memories are contained in this landscape? I see the trees and rocks and the grass and the hills and the rivers as storing places of memory'. (p. 3). He adds that in his use of setting, Mda mutually imbricates memory, history, landscape and culture. His attitude to landscapes has little in common with Western perspectives that observe geographical settings as mere expressions of human mastery. Rather, settings and landscapes in Mda's storytelling derive from African oral genres, which refuse to separate from land. Gunner (1996) comments: 'Like the praise singers, Mda's settings [collapse] linear time and [allow] the past to sit within the ambit of the present' (p. 123). 'They also [break] down the categories of land, body and being' (p. 127).

Allison (1999) posits that landscape therefore functions as an integral part of an indigenous group's sense of identity. These links with the past are strongly present too in Mda's story-worlds. They deconstruct many of the binaries on which Western history is built. Memory takes the place of the

topographic documentation created by Western maps. Thus: 'where Western mental categories separate, indigenous peoples' conceptions of geography join, history, science, spirituality and aesthetics are all tied together by these peoples' oral, or recently written, bodies of local knowledge ... In contrast to the observation of specialized professional scientists, indigenous knowledge is local, intensive, long-term, and based on intimate, shared experience that is dynamic, complex and recursive' (p. 273).

2.5 Critical Works in Mda's Novels and the Environment

Barnard (2004) with its use of the grotesque, its fusion of colloquial with literary registers, its emphasis on the body and its enactment of carnival views *Ways of Dying* as the most Bakhtinian of Mda's novels. Barnard also draws attention to the peculiar and productive ambivalence' of the grotesque as literary mode in the postcolonial context of the volatile and violent years between the unbanning of the resistance movements of the inauguration of the democratically elected ANC government (p. 279). Bakhtin's (1981) central thesis examines that human existence is a ceaseless battle between centrifugal forces that seek to keep things apart, and centripetal forces that strive to make things cohere (p. xviii) is of course particularly applicable to an interregnum, a time of cultural and historical crisis such as that experienced by South Africans in their transition from apartheid to democracy. In 'Discourse in the Novel' Bakhtin says that the prose writer makes use of words that are already populated with the social intentions of others (pp. 299-300).

Barnard (2004) examines *Ways of Dying* as Mda's first novel about South Africa. The novel is about transition and cultural crisis; it fuses Mda's ongoing commitment to social realism with the liberating potentials of the creative imagination. While the novel is set in an apartheid squatter community characterized by violence and horror, its protagonists are nevertheless capable of imaginative transcendence. Barnard remarks that the whole novel has a dramaturgical quality (p. 282). This discourse participates both in what Bakhtin calls synchronic and diachronic dimensions; it is of its own contextual

moment [as well as] part of the long evolution of social change (Bakhtin in Morris, 1994, p.5). Bakhtin is particularly concerned to explain how new meaning is generated, just as Mda is concerned to explore how new social and political realities come into being. *Ways of Dying* graphically illustrates how Toloki as Professional Mourner learns to appropriate a new language through interacting with the languages and discourses that surround him in the township, first under apartheid, then in post-apartheid South Africa.

Bakhtin (2004) draws our attention to the ‘double-voiced’ or dialogic character of language, which moves between author and characters and in which readers have to learn to interpret the social voices that structure our being: ‘Each word, as we know it, is a little arena for the clash and criss-crossing of differently oriented social accents’ (p. 12). This struggle for dominance is a feature of all power, all hierarchy; it is through the generative dynamics of opposition that new meanings are born. The fictional genre of the novel orchestrates these new and dynamic possibilities through its complex (‘heteroglossic’) language.

According to him, through the introduction of laughter and comedy, it breaks down stratifications and makes for social equality. Words take on different meanings and connotations for different social classes at different times. They disrupt authority and privilege alternative voices. Central to this disruption of authority is Bakhtin’s notion of carnival: ‘The festivities associated with Carnival are collective and popular; hierarchies are turned on their heads (fools become wise, kings become beggars); opposites are mingled (fact and fantasy, heaven and hell; the sacred is profaned) ... Everything authoritative, rigid or serious is subverted, loosened or mocked’ (Selden, Widdowson and Brooker, 1985, p. 43).

Barnard (2004) suggests that in *Ways of Dying*, Mda may be consciously importing and writing a number of tropes from Bakhtin’s Rabelais and his Word (p. 283). She explores the novel’s concentration on the body and the grotesque to dramatize the profound and regenerative connection between life and death, of the world of the living and the world beyond (p. 284). Barnard (2004) also investigates the

function of carnival to liberate the formerly oppressed: ‘At the end of the novel, the traditional trappings of carnival are clearly in place, complete with drunken carousers in costumes and masks, and is in the description of their revels that one of the most crucial elements of the Bakhtinian carnivalesque is foregrounded. This is, in a word, freedom: freedom from the fear and intimidation that was pervasive in the unpredictable world of the South African transition (p. 288).

Courau and Murray (2009) also address the creative re -appropriation of urban space in *Ways of Dying*. They view the novel as Mda’s attempt to give imaginative weight and historical context to the experience of the migrant labourer and the rite of passage from a poverty-stricken rural life to the even more severe conditions of urban existence (p. 91). In *Ways of Dying*, the rituals of death become a performance of the substance of community memory – a source of connection between the worlds of the living and the dead (p. 93). Their argument foregrounds the eclecticism of Mda’s borrowings from both African and European traditions, and the importance of community history and community memory in both traditions.

Mervis (1998) offers possible entry point into understanding of Mda’s first novel, *Ways of Dying*. He evaluates that the book is ultimately a combination of Brechtian didacticism and indigenous African participatory story-telling in which the difference between artist and audience is virtually non-existent, it begins to beg questions. Nevertheless, the general thrust, if not the particular argument, appears valid, and her view that in this novel, Mda explores creative ways of resolving race, class and gender-induced oppression in the post-apartheid environment of a black community, is hard if not impossible to disagree with (p. 39). Van Wyk (1997) proposes the concept of transitional literature and an attendant aesthetics of transition to assess literature written or set in periods in which a state has lost control and legitimacy. The transitional period in South Africa he claims is the turbulent and violent interregnum between the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990 and democratic elections in 1994, roughly the period in which the novel *Ways of*

Dying is set. According to Van Wyk (1997) the characteristic features of transitional literature are: ‘one, an inversion of state and masses, where the latter asserts itself in the temporary vacuum of the state in crisis, reminiscent of the anarchic inversion associated with Bakhtin and the carnival, and two, on a psychic level, the resurgence of the repressed [which] in turn implies a regression: a loss to some extent of the reality principle’ (p. 79).

Van Wyk (1997) explains *Ways of Dying* as an intricate analysis of the historical nightmare of the ‘death producing’ ... transition and its predecessor – apartheid, perceiving its value not only in ‘deconstructing the past’ but in pointing to the future: ‘These past narratives contain determining signs that go beyond apartheid and which are shared by all humanity’. (p. 90). In other words, he identifies the novel as having predictive value and as widely applicable. The researcher assesses *Ways of Dying* as a novel that brings illumination to the pervading darkness that eclipsed the people of South Africa before Nelson Mandela regained his freedom from the hands of the oppressors.

Durrant (2005) identifies *Ways of Dying* as an excellent example that has its transformative and ability to grapple with legacies of oppression and imagination of new states of being. He proposes and valorizes ‘aesthetics of mourning in the context of traumatized societies where literature becomes a crucial site ... for the reinvention of memorial practices and thus the reinvention of community’ (p. 441). The mourning practice in Mda’s novel is explicit, but Durrant gives examples of other post-apartheid novels where mourning processes are important to dealing with the traumatic past. The mourning in *Ways of Dying* is wide-ranging such as, disintegrated communities and families, internecine strife, and human kindness or basic humanity. The novel is read positively as moving towards reintegration of community through the mourning of personal and communal losses.

Also on the theme of mourning but with a striking comparative analysis of the theme in *Ways of Dying* with Homeric, Steinmeyer (2003) examines the differences and similarities between what is known

about mourning rituals in ancient Greece with those described in Mda's novel and extant in Zulu cultures: '[The] figure of Toloki combines the tasks of the ancient male 'singers of dirges'... and of the women who accompany them by wailing... One might regard him as an African version of the 'professor of threnodies' described by Lucian'. (p. 156). She views the function of mourning in the novels in accordance with the chief protagonist, Toloki, functioning as a catalyst for the community, to raise critical awareness among the disadvantaged. Following Mervis (1998) and others, she evaluates the novel as an example of transition literature, also finding elements of the carnivaleque theorized by Bakhtin, as discussed by Van Wyk.

In an in-depth discussion of the mobilization of the term African Renaissance in South African political discourse, Jacobs (2002) ventures a few comparisons between Mda's novel, *She Plays with the Darkness*, and works from the Italian Renaissance. While these comparisons underscore the representative nature of the novel, its performative aspects are dwelt upon by drawing attention to the oral influence both in the form and content of the narrative. Jacobs (2002) emphasizes the open-ended nature of the novel's conclusion, seeing it as incomplete, even improvisational, mediating a culture in the process of transition and renewal and suggests that for Mda, Renaissance ... might lie in restoring humanity to [Radisane's] worldliness, and in finding a place in the world for [Diksha's] humanism (p. 224).

Mkhize (2001) contrasts white writing and black writing, tracing developments in these broadly defined areas of writing prior to and since the demise of apartheid, and predicting the possibility of a reapproachment of sorts between the two in post-apartheid South Africa. On the white writing side of the score-sheet, he places J.M. Coetzee, Breyten Breytenbach, André Brink and Menán du Plessis who in the past ... embraced modernist or post-modernist techniques in their writing, going on to see the same shift in the later works of Nadine Gordimer. Ndebele, Serote, Mphahlele among others, Mkhize (2001) finds a predominantly neo-realist mode characterizing black writing. He identifies the rejection of modernism as based in its perceived apoliticism: '[L]iterary modernism's rejection of narrativity has been perceived by

black South African writers as a strategy bent on mystifying information – modernist techniques of writing are, according to this argument, elitist, a luxury that black writers who had a political responsibility to the masses could not afford’. (p. 170).

He goes on to suggest that Mda may well not have escaped from the tyranny of narrativity but by gesturing towards magical realism [in] *Ways of Dying* has succeeded in creating a clearing house for black post-apartheid writing. He evaluates this novel as representative of a new form, and speculates that [i]f there ever will be an encounter between black writing and the postmodern ... it might well be through magical realism, stopping short, however, of strongly asserting this prediction: ‘Whether there will ultimately be a convergence between black and white South Africa [sic] writing in the immediate future remains to be seen’. Wenzel (2003) explores the concept of houses as constructs of identity, identifying in Mda’s *Ways of Dying* as a depiction of how the living spaces of the chief protagonist reflect his cultural boundaries and subjective or imaginative world. She focuses on human interaction with context and how the delimitation of space and the establishment of personal boundaries in the construction of houses or dwelling places express and reflect the individual’s interaction with time and place in literary representation (p. 316).

The novel is analyzed as attesting to the resilience of the human spirit in its ability to transcend spatial boundaries. In addition, the significance of the historical period in which the novel is set is seen as contributing towards the construction of identity in literature. In a sense, Wenzel believes, the text illustrates, through the sheer power of imagination, how time and space can be transcended and represents a solution to the South African impasse created by apartheid (p. 330). In other words, the novel offers an imaginative answer to bridging the divide between the past of apartheid and the future of reconciliation. From the researcher’s standpoint, Wenzel’s opinion goes along way as this has brought home some ideas in

an ecocritical sense, one can deduce the fact that humans have lost contact with nature and there is need to reconcile back to the mother earth as this will bring harmonious relationship.

An approach examining the literary representations of destitute African societies explains Mda's *Way of Dying* in which the destitute are an index of the betrayal of the ideals propounded by nationalism, as a powerful indictment of the failure to address the needs of the surplus people. Radithlalo (2005) evaluates the novel as a document of the last days of apartheid rule and the many that died so that a new rainbow nation could come into being. The very representation of the powerless and their sufferings at the hands of the powerful is read as restorative, and the positive ending is viewed as an affirmation that 'literary art ... has the power to dissipate fear and hatred and to return society to a state of health and normality. Radithlalo (2005) views this work and several others in his survey as, in effect, a wakeup call to postcolonial powers to adopt development models which address the suffering of the surplus people (p. 169). The researcher also agrees with Radithlalo's view that *Ways of Dying* serves as a wakeup call to the embrace of ecocriticism as there is need for us to address environmental injustice and the degradation of natural endowment we are being blessed with.

Samin (2003) offers a reading of *Ways of Dying* as a text which subverts conventional forms of representation and as resorting to different forms of marginality ... so as to articulate the contradictions and ambiguities of the period (p. 331). According to Samin, the author achieves this by describing ordinary lives in a context rife with ambiguity simply by juxtaposing African urban lifestyles and rural, traditional customs without any attempt at reconciling or rationalizing these differences, (p. 344) and by blending elements of oral and written storytelling conventions, realism and the supernatural, and a variety of genres, such as the quest, romance and the tale, into a remarkable textual tapestry. Its focus on marginality is seen as constituting a counter-discourse which strongly resists the assertive reductiveness of the liberation discourse. While it is a severe indictment of the apartheid era, it is cautious about the future, not

particularly hopeful that the problems of the marginalized will be addressed in any significant manner. As such, it represents a warning and a critique of possible new forms of oppression.

Farred (2000) offers us a resoundingly negative reading of *Ways of Dying* as apolitical. However, the article appears to be suffused with considerable animus against the novel. Somewhat restrictively, Farred reads the novel primarily through an analysis of the two chief protagonists: Toloki and Noria. He finds the former the more problematic of the two. He goes on to make a spurious and bewildering comparison between (real life) trade-union performance poets of the 1980s and the (absurd) fictional character of Toloki in the transition period (1990-1994).

By reading the novel, focusing attention primarily on Toloki ignores entirely the key figure of Nefolovhodwe, a representative of the upwardly mobile black bourgeoisie enriching Toloki on other's suffering; it is this character which forms the primary butt of the trenchant critique in the novel of such exploitation. By shrinking his critical gaze to Toloki alone,

Farred argues that: Toloki the artist represents the benign face of post-apartheid society's preference for the upwardly mobile black individual rather than the demands of the township masses. Although (exceedingly) tenuous given Toloki's destitute and outsider position, such a statement may yet stand unless stretched to characterize the novel as a whole. Farred's critique, most of which is a vitriolic disparagement of the apolitical Toloki, constitutes an attempt to represent the novel as apolitical for such reasons.

One can see another absurd juxtaposition which is made by setting off real life Winnie Mandela against the fictional character Noria, reaching the insight that, although the post-apartheid society is founded upon democratic principles as this has not translated into equality of status – some black mothers are more equal than others'. Reading imaginative works, even highly inventive ones like *Ways of Dying* which has elements of fantasy interwoven with reality, against history and historical figures may yet render valuable insights. However, Farred's reading fails abysmally for being overly instrumental in its almost

mimetic understanding of representational practices and too selective in its choice of narrative evidence to uphold conclusions.

Lombardozzi (2005) claims that while there are not many overtly feminist readings of Mda's novels, there is certainly much to be said on the manner in which Mda addresses gender issues. Interestingly, according to Mda, when he first submitted his manuscript of *Ways of Dying* for publication in the Heinemann Educational Books - African Writers Series, it was rejected on the basis that it was, among other things, 'feminist diatribe'. Critique of patriarchy is not new in Mda's writing. In a resoundingly positive reading of Mda's representations of female characters in his apartheid and post-apartheid plays, Mda ... speaks as loudly to today's post-apartheid audiences as he did in the apartheid days, particularly when it comes to the portrayal of gender roles (p. 213).

Kauer (2003) offers another feminist reading of Mda's *Ways of Dying*, in which she avers that women function as saviours. According to her, women are depicted in the novel as playing active roles in the community, while men sit and deliberate. In addition to the other texts she examines, she identifies this novel as showing a distinctive utopian quality of femininity which supports theories of the feminization of the nation adding that [e]ven if these utopian ideas partly rest on traditional stereotypes, a tendency towards a negotiation of social images concerning gender roles is noticeable. (pp. 106-116). To this point, however, writers have reviewed the place of women in Mda's novels by showing how important women are in the society. Mda has also debunked the notion of some African men who identify women as working tools in their hands probably for baby making etc. This is by no means an ecocritical way of relating women to nature.

Attwell (2005) provides a reading of two of Mda's novels: *Ways of Dying* and *The Heart of Redness*. He says that both novels are viewed as an experimental turn in black South African writing, which extends and builds on a significant stream of experimental imaginative discourse by black writers

before the demise of apartheid. On this reading, Mda re-instrumentalises modernism's anti-instrumentalism by which Attwell appears to mean that Mda neither eschews the direct contextualization of a message within a particular socio-historical milieu nor its indirect dramatization within his narrative practice. In the character of Toloki, Attwell avers that [w]hat Mda places before his readers are a performance that stands for the symbolic function, the point being to restore the image of the man-of-ritual, and the maker-of-culture. Both novels are read as constructive of national culture and identities from the resources available to the protagonists in the historical moment. Attwell (2005) views that the reading is resoundingly positive, concluding that the subject construction in this writing carries a post-humanist urgency. But perhaps the full and final answer to the question of whether this writing represents repetition or renewal is not really possible, since the question itself is open to the future as a utopian gesture. The optimism here is conditional as it is positioned between one mode of reason that has been corrupted by historical failure, and another that is called into being by a different historical task.

Hence, Attwell offers us an endorsement of the novels in terms of their putative recouping of a highly symbolic mode of realism possibly apt in the given historical juncture of a transforming society in need of new ways of self-knowing. Malan and Mashigoane's (1999) in *Ways of Dying – Study Notes* offer useful overview of the text as a novel of transition that seeks to explore positive ways of living. Their notes succinctly state that the text is ground breaking because of its uniquely South African themes and its contemporary concerns which gives an authentic picture of the experience of political transition, and also stands as an allegory of the contemporary life of Africans (p. 2). *Ways of Dying* has in the main been lauded for its courageous depiction of South Africa's early years of transition when it appeared that violence may derail the processes of negotiating an extremely fragile peace. Mda took care to write about the country's vulnerabilities, in a way that cautioned us about the depravity of continuing violence and the underlying prejudices and causes of those conflicts.

Cornwell, Dirk, and Craig (2009) view that Mda's *The Heart of Redness* presents the hybrid identity of contemporary South Africa through the continuous intermingling of traditional myths with daily life, and in this way, applies a mixture of social and magic realism in his novel (p. 33). Upon reading the title, one might be reminded of Joseph Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness* – a novel that contains numerous prejudices and portrays the people of South Africa as backward. Mda stresses, however, that he did not intend this allusion. The original title of his novel was *Ululants*, but the publishing agency disapproved, so Mda had to think of something new. An acquaintance in a bar suggested *The Heart of Redness* to Mda, which found the publisher's approval as the novel's new title (Pesenhofer-Yarton, 2007, p. 129).

Cornwell, Dirk, and Craig (2009) observe that in using two interconnected narratives, the novel combines two different time frames, emphasizing that the past continues to influence the present (p. 137). One plot is set around 1850, describing the Great Cattle-Killing in Xhosaland as well as the prophecies of a young prophetess called Nongqawuse. Alongside these 19th century events, the second storyline is set in 1998, in the same rural seaside village of Qolorha-by-Sea, presenting a contemporary environmental point of view on the everlasting conflict between tradition and modernity. *The Heart of Redness* is not only built around two different timeframes, but also portrays two divergent tendencies. On the one hand, the Believers represent traditionalism and 'redness' – referring to the red ochre tribal women who paint red coloring all over their bodies – and on the other hand, the Unbelievers, who display a strong faith in modernity.

In his book *Rewriting Modernity*, Attwell (2005) analyses the novel and views it in terms of the way the text engages with the idea of an African modernity. For Attwell, instead of focusing on racial conflict, or apartheid and its counter-histories, *The Heart of Redness* foregrounds the encounter with modernity, not as a completed event, but as unfinished business over which the Xhosa and through figures such as Dalton and Camagu and South Africans in general must take charge (p. 196). According to Attwell,

The Heart of Redness is concerned with two historical moments, both encapsulating the Xhosa's engagement with ongoing modernity (p. 196). In the first instance, around 1857, concerns about the prophetic movement started by Nongqawuse and sustained by her uncle, Mhlakaza, which provides the point of reference. In the second moment, it is the emergence of democracy in 1994, and more especially the period immediately after the elections when political freedom needs to be put into practice.

Attwell claims that these historical moments are times of transition, where Xhosa people are confronted with modernity and have to make critical choices. Attwell argues that *The Heart of Redness* is a novel of ideas in its attempts to reconcile the contradictory tensions of post-apartheid modern Africanness. This new identity, which brings together African traditional values and a modern outlook, embraces the hybridity of the novel. In this regard, Attwell notes that Mda hybridizes language through his combination of his native language and English.

Stylen (2003) in his review 'Zakes Mda, *The Heart of Redness*', in *World Literature Today*, focuses on Mda's criticism of the new South Africa and its leadership. Though his narrative hides this under much history and depicts contemporary village life. Writing about Camagu, Stylen identifies him as Mda's voice in articulating a critique of the African National Congress (ANC). Camagu is against the 'Aristocrats of the Revolution' and the 'Black empowerment' boom that is merely enriching the chosen few. Against the self-enrichment of trade union leaders and politicians who misuse their struggle credentials, Camagu and Mda are trying to oppose the fact that people are denied the right to shape their own destiny. (p. 2).

Titlestad and Kissack (2003) in their article 'The foot does not sniff: imagining the post anti-apartheid intellectual', examine the role of literature in post-apartheid South Africa. According to them, Mda's novel contributes towards this by examining what has to be innovated socially, politically and economically for a better future. In their analysis of *The Heart of Redness*, the critics are primarily

concerned with the history of South African identity, which is one aspect that the novel deals with. While they focus on Camagu, who is the central character of the novel, Titlestad and Kissack identify in him the current dilemma of post-anti-apartheid intellectual (p. 4). Taking into account Mda's presentation of this intellectual character, they state that 'the post-colonial intellectual clarifies and expands his understanding of colonialism and its ongoing expansion in the present (p. 5). This means that post-colonial intellectuals such as Camagu help us to understand the neo-colonialism prevailing in the post-colonial governance.

Woodward (2000) examines Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness* as an epistemological challenge to dualistic thinking – primarily through its employment of satire and humour. She describes *The Heart of Redness* as a postcolonial novel of epic proportions in which humour constitutes the central narrative strategy (p. 73). Furthermore, she maintains that the use of humour makes *The Heart of Redness* more effectively transformatory (p. 22). Traditional dualities are deconstructed through humour and satire: 'racial identities as fixed categories are derided; the preference of urban over the rural is reversed with the city slicker going to the country to establish himself rather than the country bumpkin going to the city; and the dividing line between present and past becomes blurred or blurry' (p. 173). Moreover, and with regard to the choice of setting, Woodward (2000) examines the book as a highly successful staging of the national crisis on a local platform: 'So much of the comedy is connected to the region itself, to the historically sedimented Qolorha and to the identities which are constituted by the place and its history. The region, replete with postcolonial issues [...] becomes a microcosm for the nation.' (pp. 21-37).

According to Woodward, the novel satisfies the primary criterion of ecopoetic discourses in what she reads as its deconstruction of binary oppositions. In his reading of Cartwright's novel *White Lightning*, Marais (2003) draws heavily on Continental philosophy as well as on South African environmental texts in explicating a work very clearly ensconced in environmental discourse. Interestingly, Marais reads Darwinian thought as affecting a subversion of the subject/object or human/animal dualism. According to

him, the publication of *The Origin of Species* (1859) stimulated an entirely new outlook on the human being as a creature no longer posited as master of all things but simply understood as another species among many others. As Marais observes it, Darwin's views have many implications. First, the essential fluidity and non-static nature of individual species undermines essentializing exceptions of both humans and non-humans. Second, *Homo sapiens* share with all beings the properties of continuity and contiguity. Third, in relation to land, man's jurisdiction over and ownership of land is effectively questioned, the human subject's claim to the possession of the environment is undermined.

From the above, the researcher observes man's relationship and possession to land as something that should not in any way be questioned as humans live in the realm of nature; they are constantly surrounded by it and interact with it. Zakes Mda in his novels i.e. *The Whale Caller* and *The Heart of Redness* has shown that our environment, although outside us, has within us not only its image, as something both actually and imaginatively reflected, but also its material energy and information channels and processes. This presence of nature in an ideal, materialized, energy and information form in man's self is so organic that when these external natural principles disappear, man himself disappears from life. If we lose nature's image, we lose our life.

Vital's (2005) discussion of Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals* and Mda's *The Heart of Redness* represents an overt and critically shrewd ecocritical reading thoroughly situated within environmental discourse in the country. He postulates the emergence of a new, *postcolonial* understanding of apartheid's emphasis on conservation as derivative of an earlier colonial emphasis on conserving nature and instead identifies new, people-centred approaches to the environment. 'He emphasizes that any postcolonial environmentalism will [...] be unapologetically anthropocentric'. (p. 299). Accordingly, he insists that ecocriticism applied to postcolonial narratives must be sensitive to the tensions that exist – on the one hand, between the historically empowered metropolitan and globally interconnected capital interests and those of

rural communities, and, on the other, between the internal inconsistencies in trying to accommodate both human needs and the need to preserve nature.

Vital (2005) claims that certain instances of post-apartheid fiction evince such a postcolonial perspective on ecology. He provides a close and convincing reading of the above-mentioned texts to demonstrate these claims and concludes with the following statement:

Despite their differences, both narratives assert a positionality that decentres the North. In this context of a postcolonial understanding of history, each narrative assigns significance to the ecology it references [...]. Ecology's value in Mda's novel is pragmatic, subordinate to the narrative's principal interest in mapping a postcolonial African identity reacquainted with its roots. In Coetzee's novella, ecology appears incidentally as narrative itself and in broad questions of human self-definition, the treatment of animals, the behaviour of modern civilization etc. (pp. 297-313).

Wright (2010) in his book *Wilderness into Civilized Shapes: Reading the Postcolonial Environment* focuses on Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* and Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness* as the novels that deal with the struggles against capitalist modernity and its devastating environmental impact. Wright identifies that both novels deal very explicitly with the potentially devastating effects of capitalist-driven development of the land, particularly as a result of deforestation and the replacing of native flora with European varieties of plants. Characters in both works seek either a return to an imagined traditional identity or struggle to define and occupy a hybrid space, and the presentation of the mortality and the vulnerability of plant life functions in both texts as a mirror for nationalist survival. The destruction of indigenous plants and their displacement by alien species can be read on a very literal level as indicative of

the decrease in biodiversity that results from the introduction of nonnative species, but such an instance can also be read as a cultural metaphor.

For instance, as Qukezwa says about the European inkberry bush in Mda's novel, 'it kills other plants. These flowers that you like so much will eventually become berries. Each berry is a prospective plant that will kill the plant of my forefathers' (Mda, 2000, p. 90). Also, Ngugi's narrator claims that an early white colonist, Lord Freeze Kilby, planted wheat as a means of changing 'Illmorog wilderness into civilized shapes and forms' (Ngugi, 1977, p. 68) that would yield European trees and crops. The search for an authentic or 'traditional' identity that is somehow uncorrupted by the imposition of colonial culture in both works, then, is played out in part through attempted eradication of these invasive plant species: in the case of Freeze-Kilby, for example, the Illmorog leaders 'met and reached a decision. They set fire to the whole [wheat] field' (Ngugi, 1977, p. 69), an instance that foreshadows the death of three prominent neocolonial businessmen later in the narrative.

Similarly, in *The Heart of Redness*, Qukezwa is brought before the Xhosa leaders for cutting down trees that are 'foreign', the lantana and the wattle that have 'come from other countries...to suffocate our trees' (Mda, 2000, p. 216). Such actions, however, are ineffective as attempts at establishing various prelapsarian – and imaginary – African Edens, impossible landscapes that are somehow uncompromised by their postcolonial status. Consequently, Ngugi turns to a fairly dogmatic form of Marxism as a means of contesting the socio-environmental destruction that comes with a corrupt development project whereas Mda overtly questions the effectiveness of forms of local empowerment such as cultural villages and ecotourism, which must still traffic in romantic notions of culture and nature (Wright, 2010, pp. 22-23).

Writing about one of Mda's intellectual characters, Xoliswa Ximiya, daughter of the Unbeliever Bhonco, Sewlall (2003) describes her as representing the modern woman who struggles to take her community out of redness. Xoliswa strongly supports the building of the casino, thus opposing Camagu

whom she once fancied as her lover. Xoliswa loses Camagu because of his attraction to Qukezwa. She associates him with redness like all other Believers. Disappointed by the ineffectiveness of her hopes to change her community, together with the loss of the only person she could marry in Qolorha, Xoliswa Ximiya leaves the village, which metonymically, represents *The Heart of Redness* (p. 338).

In this respect, Sewlall (2003) does not show that Camagu's rejection of Xoliswa is a way of criticizing and rejecting the version of Western modernity that Xoliswa embodies. In all, Sewlall's point will help to highlight different aspects making Xoliswa differentiable from other village women through her uncritical adoption of Western modernity. Indeed, despite her female status in a tiny village like Qolorha, Xoliswa impresses by her audacity in talking to elders such as her father Bhonco, instructing them to abandon their redness, which is not a common attitude for an unmarried young woman in Xhosa culture.

Sewlall goes on to say that as a female intellectual preoccupied with the task of bringing her community out of supposedly uncivilized and barbaric manners, Xoliswa is surprised to wake up one morning with scars of her ancestors on her body. This appears in *The Heart of Redness* as follows: 'the Unbelievers were shocked to hear of the scars on their daughter's body. They thought that the scars had come to an end, as Bhonco did not have a male heir to inherit them (2000, p. 302). Sewlall associates the appearance of the marks on Xoliswa's body with magic and supports Ashcroft (2003) when he argues that: 'Magic realism is used to interrogate the assumptions of western rational, linear narrative and to enclose it within an indigenous metatext, a body of textual forms that recuperate the colonial culture'. (p. 338).

According to Sewlall, Mda's use of magic realism is a device to equate Tradition and Modernity, Realism and Magic (Surrealism), and Science and Traditional healing (2003, p. 338). He adds that these binaries interrogate each other and consequently become interdependent. Commenting on magic in *The Heart of Redness* in his interview with Julia Wark, Mda says that he has always been fascinated by magic

contained in African traditional stories. He adds that the supernatural, the strange and the unusual exist in the same context of what you would call objective reality, which is quite different from fantasy.

Nigerian poet, writer and critic Ojaide (2008) groups Zakes Mda among those writers who were born in the 1940s and 1950s and who were socialized and educated in Africa but then left the continent for various reasons: 'In their writings, they tend to compare their native African environment with the new Western environment. These writers view the Africa they know with a sense of nostalgia and often maintain an African identity in a foreign land' (Ojaide, 2008). *The Heart of Redness*, according to Ojaide is one of those works which are filled with nostalgia and set in a concrete space and time.

This nostalgia becomes striking in Mda's use of folkloric language as well as in the significance he places on landscape and myth. The recourse to mythologizing according to Ojaide (2008) is an expression of [...] cultural identity. Ojaide emphasizes the authors' exile status as giving rise to their nostalgia, however compared Rush's negative evaluation of Mda's nostalgia, he alraey potential in establishing cultural coherence when he notes that this generation of authors write with deep understanding of the Africa they left behind, propose solutions to Africa's moral, ethical, and developmental problems in the debate about the need for development, on the one hand, versus the need to maintain a cultural identity in the people's 'redness' and a pristine environment that contains traditionally known curative herbs, on the other. The writers tend to eulogize ancient virtues that they think contemporary Africa imbibe to be strong; hence the heroic and nostalgic manner in which older times are presented.

Ojaide's arguments support the claim that nostalgia is a way of reaffirming cultural identity since it is more complex than a simple eulogizing of the amaXhosa past for the creation of a strong present amaXhosa culture. Mda narrates a problematic and ambiguous past of the amaXhosa nation in the Eastern Cape, centered on the prophecies of Nongqawuse in the middle of the nineteenth century. Nkosi (1994) terms *The Heart of Redness* anti-nostalgic and failing to re-imagine the nation. He is critical of how people

deal with the past and demonstrates both the values and the dangers nostalgic journeys can have. Thereby historical memory plays a vital role for the construction of identity, community and nation, as Mda suggests variously in his novels. Moreover, his novels celebrate the cultural richness and vibrancy, the many cultural heritages as well as the hybridizing of cultures into a uniquely South African identity.

Eisler (1987) in reviewing *The Heart of Redness* maintains that myths, stories, literature and language play a foundational role in the shaping of our individual and collective selves. They are responsible for the construction of systems of oppression, of alterity and difference, by erecting insurmountable barriers which exclude, segregate and marginalize the 'Other'. And yet, they can offer a fundamental contribution to the dismantling of simplistic and arbitrarily forged binary categories, walls apparently enclosing us within the safety of protective/protected territories, but that can be easily transformed into prisons, as Said (1984) warns us. The journey of the novel's main protagonist Camagu into the 'heart of redness' is illuminating in this respect because it symbolizes the attempt to overcome artificially constructed ethnic, racial, social and gender boundaries through a critical analysis of the past and its retrieval as an empowering source of affirmation. Grounded firmly in the present, the novel draws on the past in order to project proactively into the future.

Camagu refuses to maintain his stance as the unconcerned and passive witness of the 'peaceful' penetration of Western economic powers into a traditional South African world which has already been wounded in the past by the plague of colonialism in its most virulent and degenerated forms and which is victim in the present of the assimilationist forces of a Western-directed globalization. On the contrary, relying on his knowledge and the experience he has acquired during his formative years in the West, he plans and fosters a dignified and intelligent project of local development that preserves the specificity and peculiarities of the area without surrendering the opportunities offered by foreign capital. He realizes a project of cooperative ecotourism which is an alternative to that promoted by multinational investors, one

which is in tune with the values and ethical principles of the local community, respectful of and caring for its history, culture, and tradition and for the ecological balance of the environment (Eisler, 2007).

Camagu's developmental journey is marked by crucial moments of insight occasioned by a respectful confrontation with other characters in the novel. The strengths and potentials of a 'dialogical dialogue' (Panikkar, 2007) as a catalyst and resource for mutual recognition and comprehension (Eisler, 2007) loom large in the novel and play a preeminent role in the inner transformation of the characters. Dichotomical world views are explicitly embodied and voiced by the two female characters Camagu is attracted by, women who affect and determine his growth as a conscious man and citizen of the world, enabling him to question the myth of modernity and reappraise tradition as a valuable source of identity and empowerment for the whole community. Xoliswa Ximiya is constructed within a binary pattern which opposes her character as the westernized subject *par excellence*, prepared to die for civilization (Mda 2000, p. 259).

More so, in an interview with Williams (1980), Mda testifies that his creative process of novel writing begins with place: 'The place is important in my fiction because it becomes part of the story. It's not just there as background. Sometimes the place functions as character' (p. 68). The Nongqawuse valley, as the spiritual site for Xhosa aspirations as it continues to elicit a powerful sense of reverence and is instrumental in defining the aspirations and agency of contemporary Believers. Bell (1990) argues that unlike the communal tragedy of the historical narrative, the contemporary story identifies the successful implementation of co-operative development projects in which Nongqawuse and her legend are appropriated from the discourses of shame or heroic legend into the strictly commercial and successful exploitation of her attraction to visitors (pp. 63-73).

Through ensuring that the indigenes retain (at least in the present time) control over their own environment, including the sea and the Nongqawuse pool, Camagu and Dalton save the beautiful environs

of Qolorha from the predations of multinational and native elite schemes to appropriate access to its resources, and allow it to continue to serve (and be protected by) the local people. In the attempt to keep out of tourists, they make a concerted effort to minimize the negative environmental impact of tourism, even when they were preserving the dignity of their culture by resisting commodification, as exemplified by Dalton's charade of village life performed by villagers in elaborate traditional attire.

Mda skillfully weaves two historic moments in South African history. First, he recuperates the little-known Cattle Killing movement of 1856, a millenarian movement that is unjustly dismissed in contemporary history textbooks as the outcome of the deceitful fantasies of a young girl who drove the nation into mass suicide (p. 35). The seemingly irrational decision of the Believers appears motivated by what Hanchard (2001) terms a product of racial time. Hanchard suggests that while it is easy for a postmodern twenty-first century audience to mock at millenarian thinking, the curious hybrid of Christian resurrection imagery, traditional ancestor worship and the promise of restoration that were implicit in the prophecies delivered by Nongqawuse offered a potent opportunity for many Xhosas to exhibit agency now that military resistance against the colonizers was out of the question (p. 29).

The second defining moment of South African nationhood that Mda draws attention to lies in the contemporary post-apartheid period after the first free elections of 1994. The previous historical confrontation between colonizers and indigenes over control of South African land, resources, people and autonomy is replicated in the current tussle between global capitalism led by multinational companies (in collaboration with South Africans elite), and the autochthonous population's desire to safeguard their ecological resources from commercial ventures (like casinos and tourist resorts) that will preclude local participation but drain its resources. Interestingly, Mda inverts the terms of the struggle; whereas Believers in the past killed their cattle in the conviction that God (in the form of their ancestors) would provide replenishment, the current Believers fight to preserve their natural resources. The Unbelievers, however,

having been co-opted by the British colonizers in the past, are once again in danger of being unwittingly exploited by the vested interests of urban developers of the present time.

Mda's revival of the myth of sacrifice and regeneration that animated the Cattle Killing movement in the 19th century is now transfigured into a contemporary call for action for the rejuvenation of the nation. Whereas the previous legend demands a complete sacrifice of extant methods of livelihood, this call is for the adaptation and modification of extant livelihoods to integrate into larger economies that lie outside the ambit of the village, with some modicum of control by the villagers. As such, even as hegemonic financial and political powers still retain their threat over rural communities in the present and in the past, the response moves away from an extreme personal sacrifice for the greater community good to a strategic management of assets and control. The indigenes learn to engage and benefit from their interactions with the wider world to their advantage.

While this appears a cautiously optimistic endeavour on Mda's part to posit the building of a new future, the portrayal of the divide between the Believers and the Unbelievers has deeper ramifications than political or economic ones. From an ecocritical point of view, this debate reveals a sometimes troublingly essentialist cleavage between indigenous and urban relationships with nature per se, as natives by and large are divided into polarized camps that are pro-conservation or pro-development, and it takes the educated elite (Camagu) and the white trader (Dalton) to successfully mediate between them and arrive at a workable solution to the satisfaction of most of the community members.

Emberson-Bain (1984) points out that for many indigenous communities, natural resources ... are crucial to human survival in more than just physical respects, forming the foundations of whole social and cultural systems as well as sources of subsistence and production for distribution and exchange. Nature is respected for its spiritual sanctity as well as its material value (p. 1). These traditional interactions have been impinged upon by the process of modern commercial activities that have directly intruded upon

people's lives, the natural environment and the relationship between them. Mda dramatizes this conflict when the urban professional developers arrive in Qolorha to check the suitability of the site for their various business ventures, and try half-heartedly to convince the villagers of the advantages of their schemes.

Mda's narrative, animated by his emphasis on reconciliation, facilitates the interaction between urban developers and rural inhabitants; and through a combination of native wisdom (especially through Qukezwa), and urban sympathy and expression (through Camagu's educated resistance), he demonstrates that it is by dialogue that complex issues can be tackled. Admittedly idealistic and optimistic, the narrative, while conscious of the unlikelihood of defending rural land and resources against the power of the multinational conglomerates over extended periods of time, still refuses to despair of the very possibilities of attempting to safeguard them.

The persistence of deep-rooted discourses on colonial savagery still alive in the psyche of ex-colonized populations is worth noting. Hulme (1986) posits that the issue of colonial land acquisition was dissimulated by the trope of savagery, a characteristic move in all discursive narratives of the colonial encounter. Recent South African writing in English has been described primarily as a literature of witness, documentary and protest (Attwell, 2005, p. 169). Much of this literature has chronicled the country's long journey from the shackles of colonial bondage by the Dutch and the British, followed by the apartheid regime under the white settler government, until the eventual election of a free, multi-ethnic or rainbow coalition, led by a black government in 1994.

Mda echoes his compatriot Ndebele's (1986) belief that literature should move away from the spectacle of violence and abstraction, engaging instead with the politics of ordinary lives of people. Mda combines his literary skills with activism, inspired by the belief that for his country to survive and prosper, reconciliation is absolutely essential. But true reconciliation will only come when we are big enough to

confront what happened yesterday, without bitterness. This project of recuperating Xhosa cosmologies gathers significance especially as South Africa charts its way forward under an independent, black-led government, and has to make tough choices about the extent of environmental dependency it can sustain and afford, given that its chief industries are centred on the extraction of natural resources (coal, gold and diamond mining), or dependent upon them (agriculture and wildlife tourism).

Mda's humorous yet respectful revival of the troubled history of Nongqawuse's failed prophecies serves as an apposite cultural reminder of the Xhosas' deep physical and spiritual relationships with their ancestral land. A paean that celebrates the Xhosas' spiritual connection with their land –The atmosphere holds everyone in conciliating laughter. The sacred presences protect the earth (p. 25) - the novel points to the deep ontological divide between the western colonizers and the indigenous inhabitants of their African colonies.

Furthermore, Mda's *The Whale Caller* narrates an ecocentric relationship between human being and what Plumwood (1993) calls an earth other (pp. 137-40). The novel is regarded as comedic, in terms of Meeker's (1972) definition, because of its underlying concerns to promote positive, healthy relationships between humans and the earth and its inhabitants. It also represents a relationship of loving bio-sociality between a human being and a whale, but is, ultimately, a cautionary tale. The novel ends violently and tragically, with the beached Sharisa euthanized and Saluni, the Whale Caller's human love, murdered by the Bored Twins, who have no respect for the sentience of reptiles or insects.

In *The Heart of Redness*, Mda has already expressed ecological concerns in representations of sustainable development, corporate and state abuse of the land and the rural poor. Relationships between human beings and other animals, as well as birds, are interconnected with traditional spirituality and folktales (Woodward, 2003), aspects of which reappear in *The Whale Caller*. The novel is set in contemporary Hermanus and the eponymous protagonist is a wise fool who engages musically with

Sharisha, a Southern Right Whale. He is never named beyond his vocation of calling whales; his pursuit has elements of the magical as he communicates passionately with the largest mammal on the planet.

But the narrative does not have nature or an animal as an active healing force to right the disturbed equilibrium of society, which Jordan (1973) considers an essential element of folktales (p. 218). Nor is the Whale Caller a heroic figure who triumphs over evil through his own courage, who confronts social norms and who defines his own identity (p. 192). Unmotivated by any dualistic quest, he is semi-nomadic and socially marginalized, with his identity defined by his love for Sharisha, the whale. Mda's critiques modernity's treatment of nature as spectacle in ecotourism, or as a resource in perlemoen (abalone) poaching or whale hunting. Yet the novel is never overburdened by didacticism or polemic, nor is *The Whale Caller* himself represented as one-dimensionally good. He is a complex character, struggling for survival and love, attempting, not always successfully, to live without Cartesian notions of dominion over nature.

At the centre of South African responses to ecological issues is Coetzee's (2006) *Elizabeth Costello*. In 'The Lives of Animals', Costello reflects on the interconnectedness of life on earth: 'In the ecological vision, the salmon and the river weeds and the water insects interact in a great, complex dance with the earth and the weather. The whole is greater than the sum of the parts. In the dance, each organism has a role: it is these multiple roles, rather than the particular beings that play them, that participate in the dance'. (p. 98).

Taking up a metaphor that echoes Coetzee's 'dance' analogy of ecological interconnection, Everitt (2006) coins the phrase 'net of energy': Hopefully, the relatively new science of ecology will permeate human consciousness and make us understand and respect nature as 'a net of energy' which sustains life on the planet (pp. 92-3). Similarly, Glover (2006) quotes the phrase 'web of being' to figure the interconnection of species and life-forms on earth: '[T]he science of ecology has provided additional

support for a worldview that perceives all of life as an interconnected web or single living being' (p. 130). This is reminiscent of the trope used by American writer Carson, who refers to a 'web of life that binds together all organisms (cited in Cock, 2007, p. 37). To be unaware of our participation in that dance, net or web of life is to promote uneven ecological relations, to jeopardize our own peace as well as the equilibrium of the planet.

Sewlall (2007) quotes Wangari Maathai, a Kenyan Nobel Peace Prize winner. When asked, what's the world's biggest challenge?' she replied, the environment. We are sharing our resources in a very inequitable way ...And that is partly the reason why we have conflict (p. 386). Vital, discussing South Africa's environmental justice movement, expresses the hope that the founding of Earth life Africa, an organization that combines progressive politics with environmental concerns, may [develop] an environmentalism that could be called postcolonial, asserting the need for a 'people-centred' interest in the environment while being alert to South Africa's colonial legacies and its peripheral position within globalized economy (Vital, 2005, p. 298).

Investigating the biologist-writer Douglas Livingstone's attribution of subjectivity and agency to animals, Woodward (2003a), cites ecological critic Patrick Murphy. Murphy reconceptualises traditional ontology: '[I]nstead of thinking in terms of 'I' and 'other', we [should] conceptualize interconnection between we, a communal notion of the self, and another' (p. 46). Woodward also draws on the work of Plumwood who seeks to build a non-instrumental relationship to nature: '[T]he only way to dismantle dualism and the Cartesian 'dream of power' is to develop a non-hierarchical concept of difference' (p. 47). Livingstone, Woodward concludes that Livingstone is a poet with ecological vision. His writing moves towards dismantling some of the dualisms on which Cartesian dreams of power depend, although in some respects he reasserts dominant masculinity.

Martin (2003) discussing her teaching practice, shares Woodward's (2003) hope that the dualisms on which our knowledge has traditionally been built can be deconstructed: 'Drawing on the extensive ecological, feminist and other analyses of the exploitative consequences of binary thinking and ideology of hierarchic dualism, 'I would hope in the learning environment to articulate the value of reading a middle way between the dualisms according to which we habitually construct lives, and in particular our academic work' (p. 111). Marais (2003), however, believes that the project of overturning the epistemological and ethical dualisms on which power turns is utopian. Given what he perceives as humankind's ineluctable anthropomorphism, he argues that the only hope for an ethical response to the environment lies in the interruption, rather than sublation, of the opposition between human subject and objective world (p. 69).

Marais (2003) argues that Cartwright's novel, *White Lightning*, takes a pessimistic view of human capacity to be with other species. Literature can only represent nature ... from the perspective of human subjects (p. 84); the reconfiguring of the binaries on which Western power/knowledge depends cannot be achieved. Besides, Coetzee's (2004) novel *Elizabeth Costello* provides the phrase that stands behind much ecocritical thinking. In her talk on 'The Philosophers and the Animals', Costello tells her audience that there is no limit to the extent to which we can think ourselves into the being of another. 'There are no bounds to the sympathetic imagination ... If I can think my way into the existence of a [fictional] being that has never existed, and then I can think my way into the existence of a bat or a chimpanzee or an oyster, any being with which I share the substrate of life' (p. 80).

The same argument emerges in 'The Poets and the Animals', where Costello describes Ted Hughes' creation of the jaguar: 'By bodying forth the jaguar, Hughes shows us that we too can embody animals – by the process called poetic invention that mingles breath and sense in a way that no one has explained and no one ever will. He shows us how to bring the living body into being within ourselves.

When we read the jaguar poem, when we recollect it afterwards in tranquility, we are for a brief while the jaguar ripples within us, and take over our body; he is us' (pp. 97-8).

Louw (2006) writing about nature documentaries, quotes Armbruster's ecocritical philosophy, which, like Costello's, turns on the imaginative possibilities that the study of literature can release: 'I can influence people to develop more sustainable relationships with the natural world by exploring, critiquing, and re-envisioning the worldviews found in literary and other cultural texts – especially views of human relationships with nature'. (p. 147). Everitt (2006) advocates the unifying power of the human imagination '[that] offers a possibility of synthesis between the intuitive and the rational ... [and] ... could lead to an authentically ecological sensibility. Human beings she believes must learn to reconnect with animals through the elusive but powerful human imagination (p. 91) which is both an intellectual and a creative faculty. This faculty is similarly acclaimed by Woodward that imagination is a positive attribute in the representation of animals is also acknowledged when J.M Coetzee has Elizabeth Costello define 'sympathetic imagination' as sharing ... the being of another.

According to Buddhist ethics, seeing others as being like yourself ... means that you cannot kill them (Woodward, 2007, p. 300). A further step in the process of imaginative extension described above is a protagonist's learning, through new practices of witnessing the multisensual business of becoming animal – a relational process in which animal subjects are configured through particular social bonds, bodily comportments, and life habits that are complicated, but neither originated nor erased, by the various ways in which they may be enmeshed in the categorical and practical orderings of people (Shirley Brooks, quoting Whatmore and Thorne, 2006, p. 21).

Literary texts can dramatize this process; Costello quotes Hughes' poetic creation of the jaguar, which allows the reader to feel at one with the animal. Woodward (2006) discusses the ontological shift required to participate in becoming-animal:

Shamanistic practice demands an ontological shift, one which is described in Deleuze and Guattar's concept of 'becoming-animal...they stress that becoming-animal is not a metaphoric process but one in which identities become deterritorialised through a radical sense of immanence...For the human, becoming-animal eradicates subjectivity and its duality, and does not include guilt (p. 33).

Morrison (2008) remarks that the ways in which Mda presents the sympathetic imagination or the ability to 'become animal' are figured particularly in the Whale Caller's somatic and kinetic relationship with the whale Sharisha. This relationship entirely avoids the crypto-anthropomorphism risked by the human signifying systems embodied in language. He perceives that the role of literature to dramatize ecological issues is foregrounded in the work of the South African writers. Thus:

Storytelling is an important social activity through which identities – individual or collective – are constructed and maintained. Though it may be individuals who tell stories, their stories are composed of larger cultural stories that are passed on, handed down, told and retold. Therefore, our narratives are located within a particular place and time and are shaped by the larger stories available to us – the 'factual' and the fictional, the conventional or the subversive. We draw off these in order to create our own coherent narratives. (p. 57).

According to Morrison (2008) suggests on the need to perceive our humanity as belonging in the world, rather than it belonging to humans and that if we see ourselves as interconnected and interdependent, then we will be able to note that 'what I do to the other I do to myself (p. 58). Thinking also about this interconnection, Vital (2005) asks: '[H]ow do we begin to tell the story of animals and

humans, drawing the distinction in such a way that the lives of both can be opened to a fullness of being, while acknowledging both the deprivations of colonial pasts and the power exerted by an ever more dominant global civilization linked historically to European and American cultures and practices?’ (p. 306).

Introducing a special edition of *Current Writing* with an article titled ‘Animal presences, animal geographies’, Wylie (2006), comments:

The symbiosis between the physical orientations of these sometimes astonishingly autonomous, coherent individual creatures around us – animals, wild and domestic – and their literary and psychological presences and effects in all our lives, is a relationship which holds the promise of endless avenues for reassessment of those lives. Any close reassessment is likely to confront us with, at the very least, our own troubling animality, our accelerating destruction of most other species, and our potential for redemptive compassion. And what is the role of the written word – literature – in forging and expressing these relationships? (p. 1).

Everitt (2005) takes up Wylie’s challenge and states that: ‘I pin my hopes on the elusive but powerful human imagination. Perhaps literature can be used to persuade where environmental facts fail. After all, stories have been used as a didactic tool from the beginnings of human civilization. To put it another way, it is not knowledge of our biological and evolutionary heritage but, rather, our uniquely human capacity to make art which may reunite humankind with the rest of the natural world.’ (p. 91). Bieder (2006) discusses stories that ‘humanise’ animals, thus:

[In these tales about bears] are situated cultural themes touching on origins, ancestors, taboos, identity, metamorphosis, greed, duty, spiritual power,

breakdown of social order, respect for nature, cycle of life, and rebirth. They are all tales that both bridge the boundaries between humans and bears and give cultural meaning to the bear. They also bridge the boundary between the past and the present (p. 165).

These stories then impinge on the lives of human beings because they: '[help] us understand the world and our place in it; they help us imagine ourselves and our relationships with the world around us. In these stories...bears are powerful, sacred spirits; ancestors; healers; shape shifters; lovers and mates. The stories...are also about cultures exploring and reshaping environment' (p. 172).

On a somewhat bleaker note, discussing animals in Mda, Honwana (1964), Coetzee (1983), Cartwright (2002), and Woodward (2007) argue for these texts capacity to capture reader's attention in ways which, if they cannot prevent the killing of animals, will at least make humans aware of their complicity in these killings. These texts encourage the reader to imagine sharing the being another, who is condemned to death ... Constrained socially from quitting tables laden with the corpses of dead animals, we can, at the very least, tell stories of their deaths (p. 310). The creative processes of storytelling, therefore, can dismantle dualisms, engage the sympathetic imagination and celebrate the interconnection between humans and non-humans. Mda, in *The Whale Caller*, dramatizes all these interactions in telling a story of love between a human and a non-human that challenges readers' responses to the natural world. American ecocritics also foreground the role of literature in achieving a transfigured ecological consciousness that breaks down barriers between humans and non-humans.

The Whale Caller is a case in point, which could be argued to propound an ecocritical ethic in the material asceticism of the chief protagonist and his deep reverence for the natural world. While Vital

(2005) is right to point out that the pro-environmental model of development proposed in *The Heart of Redness* is not one easily replicable, thus:

that the chief protagonist is motivated by subjective, personal reasons, and that people with his learning or understanding of the issues is not generally found among local communities. Not only does this criticism reveal a somewhat instrumental or mimetic understanding of representational forms, it glosses over the glaring pro-ecological principles expounded in the novel. (pp. 297-313).

Mda's stance in favour of the underprivileged masses works against an uncritical acceptance of the new democratic government in South Africa, and his text makes several biting sallies into unmitigated social and political criticism. *The Whale Caller* points to the isolated quality of individuals and the fractured nature of community which are part of the aftermath of apartheid—an isolation which is crucial to the final inability of both the Whale Caller and Saluni to recuperate their pain and loss. Sharisha, on the other hand, has access to the oceans of the world and, in an ironic sense, may be said to shadow the colonial voyages of European colonists of the past. She is devoid of the elements of exploitation, material gain and misplaced patriotism, however, coming in peace and interacting with the Whale Caller in love. She embodies issues of border crossing and migration as well, with the dangers that these entail, running the risk of being hunted, or at least being squeezed out of her natural environment by human activity, such as pollution and other abuses of the natural world. She has risked ships' propellers that slice curious whales [...]. She has defied fishing gear entanglements and explosives from oil exploration activity to be here (Mda, 2005, p. 37).

Especially when she comes close inshore to mate, she negotiates the blurred, continually changing borders between land and sea, mirroring the radically decentred selves of the Whale Caller and Saluni. Her

eventual destruction, although technically a mercy killing, serves as a symbol of the destructiveness of the previous system in this country, whose unhealed wounds-of body, mind and spirit-cause violence still to weigh heavily on the present. (see<http://www.thefreelibrary.com>). The researcher hereby support the review above as in the present South Africa, the effect of racial segregation and the destruction of nature of what the people of South Africa is experiencing at the moment. The government of the day is not helping the matter but rather contributing to the already damaged system.

In *Ecocriticism, Globalised Cities, and African Narrative*, Vital (2005) addresses urban nature and acknowledges that the ‘political motives’ of these narratives may reduce attention to the ways in which ‘urban mediation complicates social and individual relation to nature’ (p. 226). Vital makes an ecocritical perspective useful for engaging social inequality in representations of urban space by black writers. Mda may indeed be the exception that proves the rule, as a black South African author garnering substantial (eco)critical attention, particularly with his novels *The Heart of Redness* and *The Whale Caller*. Mda denounces the aggressive commodification of animals in the new South Africa. But also discredits sentimental desires for closeness with individual specimens of charismatic megafauna.

Scholars such as Woodward, Huggan, Tiffin, and Sewlall approach *The Whale Caller* from animal studies perspectives, drawing on Coetzee and Derrida. Woodward (2007) contextualises the novel as one of many stories in which fictional animals are sacrificed to a human idea of ‘the Animal,’ even in cases of deaths classified as euthanasia (p. 301). In Woodward’s view, this showcases how compassion toward animals occurs only when they are individualized (pp. 295–297). Sewlall, like Huggan and Tiffin (2010) argues that Mda’s novel pushes toward ‘erasing the boundary between the human and the non-human,’ in Sewlall’s words (2007, p. 138). But Sewlall rather banally describes *The Whale Caller* as ‘celebrat[ing] the possibility of existing in harmony with nature’ (138), whereas Huggan and Tiffin (2010) in their co-authored book, tackle the novel in relation to bestiality, ‘a profoundly difficult subject to confront’ (p. 194).

While these three readings contextualise Mda's representation of human-animal relations differently, they all suffer from the same limitation that the authors engage only the parts of the novel that are explicitly about whales, ignoring how animal questions are intertwined with social justice themes explored elsewhere in the novel. Steinwand (2011) approaches Mda's animal themes in relation to the novelist's concerns with resource distribution. Mda criticises the commodification of animals for touristic purposes, but also questions more sentimental alternatives. The novel takes place in Hermanus, a Western Cape town popular as a site for whale-watching, as large numbers of southern right whales arrive in the region in late winter and use inshore waters as calving grounds, where they can easily be viewed from the waterfront. Mda opposes his protagonist, the self-identified Whale Caller of Hermanus, with the 'official whale crier...employed by the tourist office,' who 'alerted people to the whereabouts of whales, whereas the Whale Caller called whales to himself' (pp. 13–14).

Steinwand (2011) describes the novel's central conflict as 'a ridiculous, yet strangely sublime, triangulated love story, as the Whale Caller is torn between Sharisha and the village drunk Saluni, with whom he has a difficult romantic relationship' (p. 191). As we will argue, the strife between the Whale Caller and Saluni allegorises the tension between environmental movements focused on charismatic megafauna and movements for social justice. Mda uses dialogue between the Whale Caller and Saluni to illustrate the troubling polarisation of these movements. Saluni disparages mainstream environmentalism, especially the Whale Caller's obsession with whales. When she and the Whale Caller meet, he gets upset whenever 'an angler does something unseemly, such as use a piece of lead to sink the hook. Although it is illegal to do since it pollutes the water, selfish people do it all the time' (p. 166). Saluni instructs the Whale Caller to 'Forget about other people...and focus on your work.' 'It is dangerous to the wildlife, Saluni. Hooks and tackle in the sea will kill many innocent fish and other sea creatures.' 'We are catching them

here, man. They are going to die in any case. And we're going to eat them. What's the difference?' Oh, this Saluni! She will never understand these things. He chuckles at her logic. (p. 166).

The Whale Caller closely attends to environmental problems that Saluni dismisses out of hand. Saluni prefers to stress social issues, to which the Whale Caller is oblivious, particularly in relation to Lunga Tubu, a boy from nearby Zwelihle Township who sings for tips. (Lunga Tubu is based on a real figure, one of the small boys who a few years ago regaled tourists on the streets of Hermanus by imitating Pavarotti as Mda's acknowledgements make clear.) The Whale Caller cannot hear his singing, and asks who Lunga Tubu is. Saluni demands, 'You can hear your whales a hundred miles away but you cannot hear a boy only a few meters below us? It is Lunga Tubu singing to the waves...He is here at least twice a week. But you never see him because you only see whales' (pp. 84–85).

This scene reveals that the Whale Caller's monocular attention to megafauna is an alibi for his blindness to poverty, while the fishing scene mocks Saluni's ignorance about environmental issues. (Nonetheless, the Whale Caller's own environmental knowledge may be questionable, given his dubious claim that lead weights pollute the water—although they *are* dangerous to waterfowl, which can ingest them.) Mda uses his characters to dramatize the confrontation between a range of views, rather than privileging his protagonist's (rather naïve) environmentalism. Steinwand (2011) writes that the Whale Caller's attitudes toward whales and 'nature' are alternately 'explored, undermined, challenged, ridiculed, and defended throughout the novel' (pp. 190–191). As for Saluni, Mda ridicules her at times, for instance, when she stoops to moon Sharisha out of jealousy. But she acquires gravity in scenes such as the encounter with Lunga Tubu. Mda writes:

Saluni explains to the Whale Caller that Lunga Tubu's presence here destabilises the serenity of *Hermanus*—a sanctified playground of the rich. Lunga Tubu is disturbing the peace of *the world*. His tiny frame nags the

delicate souls with what they would rather forget: that only a few kilometres away there is...a whole festering world of the disillusioned, those who have no stake in the much-talked-about black economic empowerment, which is really the issue of the black middle class rather than of people like Lunga Tubu. While the town of Hermanus is raking in fortunes from tourism, the mothers and fathers of Zwelihle are unemployed...Once, they had dreams, but they have seen politicians and trade union leaders become overnight millionaires instead.

Only tiny crumbs trickle down to what used to be called 'the masses.' (p. 86).

Buscher (2013) views that tourism's aversion to poverty is characteristic 'of Hermanus' in particular, yet it is fundamental to South Africa's national politics and to 'the world' of globalised capitalism. In his depiction of Hermanus, Mda uses the local not as an occasion to celebrate ecological wholeness and integrity (the default move in environmental literature), but to concretise ecosocial concerns that are both national and global. This strategy of interlocking frameworks and telescoping scales could help ecocriticism move beyond the conflict between place-based thought and the 'sense of planet. Ecotourism masquerades as 'a holy grail' uniting equitable development and sustainability efforts (p. 54). But under South Africa's neoliberal governance, 'the tourism market is set to benefit ... (overwhelmingly white) market leaders' and 'black political elites' rather 'than (poor) local people, a state of affairs recognized the world over' (p. 59).

Attributing a cogent critique of such neoliberal governance to Saluni, Mda counterbalances her aspirations to conspicuous consumption throughout the novel. Saluni lacks the resources to engage in consumerism, but she *simulates* it through 'civilised living': 'a ritual in which she and the Whale Caller go to the grocery store and restaurants to 'eat...with [their] eyes,' looking at foods they cannot afford (p. 160). The novel criticises gluttonous consumerism in many ways, deriding '[t]he boerewors-roll-chomping

tourists, mustard and ketchup dripping from their fingers and chins' (19). But to condemn Saluni's yearning to consume, as Feldbrügge (2010) does, is to ignore one of the basic failings of bourgeois environmentalism: 'it would deny the poor the consumerist pleasures—the foods and other goods—that the wealthy already enjoy'. (p. 13). For Mda, the problem is not Saluni's desire for prosperity, but the disarticulation of concerns about social inequality from environmentalism, as allegorized in the arguments between the Whale Caller and Saluni.

Samuelson (2013) identifies Sharisha's death as 'a direct result of the human presence in and on the seas and of the overdevelopment of the shoreline' (p. 19). This is possible, but whales often beach themselves for mysterious reasons. Within the novel's logic, however, Sharisha's death results from the Whale Caller's desire: 'If he had not selfishly called her with his horn...she would not have come to such a terrible end' (p. 229). Mda implicates the tourism industry and conservation science, but also blames aspirations to excessive intimacy with wild animals. (The desire to get close to large, dangerous wild animals poses an on-going problem in South Africa's national parks.

As Steinwand (2011) argues, the tragic conclusion of *The Whale Caller* communicates a 'renunciation of sentimental attachment to charismatic megafauna' (p. 192). But Mda does not advocate a people-centered environmentalism as such: 'he insists on both human *and* animal welfare. Rather than dismissing human/nonhuman dualism, Mda illustrates that it is precisely because of this reified binary that we lack appropriate ethical paradigms for relating to wild animals. The Whale Caller has no model for closeness to Sharisha other than romance, conducted on inappropriately human terms. But Mda does not deride the Whale Caller and Sharisha's relationship (perhaps because it is, just as Steinwand suggests, both ridiculous and sublime). The novel serves as a double corrective while it questions our differentiation of human and nonhuman concerns, it also reminds practitioners of animal studies (especially those influenced by thinkers like Derrida) that, while wild animals may not be Other, they are nonetheless different from us,

and different in ways that will continue to matter—ways that can be, to use a word with several meanings, *specified*, and that would preclude cetacean bestiality as anything other than a sexual fantasy (or allegorical trope). Thus, Mda warns against a sentimental anthropomorphism that invites nonhuman animals into human relations, rather than taking them as they are. (www.oxford.com/view/10.980.1).

Huggan and Tiffin (2010) further suggest that the violent conditions experienced by humans and non-humans are not ‘either/or matters’ and argue that approaches to these two issues ‘must proceed together’ (pp. 137–138). *The Whale Caller* takes on this dual focus, perhaps in spite of its eponymous character as he, in his devotion to whales, remains somewhat unconcerned and ill-informed about the problems his fellow human inhabitants face. While she often, but not always, fails to relate to others and animals ethically throughout the novel. Saluni, a ‘village drunk’ who is in love with the Whale Caller, supplies political commentary throughout the narrative and informs the protagonist about the inequalities and economic hardships that the humans of Hermanus face. The disregard of the Whale Caller for human activity seems to be a flaw; thus, in addition to the novel’s critique of anthropocentrism, it criticizes those isolated environmentalisms that fail to acknowledge their transversal connections to the human world.

Huggan and Tiffin (2010) describe postcolonial ecocritical writers as ‘against the kind of developmentalism that panders to global-corporate interests,’ yet ‘the battle is not so much against development itself as an intrinsically harmful activity or process as against the flagrant social and environmental abuses that continue to be perpetrated in its name’ (p. 20). In *The Whale Caller*, the tourist industry, fisheries, and other commercial operations visit economic and environmental violence on the community of Hermanus as capitalists and consumers break laws that is developed to protect animals and their habitats thus threatening the sustainability of the community and the economies. This kind of development fails to result in any positive change in conditions for the poor residents of Hermanus and

the adjacent township as they often find themselves outside looking in on the restaurants and other industries that service the tourists:

While the town of Hermanus is raking in fortunes from tourism, the mothers and fathers of Zwelihle are unemployed. It is a world where people have lost all faith in politicians. Once, they had dreams, but they have seen politicians and trade union leaders become overnight millionaires instead. Only tiny crumbs trickle down. (p. 86).

In the post-1994 setting of the novel, disenfranchisement continues rather than being redressed, for example, it is illegal for local abalone fishermen to harvest the sea for profit and they are called ‘poachers,’ while the government grants quotas to big companies (p. 191). Nixon (2011) describes such practices as continuing in ‘[t]he colonial rescripting of wildlife scarcity as a black problem,’ which involves ‘demonizing blacks as barbarous poachers whose relationship to wildlife was one of illegality and threat while depending, conversely, on mythologizing whites as stewards of nature’ (p. 190). The narrator of *The Whale Caller* reveals that ‘[t]here are established racial hierarchies in the illegal abalone trade’ (p. 192) which render the labour of local fishermen cheap while securing large profits for white men and Chinese traders. The refusal to grant quotas to local fishermen recalls the colonial past of the rush for diamonds in South Africa where, shortly after their discovery, laws were passed to prevent black South Africans from owning them to secure greater profits for white males.

(https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-56726-6_3).

Caminero-Santangelo and Myers (2011) assert that African ecocriticism will share many points with a more generalised postcolonial ecocriticism, but must ‘take into account the specificity of cultural, discursive, and material contexts in Africa’ (p. 8). Through an even more specific localisation, South African ecocrit and ecolit are poised to integrate questions about the treatment of animals and about land

and resource use, as so many ecosocial issues in South Africa throw their complex and dense entanglement into sharp relief. Ecocritics need to avoid the narrow emphases on charismatic megafauna and beautiful landscapes that have informed bourgeois environmental thought in South Africa and other countries.

Mda suggests that South African ecocriticism may be enriched, if it also begins to treat animals and other traditional environmental concerns as if they were so to speak down on all fours with concerns about people and environmental justice. This conceptual reorientation will go hand in hand with embracing a more inclusive literary canon. By innovating in this fashion, South African ecocriticism can help to articulate the several ways, which are much less obvious than mainstream environmentalism has assumed, in which saving whales turns out to be part and parcel of saving ourselves.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

2.6.1 Conceptualization of Ecocriticism

Howarth (1988) defines ecocriticism as a study of the relationship between literature and the natural environment in the mid-1990's. Ecocriticism is a term derived from Greek *oikos* and *kritis*. '*Oikos*' means 'household,' a nexus of humans, nature and the spirit. '*Kritis*' means judge, 'the arbiter of taste who wants the house kept in good order!' (p. 163). It is a new field that different thinkers and critics have used the approach and mode differently. However, their basic concern is the various approaches that focus mainly on the relationship between man and the earth.

Ecocriticism was officially heralded by the publication of two seminal works written in the 1990's, *The Ecocriticism Reader*, Glotfelty and Fromm (1996) and *The Environmental Imagination* Buell (1995). Glotfelty is the acknowledged founder of Ecocritics in the United States of America. As a pioneer, she says: 'ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender conscious perspective, and Marxist

criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centred approach to literary studies (p. xviii).

Glotfelty asks questions such as how is nature represented in literature; how has the concept of wilderness changed over time and how is science itself open to literary analysis. Ecocriticism is apparently a more political mode of analysis, when compared to Feminism and Marxism. Ecocritics generally tie their cultural analyses explicitly to a green moral and political agenda. In this respect, ecocriticism is closely related to environmentally-oriented developments in philosophy and political theory.

([http://shodhanga.inflibnet.ac/bptstream/10603/6722/5/05=chapter 9/201.pdf](http://shodhanga.inflibnet.ac/bptstream/10603/6722/5/05=chapter%209/201.pdf)).

To this point, the researcher defines ecocriticism as a marriage between the real and the unreal, the artificial and the natural, the haves and have not coming together to form an alliance for better togetherness and upholding of the marital norms and tradition.

2.6.2 Proponents of Ecocriticism in African Literature

The difference between ecocriticism in the African society and ecocriticism in the West is quite great and this is because of the problem of the level of poverty and corruption, politics of exploitation and underdevelopment which makes it impossible for people in developing countries to appreciate and preserve the environment as the westerners will do. On this note, African society cannot be compared with the Western society in terms of its growing resources. African ecocritics such as Graham Huggan, Helen Tiffin, Rob Nixon, Byron Caminero-Santagelo and Tanure Ojaide propound that an ecocritical appraisal of the African state will be centered on its growth in relation to the need for its available environmental resources. In addition, couples of ecocritical works have emerged to identify the relevance of the environment which is a pointer to the relationship of man to its environmental and how man has negatively oppressed the society. The ecocritical works of these writers are: Abdullahi Abubakar's *Ecocriticism and the Dialectics of Nature in Ajibade's Tears of the River Niger* (2013), Lere Adeyemi's *Literature and*

Climate Change: A Discourse in Eco-criticism (2011) and Akrul Alam's *Reading Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart Ecocritically* (2012).

In the light of the above, Olaniyan and Quayson, (2001) examine that Black African critics have traditionally embraced nature writing, land issues, and landscape themes that are pertinent to national and local cultural claims and that also functions as pastoral reminiscences or even projections of a golden age when many of the environmental evils resulting from colonialism and the exploitation of indigenous resources have been remediated (p. 682).

African critics such as Caminero-Santagmelo and Vital (2011) have taken up environmental issues in African literature; they have not adequately engaged the broader field of ecocriticism, which is mainly on Western literature and examples. Thornber (2012) critiques the relegation of non-Western literature in mainstream ecocriticism (p. 18). She highlights the 'anthropocentric or sociocentric standpoint' of the second wave of ecocriticism under which we can include most work being done in African environmentalism because of their social justice mission. Thornber's solution to the environmental justice approach is not to embrace deep ecology and its romanticization of nature. Rather, her notion of ecoambiguity enables us to explore the ambiguities surrounding human and nonhuman interactions. Thornber's work probes the 'complex, contradictory interactions between people and environments with a significant human presence' (p. 1).

Thornber concentrates on the shifting nature of the interactions between humans and their environment and for showing that we can be attentive to globalization's ecological problems while being mindful of the complex interactions at work in the process. According to Caminero-Santagelo and Myers (2011), postcolonial ecocriticism, draws 'attention to both global imperial contexts and parts of the world often elided by western ecocriticism focuses on American and British cultural productions (p. 6). Buell (2005) examines the work of Derek Walcott, Wole Soyinka, and Mahasweta Devi, but the emphasis on the

American environmental imagination is not disguised by the brevity of the exploration of the work of the mentioned postcolonial authors.

Maathai (2006) demonstrates thus: ‘The trees would provide a supply of wood that would enable women to cook nutritious foods. They would also have wood for fencing and fodder for cattle and goats. The trees would offer shade for humans and animals, protect watersheds and bind the soil, and if they were fruit trees, provide food. They would also heal the land by bringing back birds and small animals and regenerate the vitality of the earth. (p. 125). Maathai’s work explains her involvement with the Green Belt Movement, an NGO devoted to ecological concerns in Kenya, but this particular quote is an attempt to justify her insistence on planting trees as against the government’s sanctioning of deforestation for profit purposes. This quote particularly illustrates the larger role of trees in the environment. Primarily, they are helpful for maintaining the soil’s moisture, which is important for the soil vitality.

Moreover, the passage shows that trees are useful for both the human and nonhuman components of the environment. One can argue that ‘the supply of wood’ in the first sentence of Maathai’s passage is similar to the cutting of trees. In fact, scholars have written on the role of locals in the destruction of forest resources during colonialism and afterwards. However, this does not excuse the ecological colonialism implicit in the cutting of trees and their shipment to Europe.

Maathai (2006) establishes that the destruction of Karura forest, like the malnourished women in the 1970s, the Times complex in Uhuru Park, and the political prisoners detained without trial, were problems that needed to be solved, and the authorities were stopping me from finding a solution’ (p. 272). Maathai’s passage is a departure from the patriarchal primary concern with political issues emanating from the post independent African state as if those nationalist, political concerns can be divorced from feminist or environmental problems in that society. It is a remarkable characteristic of this passage in which Maathai sets out the conflict she devoted her life-work to, that she considered the destruction of the

environment, the poverty of the women, and the repression of the Jomo Kenyatta regime as all-important and deserving attention.

There is no seeming prioritization of any of these problems; rather she demonstrates the link between the oppression of the people and their environment in somewhat, nuanced and specific manner. Maathai's contribution to the solution of this crisis is also based on an ecological vision, aimed at the sustainability of the larger environment. As her passage on trees cited earlier shows the activist's choice of planting trees strategically. Maathai recognizes the potential of afforestation for nonviolent demonstration as vehicle for empowering the women, and a veritable means for nourishing the nonhuman components of the environment, including animals, plants, water, etc.

In no way does Maathai flatten out the differences between women and nature, even when she is attentive to a similar pattern of exploitation by patriarchal structures. In a move that suggests heeding Spivak's warning that the intellectual do not muzzle the voice or agency of the subaltern, Maathai encourages the visibility of the group of women whose work led to the success of the Green Belt Movement. And although her memoir, foregrounds, the first person 'I,' as the genre often demands, the book creates the space to see the ways the rural women demonstrated their agency. One such instance is at the conference marking the conclusion of the Women Decade, in Nairobi, in 1985. Maathai 'arranged for rural women to talk about their experiences with the Green Belt Movement, and organized seminars to seminars to share with conference delegates what we were doing and why' (p. 176). Maathai's influence on the activities of the rural women is clear but it does not seem that her mediation obstructs the women to express their positions.

By giving them access to discuss their work, Maathai demonstrates one way that the subaltern could speak and be heard. Like Bhabha, Spivak draws sources from across genres and across time, which explains the leap from Indian history to the historical postmodern moment of late capitalism. Again, she

puts pressure on Fredric Jameson's postmodernism, showing how it occludes global inequalities. She underscores the unevenness of Jameson's postmodernism when she writes that: 'The actual postcolonial areas have a class-specific and internationally controlled limited access to a telematics society of information command, which is often also the indigenous contact-point or source of the discourse of cultural specificity and difference' (p. 361). Spivak gestures towards inequality that is masked in the celebration of globalization. This inequality is what James Ferguson describes as 'globe hopping' in the African context. By this, Ferguson means that 'the 'movement of capital' here does not cover the globe; it connects discrete points on it. Capital is *globe-hopping*, not *globe-covering*' (p. 38).

Gbadegesin (2001) notes that 'the dumping sites of toxic waste from Western nations can be found throughout Africa, from Senegal to Nigeria, to Zimbabwe, Congo, and even South Africa' (p. 189). Gbadegesin (2001) points to the prevalence of the problem in Africa and contends that 'it is also a tale of environmental racism' (p. 188). Indeed, it is no coincidence that the dumping sites are in Africa. Even when they happen say in America, minority communities of blacks and Latinos are often the sites for such environmental transgression. The choice of Romania can also be read in similar light and elicits the question of why the ship did not try to dump the wastes in the home country of Germany or elsewhere in Western Europe. The argument is that there is a racist coloration to the choice of both the botched dumping site and where the consignment was finally delivered.

Rich (2005) illustrates the economic value of timber for the colonial economy when he writes that Gabonese forests 'made the colony [Gabon] the most profitable of all the colonies in French Equatorial Africa, and French entrepreneurs rushed to Libreville and Port-Gentil to make their fortunes' (pp. 153-154). Rich's (2005) work shows the economic importance of timber for colonial Gabon, although he does not address the ecological impacts, we can argue that the toll on the environment was high given the quantity necessary for the economic viability he emphasizes. Rich's study also reveals that the locals were

involved in the timber trade as well but he is also sensitive to the scale of difference in the quantities they can trade in comparison to the Europeans. While the Africans ‘could purchase up to 500 hectares,’ the ‘Europeans could purchase up to 10,000 hectare concessions’ (p. 153).

The natives are also sensitive to sacred groves which they avoid destroying unlike the Europeans who often times demonstrate little or no regard for traditions they consider superstitious. Clearly, in no way is this a suggestion that all the blame for deforestation be put on the colonialists; conflicts between government and business corporations on one hand, and the local people and environmental activists on another, shows the lingering problem that deforestation is on the continent long after the ‘colonialists’ have left. This analysis is also not suggesting that the activities of the local population are not detrimental to forest resources.

Fanon (1968) examines his explication of what he calls the ‘magical superstructure’ of African societies, because it sheds light on an African-centered ecocriticism. According to Fanon: ‘In the meantime, however, life goes on and the colonized subject draws on the terrifying myths that are so prolific in underdeveloped societies as inhibitions for his aggressiveness: malevolent spirits who emerge every time you put one-foot wrong, leopard men, snake men, six-legged dogs, zombies, a whole never-ending gamut of animalcules or giants that encircle the colonized with a realm of taboos, barriers, and inhibitions far more terrifying than the colonialist world. This magical superstructure that permeates the indigenous society has a very precise function in the way the libido works’. (p. 18)

Besides, he writes that ‘the hillock which has been climbed as if to get closer to the moon, the river bank, which has been descended whenever the dance symbolizes ablution, washing, and purification, are sacred places’ (p. 20). Fanon is dismissive of these practices, which he considered diversions from the aggressiveness important for the kind of anticolonial revolutions he was advocating. Although he differs from the colonialists on matters of race, his perspective on these practices is like that of the Europeans who

view Africans as superstitious natives. The problem with Fanon is his inability to reconcile his Marxist leanings with what Garuba (2003) has described as ‘animist materialism’ practiced in these societies.

Garuba (2003) explains that ‘animism is often regarded as a reactionary, metaphysical mystification opposed to the spirit of historical materialism and scientific socialism’ (p. 276). Garuba is quick to point to the coalescence of the seeming contradictions, with the example of the Nigerian poet, Niyi Osundare. For Garuba, ‘[r]ather than a contradiction between the secular vision of Marxism and the metaphysical nature of the animist inheritance, Osundare’s poetry can be seen as an example of how both can be creatively deployed’ (p. 277). Despite Fanon’s dismissal, the fact that these practices endure, structure the lives of those in those communities who hold such world views, and have implications for ecocriticism merit paying attention to them. Writing on what he calls the ‘traditional African ethical view,’

Okoye (2014) comments that this ethical view connotes that nature has its respect which must be accorded lest man is bound to suffer for it. Thus, despite the fact that man is at the center of the ethical system, he does not have a monopoly of it. Man seeks to preserve his environment according to the traditional African system not just for himself but for the future generation and in honor of the tradition (reference to ancestors and worship). The African traditional system is replete with this weak anthropocentrism following their belief that man is a keeper of nature not a master to it. (pp. 143-144)

Okoye (2014) makes reference to the anthropocentrism of this worldview but insists, however, that humans are not masters of the environment in that economy. He argues that the ‘traditional African cares for his environment basically for the human good either to avoid punishment from the gods or for the future generation’ (p. 144). Nevertheless, the magical superstructure that Fanon dismisses, and Okoye’s work are instrumental for seeing that these societies not only derive their impetus from the rational but also consider the possibility of extra rational and extra-forces being at work in their lives. Of course, the participation of Africans in Christianity, global modernity and late capitalism, have seen the erosion of

some of these practices but they remain crucial because of the sacred status they confer on aspects of the environment. The sacred status of the hillocks and river bank mentioned by Fanon (1963) certainly protects these places from indiscriminate exploitation. As sacred sites, these environmental spaces attain agency with power to retain blessings for those who respect them and punishment for defaulters. Literature on African spirituality is replete with these traditional beliefs and a few are worth citing to underscore the prevalence of the practices that Fanon dismisses.

Writing on the spiritual significance of trees in African cultures, for instance, Anyinam (2007) contends that the iroko tree is held to be sacred in most places. Among the Yoruba, the iroko tree is believed to be inhabited by very powerful spirits. People fear having the tree near their dwelling place or to use it for furniture. The tree cannot be felled unless special rites are performed. Important meetings are believed to be held by witches at the foot or top of the iroko tree. Other trees believed to be abodes of certain spirits which include the silk cotton tree and African satinwood. Baobab trees are regarded as sacred and are often believed to be the abode of spirits or the ‘meeting place of witches.’ There are, as well numerous animal spirits and sacred snakes. Many forest animals are considered sacred by different ethnic groups. There exist taboos with regard to the killing of such animals as leopard, python, duiker, crocodile, and elephant in some societies. Certain animals symbolize the vitality of their ancestors. (p. 134).

Ferguson (2006) shows the desires of Africans to become critical and equal partners in modernity and globalization that disqualifies any call for a return to some sense of uncritical ‘tradition’, rather, Fanon and Anyinam provides a grounding for understanding my interest in what Carrigan (2011) has described as ‘multivalent sacredness’ in his study of postcolonial tourism. Thus:

I use this term to suggest an interface between contrasting ideologies of development where the distribution of power is not stable but operates in a condition of flux as the interests of different empowered actors oscillate

between conflict and coalition. Embracing the nexus of past, present, and future genealogical claims (cultural sacredness), notions of nationality, significant areas that safeguard nature's sanctity (environmental sacredness), and tourism-related economic concerns (the sacred principle of capital accumulation), it allows the extrinsic value of sacred spaces to become negotiable by multiple parties without collapsing the terms of discussion into a purely economic idiom. (p. 91).

I find Carrigan's interesting phrase productive since it encourages a dialogue between the sacred and the mundane without collapsing the importance of either. It has the advantage of taking cognizance of the need for protection of the environment while also being attuned to the need for economic survival and development. The idea of pure conservation of sacred spaces without economic consideration is not a viable option today while recent trends are clear indicators that market driven economic reasoning without respect for the environment will not engender a sustainable future. It is to Carrigan's credit that his description above does not anticipate or suggest a utopian conflict-free negotiation between the logic of late capitalism, to borrow Jameson's phrase and that of protecting the environment. Rather the attention here is to a productive coalition emerging from the chaos of the contesting logics.

(<https://scholarworks.unr.edu/bitstream/handle/11714/2148/wuunr0139D12011.Pdf?sequence=ITSAllowed=y>).

2.6.3 The Essential Principles and Features of Ecocriticism

Below are the five cardinal features of Ecocriticism:

- i. The theory and practice of ecocriticism is inherently political;
- ii. Ecocriticism can benefit from integration with other literary theories;

- iii. Ecocriticism is inherently interdisciplinary;
- iv. Fieldwork on the part of scholars and students can improve the practice of ecocriticism;
- v. Ecocriticism must tolerate dissent. We should welcome the opinions of those who argue there is no ecological crisis, who hold that environmentalism has gone too far in its methods and goals.

(<http://www.asle.org/wp.content/uploads/ASLE/Primerdefiningecocriticismpdf>)

In the light of the above, ecocritics are saddled with the following major task. They are as follows:

- i. They re-read the text from an ecocentric perspective and identify the natural world;
- ii. They apply a range of ecocentric concepts, using them other than the natural world--such as growth and energy, balance and imbalance and sustainable or unsustainable uses of energy and resources;
- iii. They give special canonical emphasis to writers who foreground nature as a major part of their subjects;
- iv. They extend the range of literary-critical practice, reflecting topographical material such as essays, travel writing, memoirs, and regional literature;
- v. They turn away from the social constructivism and linguistic determinism to ecocentric values of ethical responsibility.

(<http://www.asle.org/wp.content/uploads/ASLE/Primerdefiningecocriticismpdf>)

2.6.4 Adopted Model of Ecocriticism

The Researcher shall adopt deep ecology as a model used in this study.

2.6.5 Strength and Weaknesses of Ecocriticism and the Adopted Model

Ecocriticism's identity is still in a formative phase, and though indeed a rigid definition is to be avoided, some clearheaded attention to its conflicting characteristics would improve the area's methods and promote its aims. While ecocriticism presently enjoys an expanding range of critical projects, it continues

to exhibit a general animus toward theory and a consequent unwillingness to theorize epistemological and literary critical aims. Ecocriticism logically pursues an alliance with biology, but many ecocritics retain a postmodernist suspicion of hard science. Therefore, many of the field's assumptions about the relationship between cultural artifacts and the nonhuman environment have not been considered with much thoroughness, resulting in a habitual collapse of the aesthetic onto the ethical and a celebration of potential incoherence in the guise of diversity and pluralism.

(see <https://scholarworks.uno.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1014&context=engl-facpub>).

2.6.6 Justification for Adopting Deep Ecology in Analyzing Mda's Novels

In conclusion, this chapter has been able to give at least some reviews of literary writers from the points above. Thus, Literature does not grow or develop in vacuum; it gives impetus, shape, direction and even area of concern by social, political and economic forces in a particular society. The relationship between creative literature and these other forces cannot be ignored, especially in Africa, where modern literature has grown against the gory background of European imperialism and its changing, manifestation, slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism. (extract from Ngugi's *Homecoming*, 1972, p. xv). In addition, ecocriticism will encourage and enable students to explore the natural world at firsthand by reading the earth carefully, closely and paying attention to its rhythms, patterns and intricacy. Students need to get to know the earth, not just discuss it. In fact, such outdoor experiences will enliven their reading of books and will even sharpen their thinking and writing. Ecocriticism will also assist to investigate the manner in which politics, economics, science, religion, language, medicine and countless other matters go into the making of a piece of literature.

This study holds that Mda's eco-consciousness emerges from his imagination of prose writing as it foreshadows the emergence of the contemporary ecocritical theory. Also, Mda's belief in writing his novels through storytelling and exile writing are basically on imagination, this therefore runs to his imaginative

attitude to nature which emerges through most of his novels. Thus, the study also points out the paradox in Mda's attitude to nature.

CHAPTER THREE

ECO EXPLOITATIVE TENDENCIES OF MODERNITY IN MDA'S NOVELS

3.1 A Synopsis of Mda's *The Whale Caller*

The Whale Caller is set in the coastal town of Hermanus in the Western Cape of South Africa. Mda chooses a setting which is known for its spectacular whale watching and is thus frequented by tourists. The unnamed protagonist, who is only referred to as the Whale Caller, communicates with whales through a kelp horn. Unlike the real life professional whale crier, William Salakuzi, who guides tourists to the whales, the Whale Caller does not like or intend to attract publicity. Rather his fulfillment in life is to musically communicate and live with the whales in seclusion. After some years of wandering the coasts, the Whale Caller returns to his hometown Hermanus, which has transformed into a fancy tourist town. The Whale Caller represents an outcast who is gazed at for his Otherness primarily called forth by his peculiar interaction with whales. His position is supported by his strange appearance and odd behaviour as he meditatively stands on the rocks and plays his kelp horn most of the time. When he was still a child, he discovered his ability to communicate with whales through a kelp horn by producing vibrating sounds under water, which attract the whales. To this point, however, he has been spending his days along the coastline caring more for whales than for human beings.

Mda's *The Whale Caller* addresses similar concerns as *The Heart of Redness*: invasive tourism, protection of nature and the struggle to negotiate capitalist and environmental values. As in his previous novel, landscape and the memories also play a key role in *The Whale Caller* – it is a novel in which Mda formulates his environmental message post pointedly. While *The Heart of Redness* is more concerned with traditional culture and the protection of local identity in the face of an increasing capitalist globalization, *The Whale Caller* shifts the focus to the interaction of the human and the non-human worlds as well as to

the dynamics of the new South Africa. Therefore, the critics scrutinize the representation of nature and touches on the controversial discourse of environmentalism in the post-apartheid state.

3.2A Synopsis of Mda's *Ways of Dying*

Toloki, a former salesman, has invented a profession which he calls a 'Professional Mourner' to make a living. He attends funerals and mourns for the dead where he receives an amount of money according to what the family of the deceased can afford and although comparing his services to that of a lawyer or a doctor having different fees for different services and curing different illnesses (p. 17). In this time of struggle, Toloki is keener to look towards monks in the East (as described by Toloki himself) in comparing his profession as a professional mourner with another. Furthermore, Toloki believes that his weird diet of green onions and Swiss cake gives him an aura of austerity that he associates with monks of eastern religions (p. 15). And because of Toloki's profession and his way of looking upon himself as an austere man with more qualities of a monk instead of a man, the funerals and what happens at the funerals all become central to what happens in the novel and in the progression of the characters. He comes across the path of Noria, a former prostitute, and a woman who seems to have some magical features. Her laughter is infectious and her singing enables creation in men. Noria, a character who has suffered great loss during her lifetime supplies Toloki with a way back to society from his self-chosen exile.

The novel is set in a trouble time immediately after the abolishment of the apartheid regime, the struggle for survival in the townships and settlements together with the constant violence is making for a harsh living for the protagonists. It is because of this setting during the transitional period in South Africa, where the nation is trying to find its own ways of dealing with the troubles that have occurred during the apartheid regime, problems such as ethnicity, segregation, poverty, political issues and gender appear for Toloki and Noria. Ethnicity has a very complex background in South Africa but mainly because it has some ambiguous meaning throughout the novel. Some of the problems in South Africa have emerged since

the apartheid regime was made up of schemes that classified citizens into different groups since apartheid was based on the idea of *race*. Although those schemes have now been broken because of the fall of the apartheid and its hierarchies which has given different ethnic groups in South Africa justifications for reclaiming borders of their homelands. In specific terms, Mda's *Ways of Dying* is used to investigate and identify how underlying ecological values like land, race, class and gender have been treated therein. Also, it will bring about how Mda has explored and mediated ecology to proffer solutions to contemporary challenges in the novel.

3.3 A Synopsis of Mda's *The Heart of Redness*

Mda's *The Heart of Redness* deals with the confrontation between traditional Xhosa life and global capitalism. The novel takes place during the 19th century as it narrates the colonial incursion by the British that colonizes the Xhosa community in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. The present time level of post-apartheid South Africa is about the incursion of global capitalism (neo-imperialism) which is regarded as a new form of colonization administered by Western companies. In the colonial past, 1850s, the cattle of the Xhosa die in en-mass as they suffered from the illness that was imported by Friesland bulls which was shipped in by Dutch settlers. During this period, Nongqawuse preaches salvation for the Xhosa that if the Xhosa people will slaughter their cattle and burn their crops, the spirits of the ancestors will arise and drive away the colonizers into the sea.

However, this prophecy splits the Xhosa people into two extremes (Believers and Unbelievers). The descendents of Xikixa, Twin and Twin-Twin are the first generation to be divided into the camps of Believers (Twin) and Unbelievers (Twin-Twin). The Believers followed the prophecies and thereby drove the Xhosa community into suffering from starvation and finally into subjugation by the colonial oppressors. To this point, in 1994, the conflict is revived and revolves around the issue of economic development. The Unbelievers which is led by Bhonco and Xoliswa embrace the plan of a casino and

tourist resort as a sign of progress and propagate development and modernization which is equivalent to civilization. The Believers, led by Zim and Qukezwa, oppose these projects as they note them as a threat to their traditional life.

During the time of this conflict, the protagonist, Camagu returns to South Africa after thirty years of exile in the United States and experiences the post-apartheid era. He, however, becomes disillusioned in his first few days when he is confronted with the realities of fraud and corruption among the new elite. As he contemplates on going back to the United States, he is challenged by NomaRussia, who he later follows to Qolorha-by-Sea with the hope of seeing each other thereafter. Camagu is therefore drawn into the conflict over the casino resort between Believers and Unbelievers. Being an outsider to the Xhosa community, he thereby becomes an intermediary with the help of Dalton but with different developmental ideas which later culminates into setting up different projects.

Furthermore, as Camagu tries to remain neutral in the villagers' conflict despite his love with two women from the opposing camps; he thereafter chooses the developmental project that is in tandem with the self-empowerment of the people in Qolorha. Camagu, however, lays the grounds for acceptance and tolerance among the opposing people. The end of the novel is a turn towards reconciliation and integration where it is possible to have two different projects exist next to each other and in co-operation. (Feldbrügge, 2004, p. 64).

3.4. Ecological Disruption in Qolorha-by-Sea in *The Heart of Redness*

Qolorha-by-Sea is a village that represents a colourful and mystical place bearing vibrant memories of the past. The reverse is the case as the peaceful village is exploited by colonizers thereby distorting the known peace and happiness of the land. Mda uses Qukezwa in the novel to trigger an ecocritical longing for bygone times when the natural surroundings were still untouched by Western progress. In spite of its peaceful nature, Qolorha is represented as a village that consists of ambiguities. This is as a result of the

community's internal wrangling, colonial and neo-colonial invasions. The sporadic expressions of a romantic picture of the present and an ecocritical depiction of Xhosa traditional life are constantly disrupted by arguments of the villagers on the present time level and the horrors of war and colonization on the past time level. In the past, the locale has seen and given rise to 'mass suicide' (as the historic cattle killing movement), starvation and misery. It is revealed to have witnessed several violent wars and injustices. In the present, Qolorha continues to be a place of rivalries – despite its haunting beauty.

Barnard (2007) disqualifies Qolorha as a locale that is not represented by bounded isolated space, but rather represents a contact zone on both time levels. Qolorha is a place of transcultural interaction between the Khoikhoi, the Xhosa, the abaThwa, the British and the Afrikaners. Being a tourist site, it suggests encounter with people across the world. It is, however, a richly imagined chronotope; though 'Qolorha conforms in certain respects to ecocritical ideas of village life' (Barnard, 2007, p. 162).

3.5 Foreign Exploitation of Tourism in *The Heart of Redness* and *The Whale Caller*

Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness*

NoPetticoat says that maybe there are indeed many different paths to progress. (p. 227). The major disagreement on the present time level in *The Heart of Redness* evolves from the dichotomy between Westernization as the only correct form of civilization and the relevance of preserving traditions and the natural landscape. The prospects and destructive forces of tourism and Western development lie at the heart of the community's internal wrangling. Conservation of culture and nature, thereby provides the significant link to ecocriticism as it focuses on the restoration of an idealized past. To this point, however, Mda presents various forms of contemporary tourism and discusses matters of sustainable tourism development for local communities in his fictional account of the Xhosa community in Qolorha-by-Sea. Tourism enters post-apartheid Qolorha mainly in the prospective establishment of a holiday and tourist gambling complex which is to be built in Nongqawuse's Valley. This gambling and motor sports complex falls largely into the

category of mass tourism. The ones who would profit from this kind of tourism is, first of all, the company which initiated the complex, and second, the different owners of the tourist attractions such as sports gear traders and hotel managers.

Camagu is taken aback if the locals would profit from this kind of Western development. Contrary to Unbelievers, the Believers oppose the tourist project which they identify as an invasion of their natural environment and their traditional way of life. Barnard (2007) posits that Mda presents a certain kind of tourism as a figure of an invasive and homogenizing modernity (p. 167). This form of mass tourism is certainly therefore not presented as an invasion without a choice, such as the parallel invasion of colonialism on the past time level (Dannenberg, 2009, p. 171). As largely as inspired by Camagu and his mediating abilities, the people on the present time level are debating the kind of development which would be most sustainable. Thus, the villagers are not passive victims but in the course of the novel take an active part in advancing their ideas of local development.

In response to the destructive and invasive form of mass tourism, the narrative offers two counter-models of tourism which are represented by Camagu and Dalton. They both perceive the dangers of Western-based mass tourism in the form of the holiday resort and propose their alternative ideas of eco-tourism. Thereby, the novel does not offer any easy solutions but suggests that eco-tourism is complex and needs to be critically investigated. While the two characters perceive the need to preserve culture and nature, their ideas of cultural and natural preservation diverge. Camagu offers an eco-tourism project which is based on self-empowering development ideas and regards culture as dynamic but Dalton's project of a cultural village attempts to preserve the amaXhosa culture of pre-modern quality in a timeless present.

Camagu and Dalton support the Believer's aims to conserve nature and culture. They are the agents who have the means and expertise in the establishment of environmentally friendly and cultural tourism projects. It later becomes obvious that their approach to conserving both nature and culture vary

tremendously and that ‘their enterprises [are] devoted to very different notions of conservation’ (Barnard, 2007, p. 169). Thus, Dalton and Camagu, the outsiders of the Believing-Unbelieving-conflict, also begin arguing about their understanding of sustainable development. Camagu is well aware of the fact that if they want to successfully compete with the gambling city and get the villagers’ support, they have to offer a lucrative alternative.

Having interacted with the local people, Camagu is also aware of the villagers’ dislike of Dalton’s small tourist-touring project because it only profits Dalton and the two women. Thinking about strategies to prevent the holiday resort with Dalton and Zim, Camagu asks: ‘But what alternatives do we offer? [...] If we oppose development projects that people believe will give them jobs, we must be able to offer an alternative. I heard that day at the imbhizo that they think you are taking this stand for John’s benefit. They [the villagers] say as things stand now, only his store and the Blue Flamingo Hotel benefit from tourists. And of course John’s lackeys – NoVangeli and NoManage.’ ‘Surely you don’t believe that,’ protests Dalton. ‘The important thing is that they do. We need to work out a plan how the community can benefit from these things that we want to preserve’. (p. 119).

The conversation is cut off, not however Camagu’s thinking of alternative community based tourism projects which would suit the village as a whole and not only a chosen few. In need of offering an alternative to both the mass tourist holiday resort and to Dalton’s exotic and cultural tourism, Camagu comes up with the idea of creating a holiday camp where travellers come to enjoy natural landscape and traditional life. Dalton, however, while not rejecting that idea, comes up with his own idea of a cultural village – one which focuses on the preservation of traditional Xhosa culture before the invasion of industrialization and colonization. Their diverging approaches to conservation and tourism demonstrate two ways of dealing with cultural and environmental heritage and their use or misuse for sustainable tourism development in contemporary South Africa. While Dalton promotes a form of eco-tourism by

establishing a cultural village where the locals work as actors performing a pre-colonial life, Camagu initiates an eco-tourist holiday camp, addressing travellers who are interested in both nature and genuine local culture.

In the same vein, Dalton, the only White character in the village, opposes the form of mass tourism possibly entering Qolorha in the form of the gambling complex; he is not hostile to tourism. On the contrary, he has already discovered a business in the beautiful landscape, history and mythical aura of Qolorha as well as in the appeal of pre-colonial traditional culture. In Dalton's little tourism business, two women from the village, NoManage and NoVangeli earn their living by displaying the customs and cultural practices of the amaXhosa called *amasiko* (p. 96). After Dalton has toured the tourists around Qolorha in his bakkie, he brings them to the two women who are then performing their 'Xhosaness'. Dalton's cultural tourist practices are, however, not without problems. His urge to preserve both nature and culture and his initiated staging of ancient traditions as a tourist attraction verge on paternalism and exploitation.

In a bid to protect traditional culture against the invasion of Western capital and modernization and as an extension of his tourist tours, Dalton plans to preserve the amaXhosa culture by creating a cultural village. In his proposed cultural village, the Xhosa people would perform (and pretend to live) a past traditional lifestyle. Camagu opposes Dalton's plans precisely because his village would not help the Xhosa to keep their traditions alive but, instead, it would freeze their culture in a pre-modern time. Koyana (2003) points out, 'Dalton hopes to transport his clients to an experience of deep, archaic time, regardless of how false this is' (p. 60).

In a conversation with Camagu, Dalton defends cultural villages, which display traditional culture as a proven kind of business. He says: 'Tourists like visiting such cultural villages to observe how the people live. The village will have proper isiXhosa huts rather than the newfangled hexagons that are found

all over Qolorha. Women will wear traditional isiXhosa costumes as *their forebears used to wear*. [...] Tourists will flock to watch young maidens dance and young men engage in stick fights.’ (p. 247). Camagu rejects such tourist projects because they act out a lifestyle that is no longer lived. Instead, they are products of the marketing and stereotyping of a culture seen as immune to development and progress.

Furthermore, Camagu criticizes the fact that cultural villages combine different cultural practices from different cultures in one place, thus adding to their inauthenticity and artificiality. Upon Dalton’s argument that a cultural village intends ‘to show various aspects of the people’s culture in one place’ (p. 247), Camagu counters:

That’s dishonest. It is just a museum that pretends that is how people live. Real people in today’s South Africa don’t lead the life that is seen in cultural villages. Some aspects of that life perhaps are true. But the bulk of what tourists see is the past ... of lot of it an imaginary past. They must be honest and say that they are attempting to show how people used to live. They must not pretend that’s how people live now. It is an attempt to preserve folk ways ... to reinvent culture. When you excavate a buried pre-colonial identity of these people ... a pre-colonial authenticity that is lost ... are you suggesting that they currently have no culture ... that they live in a cultural vacuum? I am interested in the culture of the amaXhosa as they live today. The amaXhosa people are not a museum piece. Like all cultures, their culture is dynamic. (pp. 247–248).

Camagu’s reasoning reveals the dangers of performing a life that is no longer lived and thus creates an impression as if that culture was beyond time. The staging of culture in a timeless present works against the appreciation of lived, real culture. In fact, the inauthenticity and artificiality of displaying culture contributes to the lived culture and tradition and contributes to the ignoring of their present realities.

Moreover, Mda argues that tradition and progress are not opposing each other. Seeing culture in a vacuum and as static is to deny people the natural passage of time. Mda (2009c) explains:

Tradition, of course, may include modernization. [...] culture is dynamic; of course, it will always change in order to meet the demands of the present. That is what tradition is all about. In other words, I don't see it as something that is static. I see it as something that is dynamic, that will change all the time to meet the needs of the present [...]. However, dividing for the sake of dividing seems to have also caught these two characters (p. 359).

Hence, Camagu and Dalton do not find a common path to negotiate their diverging eco-tourism ideas and Dalton establishes his cultural village in competition with both the capitalist holiday resort and Camagu's planned backpacker eco-tourist holiday camp.

(<http://scholarbank.nus.edu.sg/bitstream/10635/121128/6/Ch%201%20-%20Introduction.pdf>).

Zakes Mda's *The Whale Caller*

The spates of developments in South Africa since the overthrow of apartheid and the entry of the country into the global market have been manifold. In Mda's novels, he points out the invasion of global capitalism and advanced technology as unsettling the rural areas. Moreover, he poses crucial questions about the maintenance of cultural identity and the natural environment. In the face of invading tourism and technological advancements, the Whale Caller, like Qukezwa in *The Heart of Redness*, lapses mainly into imagining pre-colonial past. The Whale Caller expresses his dislikes for progress and technology by derogatorily referring to the present as *these* days of engine-powered trawlers (p. 2), which is responsible for the disturbances of the natural world.

The binary contrast between past and present becomes striking in the demonstrative pronoun 'these' which gives the present a negative connotation. This is further supported by the choice of words and the narrative juxtaposition of, loud under water bangs produced by seismic surveys and gas and oil

explorations (p. 129) with relics of the past such as the colourful fishing boats along the cliffs that used to belong to fishermen of a century ago (p. 2). The boats are now restored to their former glory as a reminder of a bygone era and bygone manual practices so that present and future generations can see how fishermen of the old endured the stormy seas in small open boats powered by their own muscles (p. 2). The narrative already hints at the paradoxes of (post)modern culture which is wary of conserving history, thereby silencing it as museum pieces detached from present life.

The earth as a place has become one of the most disseminated symbolic motifs of our time. (Robertson, 1990, p. 56). Similar to Camagu's return to his root in *The Heart of Redness*, the Whale Caller also resettles in his town of birth, in this case, after decades of wandering ashore. Upon his return he is glad to re-discover the place of his memories. The natural beauty of the landscape and the famous crown of mist around the mountains are as he remembers them from his days of childhood, and his home town ha[s] not lost the soul of the village of his youth (p. 10). The presentation of the protagonist's return explicates the narrative's central conflict between the past and the present and (respectively) between nature and culture. Thus, the stable mountainous landscape is juxtaposed to the changed cultural life in the Whale Caller's home town: 'his former village has developed into a beautiful holiday resort' (p. 10) and a retirement paradise with double and triple storey buildings for national and international (affluent) tourists temporarily escaping the tumult of Johannesburg by spending part of the year enjoying the spoils of their wealth in the laid-back ambience of the village (p. 10). Hence, the place is filled with tourists.

The Whale Caller enters this scenario, again similar to Camagu, as an outsider. He even feels like an intruder both in the lives of the whale watchers and of the local citizens. No one knew him any more (p. 10). Owing to his vagabond, nomadic life of spending more than three decades along the coastlines of South Africa and Namibia, the narrator refers to the Whale Caller as *strandloper*. According to Boonzaier et al., the word '*strandloper*', or beach-ranger, comes from the observation by early settlers at the Cape of

people living along the beach and subsisting on marine food, such as seals, shellfish, fish, crayfish, birds and occasionally beached whales. (1996, p. 10). Thus, the Whale Caller is associated with an age-old Khoikhoi lifestyle in union with nature.

The connection to the Khoikhoi is a key aspect in the Whale Caller's ancient way of life in harmony with nature. The seemingly uncivilized lifestyle has removed the Whale Caller from human socialization and has offered him a life free of the restrictions of modern society. The place of abode for the Whale Caller, has for a long time been a travelling and floating notion, similar to that of whales floating through the sea, which has opened a zone of freedom not confining him. During his sojourn along the beaches, he only stayed longer in one place when people –especially women – seem friendly:

He survived on fish, some of which he bartered to non-fishing folks for grain and other necessities. He stopped for months at a time in fishermen's villages that dotted the coastline. In hamlets where women were buxom and welcoming he stopped for a few years. Sometimes he hired himself out as a hand to the trawlers that caught pilchards off the west coast of southern Africa. (p. 9).

The Whale Caller's desire is linked to his unrestricted access to and communion with the non-human world. Thus, to a certain extent he continues a supposedly ancient, local lifestyle.

To this point, however, the incursion of mass tourism contributes immensely to the disturbances of the Whale Caller's desired home in harmony with nature. The typical mass tourist which is familiar from *The Heart of Redness* also features in *The Whale Caller*. The novel satirizes the tourist mass incursion by relying on well-known stereotypes as in the following:

the usual tourists with floral shirts and funeral faces. [...] Binoculars and cameras weighing down their necks. Sandals flip-flopping like soft coronach

drumbeats as the feet trudge in different directions. Fat Americans, timid as individuals, but boisterous and arrogant in groups. Puny Japanese, excitable and fascinated by the most mundane things. Inland South Africans who look apologetic and seem to be more out of place than the Americans and Japanese. All clicking away at the slightest of provocation (pp. 13-14).

Tourists, among others, mark the opening of South Africa's borders and her entry into the global market. The Whale Caller perceives the new culture of tourism and global capitalism, spurred by the new government, as a threat not only to his much-preferred quiet life but also to the natural surroundings. The tourist industry, as the novel suggests, abuses and the non-human world not only by using the land as a playing ground, but also by subjugating animals as objects and toys. In his didactic tone, the narrator educates the reader about the destructive consequences mass tourism can cause:

[The Whale Caller] grieves because of the new ways of watching whales. Despite the fact that the town is well suited for watching whales from its many cliffs, some entrepreneurs have introduced boat-based whale watching. [...] The Whale Caller has seen tourists getting off the boat and excitedly boasting of how they actually touched a whale when it came alongside a boat and peered at the passengers. [...] People enjoy it when they agitate the whales, even though they know that they are not allowed to do that. This troubles the Whale Caller. He has never touched a whale. He has never even touched Sharisha, except with his spirit – with his horn. There is no doubt in his mind that soon this boat-based whale watching will be abused. (pp. 118–19).

The colonial and apartheid alienation of many (urban) Black South Africans from the natural landscape along racial lines has shaped a lasting dichotomized thinking to the extent that rural landscapes are seen as backward and the non-human world primarily as a resource without spiritual value to urban, modern lives. This becomes explicit when his two human protagonists encounter a perlemoen poacher. The encounter highlights the vicious circle of poverty and abuse of the natural environment held so sacred by the forefathers. The Whale Caller is angry about the poacher and explains that only four perlemoens a day are allowed for self-consumption. He is enraged about finding a full sack of the protected mussels: 'But this is wrong. It is all wrong. Do you know how long it takes for those perlemoens to mature? Eight years. Eight years, I tell you' (p. 174). Saluni, as the social critical voice takes the side of the poverty-ridden poacher. The poacher explains his motives for poaching himself:

We have to eat sir [...]. We have got to feed our children. Big companies are making money out of these perlemoens. The government gives them quotas. 'What about us, sir? Do you think if I apply for quotas I will get them? How are we expected to survive? (p. 174).

A little later the poacher explains the politics of corruption and exploitation to the Whale Caller and by extension to the reader. There are established racial hierarchies in the illegal abalone trade.

Coloured folk sell their harvest to white men who pay around two hundred rands a kilogramme. The white men sell to the Chinese men for about a thousand rands a kilogram. The Chinese ship the abalone to the Far East where they get about two thousand five hundred rands a kilogramme for it. And these are the old prices. (p. 175).

The poaching industry seems to represent the South African nation in a microcosm. The irony of the 'new' South Africa is that it is the very people who have struggled for freedom and equality are involved in the international racial hierarchies and exploitation with the ordinary people at the bottom of the food chain. Although promoting his stance for environmentalism, Mda does not turn a blind eye to the conditions of the people whose daily survival is threatened in his campaign for the reservation of nature and animals. The attitude of the elite reveals a paradox (already familiar from *The Heart of Redness*) many Black South Africans believe that progress lies in technology and capitalism without realizing that their forefathers who led an ecologically conscious life were in fact progressive. The irony of civilization and progress becomes obvious that it is dangerously anti-progressive since the human world cuts itself off from natural resources.

Ecology seems to be a largely neglected topic in South Africa as people are concerned with their daily survival and have other worries than the protection of nature and animals. Mda had to experience first-hand that uttering environmental concerns is a luxury and a valuing of nature over humans. Mda criticizes the pampered black elites for their indifference towards ecological crises. Instead of talking to the people on re-valuing landscape and respectful treatment of nature, they ignore both the urban and rural poor people. Mda points to the political significance of environmentalism as the rural areas are directly affected by the consequences of pollution. This, however, is, according to him, not made explicit to the people. The problem, therefore, is not that black South Africans do not care about the environment, but that the discourse on environmental justice is not framed in a manner that relates directly to their lives.

Mda addresses important issues that are largely neglected in the post-apartheid era – or rejected as elitist or White. Through his characters, he provides a different view on landscape and recuperates its often neglected or forgotten cultural mystical stories. While the narrative does not offer any ready-made solutions, it does raise awareness on the link between poverty and the difficulty to lead an ecological

friendly life. Hence, he criticizes the political agents for neglecting the needs of rural and poor people in their efforts to live with nature. In order to explicate the importance of the ecology, Mda's creativity with environmental activism and his writings become a literature of public action. To this point, this work has analyzed the Whale Caller's home and its natural environment which is strongly influenced by two major incidents: the invasion of global capitalism in the form of tourism on the one hand and the Whale Caller's love triangle with whales and human beings.

(arts.studenttheses.ub.rug.nl/11020/1/MA_1586483_M_L_Timmerman.pdf, Jun 24, 2011).

3.6 Effects of Land Exploitation from the Original Inhabitants in *The Heart of Redness* and *The Whale Caller*

Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness*

Samuelson (2009) accuses Mda of romanticizing the Khoikhoi people as he treads dangerous ground in his descriptions of the Khoikhoi both in *The Heart of Redness* and in *The Whale Caller* as the original people of the land. According to Samuelson's analysis of religious hybridity in *The Heart of Redness*, Mda keeps Khoikhoi beliefs inviolable: 'Camagu comes to learn that 'the Khoikhoi people were singing the story of Heitsi Eibib long before the white missionaries came to these shores with their similar story of Moses and the crossing of the Red Sea' (p. 288). Thus, the Khoikhoi women – Qukezwa the first and second – are the bearers of a 'pure' and 'uncontaminated' African cultural tradition invested in the son, Heitsi. (p. 241). The assumption of any 'pure' culture is usually something Mda is eager to contest. However, Samuelson's sharp observation points to an interesting aspect of Mda's view on pre-colonial, traditional culture.

Mda uses characters that are most connected to African traditions, mysticism and the past, with implicit references to pre-colonial times that are indeed descendents of the Khoikhoi. Samuelson (2009) suggests what Mda does at times tend to stylize bearers of Khoikhoi identity, such as Zim and Qukezwa, as icons of the African Renaissance ideology. Hence, Zim and his daughter Qukezwa are the carriers of

ancient traditions, re-living and re-imagining their cultural heritage in the present. This is supported by Mda's use of language. The passages dealing with the myths and traditions of the Believers are written in a colourful poetic language which shows Mda's appreciation of ancient traditions. However, the descendents of the Khoikhoi such as Zim, Qukezwa and particularly Heitsi represent hybrid identities – it would therefore be too quick a judgment to accuse Mda of celebrating 'ethnic' purity. Even though he sometimes evokes the impression of romancing Khoikhoi culture, his overall narrative testifies that Mda generally manages to highlight the diversity and dynamism of cultures and to criticize essentialist views. This becomes most obvious in the representation of Qukezwa.

Qukezwa is the closest connection to her cultural past and traditions as well as to the natural and animal world. She is the embodiment of ancient myths and practices and has magic powers which are not fully understandable to the Western reader. Her character is constructed around different values and perceptions embodying African traditions and mythologies, life and culture. Her symbiotic relation with nature, culture and tradition makes her to communicate with animals and the ancestors by crossing borders between past and present, and between the human and non-human world. Consequently, Qukezwa has been characterized as representing 'a quintessential Africanness' (Lloyd, 2001, p. 36) or 'the quintessential ecofeminist' (Sewlall, 2007, p. 3).

Moreover, Qukezwa is a representative of a dying tradition – such as the *umngqokolo*, the art of split-tone singing – and culture as she 'is the only one left to carry the tradition of belief' (Mda, 2000, p. 47): 'She whistles and sings all at the same time. Many voices come from her mouth. Deep sounds that echo like the night. Sounds that have the heaviness of a steamy summer night. Flaming sounds that crackle like a veld fire. Light sounds that float like flakes of snow on top of the Amathole Mountains. Hollow sounds singing before. He [Camagu] once read of the amaXhosa mountain women who were good at split-tone singing. [...] He did not expect that this girl could be the guardian of a *dying tradition*. (p. 152).

Samuelson (2009) identifies the colourful and poetic language of the above as an illustration to the narrative's celebration of ancient tradition and Qukezwa's portrayal as ecocritical restoration of an 'African identity' (p. 237).

Furthermore, Qukezwa is represented as the keeper of ancient and natural wisdom. Her environmental activism is inspired mainly by the beauty of the landscape which evokes in her 'deep longing for what used to be' (p. 261). Thus, 'wonderful gambling city in all its crystal splendour and glory' (p. 310), she mentally travels back to pre-colonial times when nature was still untouched by modernization and colonial/Western invasions. She turns to nature and the past as sources for her present identity; the natural landscape thereby plays a crucial role in Qukezwa's identification process as it serves as storing places of memories (Mda, 2009b, p. 3). Dannenberg (2009) observes '[a] key aspect of the figure of Qukezwa on both time levels as an affinity with and deep knowledge of the local environment, which are represented as the most positive forces in the novel because they provide a concrete framework for forms of action and orientation which stay true to the spirit – and needs – of the local community. (p. 185)

Qukezwa displays a profound understanding of the local fauna and flora, lives with nature and is able to communicate with the non-human world. Her living of ancient traditions can be interpreted with her overall longing for the past and for her ancestors who still valued traditional lifestyle in harmony with nature. Through Qukezwa, Camagu and the reader come to understand the natural environment, the legacies and values inherited by the past and the significance of cultural traditions for her and by extension, for the South African nation. However, during one of Qukezwa's and Camagu's first encounters, she educates Camagu about the local plants. Camagu observes her chopping away some bushes with a panga which he perceives as a form of vandalism and destruction of beautiful plants. The narrative juxtaposes Camagu's perspective '[t]he chopping down of a stupid plant' (Mda, 2000, p. 90) to Qukezwa's own perception of her deed: 'Nice plants, eh? Nice for you, maybe. But not nice for indigenous plants. This is

the inkberry. It comes from across the Kei River. It kills other plants. These flowers that you like so much will eventually become berries. Each berry is a prospective plant that will kill the plants of my forefathers. And this plant is poisonous to animals too, although its berries are not. Birds eat the berries without any harm, and spread these terrible plants with their droppings. (p. 90).

Afterwards, Qukezwa is summoned by a traditional court for cutting down all the ‘enemy trees’ without even having any need for them. At first, her activism is judged by the Unbelievers as an act of madness. Most of the elders, however, admit to Qukezwa’s reasoning that in order for the indigenous plants to flourish again, their space needs to be regained and the foreign trees which spread like parasites therefore need to be cut off. One of the elders even ‘mutters his wonder at the source of Qukezwa’s wisdom when she is but a slip of a girl’ (p. 216). Though, she gains the elders’ respect with her ecological wisdom. Her claim in favour for the preservation of the indigenous fauna and flora displays what Sewlall (2007) calls her ‘intuitive ecological awareness’ (p. 10). He remarks that, ‘[t]hese traditional laws may be rooted in superstition, or even, religious injunction, but they effectively legislate on matters of conservation’ (p. 7). Qukezwa’s retrieving of local wisdom and practices turn her into the safe keeper of natural beauty. According to Dannenberg (2009) ‘Qukezwa is thus depicted as applying specific knowledge and observation of the local environment as part of a contemporary ecological form of post-colonial restoration of the Eastern Cape’ (p. 187).

In the same vein, Qukezwa represents the ambiguous mechanisms of restorative and reflective nature/culture dialectic. Although Qukezwa can be identified as restoring African indigenous and traditional identity to the chronotope of the present Qolorha by ecocritically turning to the past, she does not represent a static understanding of traditions. In other words, while Qukezwa seems to be the incarnation of tradition and the past, she also challenges certain aspects of her culture’s ancient practices. When she appears in court, accused of cutting trees, the elders remind her of her status according to

traditional law: 'You are a minor still. Even if you were thirty or fifty you would still be a minor as long as you are not married', explains Chief Xikixa' (p. 213).

Qukezwa, however, is neither intimidated by the elders, nor by the laws or the traditions. She pays respect to the elders explains that she indeed acts for the natural surrounding and in favour of the traditions that regulate a respectful living with landscape and animals. Qukezwa counters the patriarchal static system, which still denies females the right of voice and agency. She, in line with her unabashed nature, suggests that the law must be changed. Thus, Qukezwa looks to the past to inspire her present life; she does not stagnate in the past. Through her, the narrative emphasizes that culture and tradition are dynamic and, in fact, modern. Gohrisch (2006) suggests '[h]er function in the novel is to preserve and pass on the knowledge about alternative ways of life' (p. 242). Also, with the help of Qukezwa's depiction, the present quality of historical memory and traditional knowledge is illuminated – knowledge which is not learned in schools. Besides, the significance of the past in the present is rehabilitated. In that way, Qukezwa represents not only her own, but also the implied author's postcolonial ecocriticism.

However, Qukezwa's activism for the conservation of indigenous plants also potent dangers. Qukezwa aims to restore the natural landscape to a pre-colonial state. This, however, poses difficulties since the alien plants have been implanted and 'found a home' on the African landscape for several centuries. In her argument, the act of imposing alien plants on the colonies represents a form of subjugation of nature by Western culture. Her act of destroying everything Western seems to be a reversal of the colonial practices appropriating local landscapes as their playing grounds. Besides, Qukezwa parallels the implantation of foreign plants and trees with the threat induced by the prospects of a gambling city and American tourists fooling around in the sea and Nongqawuse's Valley. She thereby constructs the West one-dimensionally as a poisonous force.

Qukezwa's rejection of all Western influence is a form of erecting borders and therefore counter-productive to nation-building and to finding realistic solutions of dealing with conversation and preservation in a globalized world. While her activism in favour of the preservation of local landscape is extremely important, it also seems crucial to deal with the botanical plurality. The narrative demonstrates that in order to meet the demands of globalization, Qukezwa and the Believers also need to revise their attitude toward progress by finding a constructive way to deal with modernization.

Although it is important to gain space for the native vegetation again, it is also vital to figure out the imported plants as part of today's flora and fauna translated into society, thereby valuing contemporary South Africa's diversity. The novel gives a largely optimistic outlook to the possibility of negotiating African and Western, local and global demands in Qukezwa's and Camagu's final union. To this end, Qukezwa is represented as a keeper of traditions, teaching her (ecological) wisdom and thus assuring the continuity of historical memory. Her restorative ecocritical tendencies bear both dangerous and excluding elements as well as positive elements, and her (postcolonial) ecocritical recollections are not sentimental trivialities but carry significant weight for the restoration of the Xhosa and South African identity.

(<http://scholarbank.nus.edu.sg/bitstream/10635/121128/6/Ch%201%20-%20Introduction.pdf>).

Zakes Mda's Ways of Dying

Colonialism and land possession is identified by Mda as the primary cause for the suffering of the black people in South Africa. The double standards of the nationalists are shown in their opposition to colonialism and apartheid theoretically for the liberation of all the oppressed but pragmatically for the benefit of the elite. Mda painfully acknowledges the continued presence of poverty and suffering in post-apartheid South Africa. Toloki's assertion that it is not my fault that these people are poor (p. 6). This is the cause of poverty among the masses of the people. Mda seeks to explore the exact problem that is responsible for the plight of the poor. He notes, for instance, that the people who dispossessed Africans of

their land are indeed culprits. For the situation to be corrected, he suggests an efficacious and equitable land redistribution programme.

He juxtaposes the black people's village landscape with the Boer's farms. Toloki's journey from the village to the city expresses the unfair land distribution in South Africa, because he walked through semi-arid lands that stretched for many miles, where the Boers farmed ostriches and prickly pears (p. 58). Conversely, Noria's memory of the village is the [p]ale herd boys, with mucus hanging from the nostrils, looking after cattle whose ribs you could count, on barren hills with sparse grass and shrubs (p. 23). The lean cattle and barren hills are partly a result of overgrazing, which is in turn due to shortage of land for black people.

Besides, Mda emphasizes the need for land redistribution by pointing out that it is not only black people's livestock that is running out of space; the people too are victims of this malice. As a result, many black people live in squatter camps (p. 42). Toloki remembers that, they do not like to be called squatters. How can we be squatters on our own land, in our own country? ... squatters are those who came from across the seas and stole our land (p. 42). Mandela also sounds bitter about the squatter status of the African people in their own land and he explains its genesis, the white man was hungry and greedy for land, and the black man shared the land with him as they shared the air and water; land was not for a man to possess. But the white man took land as you might seize another man's horse (Mandela, 1994, p. 27).

www.literator.org.za/index.php/literator/article/viewfile/88/752009.

Meli (1988) supports the redistribution of resources and warns that this is quite a complex issue as the destroying separation is relatively very easy:

We take over and away with racial laws. But how do we destroy inequality?

When people have been disadvantaged for 300 years, this must affect their culture, their economy, their interests, needs, aspirations and levels of

development, education and skills – in fact every-thing. So, once we destroy apartheid, there is still inequality. It will not be easy for Whites to lose all their privileges but, if we want real equality in daily practice, not only formally in law, this question will have to be addressed (pp. 66-75).

The aftermath of land dispossession is evidently horrifying and terrible. An immediate example is the migrant labour system that Mda alludes to. The migrant labour system separates families and sometimes breaks them up. Children grow up without nurturing and meaningful relationship with both parents and they are deprived of role models. Moreover, the division of labour in the domestic sphere forces the socialization of children to be only one parent's duty, that is, the mother. Mda depicts this practice as commonplace in apartheid South Africa. At home these children whose socialization is only the province of their mothers would receive an unbalanced parental perspective and guidance, because one of the parents is hardly at home. As if that is not enough, young women whose husbands are migrant workers in the mines are sometimes overwhelmed by natural desires that have to be suppressed due to this forced separation. Some become unfaithful to their men leading to unwanted pregnancies that the likes of that Mountain Woman help to abort.

Mda underscores the omissions of the nationalists on class dynamics in the liberation struggle as they portrayed it as unified with shared goals, vision and values. He points out that the silences in the liberation struggle benefit the elite at the expense of the betrayed masses. His silence about some of the critical issues in post-apartheid South Africa is not intended to promote the interests of some at the expense of the others as the nationalists did, but for the purposes of focus on his message. Moreover, Ibinga (2006), notes Mda's subversion of nationalist politics in that in *Ways of Dying*, for instance, there is a 'sudden shift

away from a traditional perspective on the political struggle (p. 3) caused by Mda's commitment to expose the omissions of the nationalists on gender, ethnicity and class issues.

In the light of the above, Fowler (1995) sadly notes that '[o]ne of the legacies of colonialism that stands in the way of Africa's liberation is the syndrome of dependence. Its most obvious symptom is economic dependence, but its deepest root is intellectual dependence' (p. 155). Mda seems to be aware of this for he portrays his characters refusing to be dependent. For instance, when Toloki is dog-tired, famished, penniless and virtually helpless, he refuses to be dependent for food on a passer-by who does not want to be paid back for the help he offers. He maintains that, he 'would rather rummage for scraps of food in the rubbish bins or steal, to steal is better than to beg (p. 52). He claims that he does not accept alms; he does not accept charity and insists on doing some job for the man in return. Although Toloki identifies himself in the light of the aghori sadhu, held in the awesome veneration for the devout Hindus show the votaries ... he shuns the collection of alms. Votary or no votary, he will not collect alms ... he is glad that even in his dreams he is strong enough not to take a cent he has not worked for. (pp. 10-11.).

Similarly, when Toloki offers to foot the bill when they hire a car to collect building material for Noria's house, Noria refuses. She, too, does not want to accept something she has not worked for. Through these examples, Mda seems to caution the nation against the dependency syndrome. Perhaps he is persuaded that South Africans should not depend on foreign aid or foreign nations, for history have shown that this does more harm than good. It perpetuates exploitation and dominance and delays people-driven development and total liberation. It further makes the dependent structure their policies in accordance with the needs or will of the people or nations on which they depend. In view of the fact that Mda discourages the dependency syndrome and the world economy is so integrated, it is essential that South Africans should realize the difference between pity and solidarity with other countries. Pity disempowers and solidarity empowers; hence Toloki does not appreciate the pity of the man who gives him food.

While discouraging the dependency syndrome, Mda encourages the people not to sit back and simply assume that socio-economic liberation will descend like manna from heaven. He seems to suggest that delivery should come from below and from above, from both the rulers/leadership and the ruled/public. While Noria is committed to the kind of delivery, which comes from below, Janabari and Sergeant, in *We shall sing for the fatherland*, are unhappy that there is no delivery from above; the rulers have neglected them. Noria tells Toloki that Madimbhaza's place is where I do some work for the community (p. 99). Sergeant complains that he is hungry and neglected by the government in the 'land we liberated with our sweat and blood' (Mda, 1990, p. 44). As we observe later, things are made by the fact that even black capitalists refuse to be socially responsible.

Discrimination is also evident in various institutions like hospitals and schools. The narrator states that, [t]he municipality was going to introduce the water cistern for the well-to-do families, and pit-latrines for the poorer ones (p. 96). Further, we learn that in one hospital the ... ward is overcrowded. There are twenty beds packed into a small room, which is really meant to take only ten or so beds. Some patients are sleeping on thin mattresses under the beds. ... The smell of infection and methylated spirits chokes them (p. 131). This means that access to better social services in this society is influenced by economic status. The implication for the post-apartheid South Africa then is that the quality of life for the poor will continue to deteriorate. The more Mda exposes the world in which the poor people live, the more the reader notices that the poor's lot is not worth much. For instance, at the informal settlement, Toloki walks through a quagmire of dirty water and human odour that runs through the streets (p. 42). This is reminiscent of Mphahlele's (1989) story 'Down the quiet street' in *The drum decade: stories from the 1950s*. In this story, Mphahlele questions the poor standards of living for blacks in the townships and, like Mda, he notes that there is dirty water running down the streets and the dirt is appalling.

This class asymmetrical state of affairs clearly echoes Jacobs and Calland's (2003) observation that ... there are grave socio-economic problems in the country. All the indicators show that the inequalities under apartheid have survived, and have worsened in some respects. South Africa is ranked as the third unequal society in the world, surpassed only by Brazil and Guatemala. (COSATU, 2001.) This then clearly shows that the liberation struggle had elements of perpetual pursuit of self-interests camouflaged as national interests. This is one of the reasons why Lazarus concurs with Fanon (quoted in Lazarus, 1990) in his argument that ... anticolonial nationalism was animated above all by frustration. All along, it was aimed not at national liberation but at securing for its constituencies (the national middle class) the political power that, under the colonial system, was unattainable. Its project was framed by the desire to 'inherit' the colonial state apparatus. Its goal was not, therefore, the *over-throw* of the colonial state, but on the contrary, its *capture* and *appropriation* (pp. 108-109).

Mda, like Fanon, posits that post-apartheid is in many ways parallel to colonialism. The new elite seem to thrive on the backs of the masses whose vision has since atrophied. Lazarus (1990) maintains that, despite their rhetoric, it was not capitalism as such but only foreign domination that reformist nationalists in Africa were eager to contest. This is confirmed by Mandela's statement that the Freedom Charter was not a blueprint for socialism but for African-style capitalism (Mandela, 1994, p. 642). One is yet to come across the merits of the African-style capitalism for at the moment more than a decade after the 'charterists' took control of government, the conditions of the poor seem to be deteriorating.

On the basis of this, Nzongola-Ntalaja (1987) cautions that not all national liberation struggles are liberation struggles. He argues that, '[A]s political independence alone is not the final result of the national liberation struggle; a nationalist movement may be struggling against foreign political domination or the purely political aspects of imperialism, but not for genuine national liberation' (p. 35). Ndebele (1983) also critiques the nascent black middle class values that Mda discerns in the post-apartheid era in South Africa.

In Ndebele's 'The test' in *Fools and other stories* (1983), Thoba rebels against his middle class status and isolation. He pledges solidarity with the underprivileged children in the township by yearning to have cracked feet like Nana, Vusi and Simangele who had no shoes. Similarly, in Mda's novel, Toloki also pledges solidarity with Noria in that he does not want to wear his shoes, because Noria does not have any to wear. Instead of this kind of solidarity between the middle and lower class, there is oppression, exploitation, victimization, tensions and animosity. This is the manifestation of the class problems that the nationalists have suppressed for their strategic interests.

It could be argued that, in emphasizing national liberation, the interests of the working class are submerged with respect to the fact that the broad liberation movement presents the national struggle as a classless unitary struggle. Wolpe (1988) envisages that 'the struggle for national liberation is bound to result in a sacrifice of the interests of the black working class, which bears the major burden of that struggle. Consequently, like Nzongola-Ntalaja and Ngugi, Wolpe advocates the 'two-stage theory' (p. 56). This theory suggests that the simultaneity of social, political, economic and national emancipation in the post-apartheid era is nothing but an illusion. Proponents of this theory argue that history has shown that national consciousness and national liberation do not equal class consciousness and class emancipation.

Moreover, they draw attention to the fact that the liberation struggle is multidimensional. For social and economic liberation to take place, it was necessary that in South Africa it should be preceded by political liberation. Black people could not have been socially and economically liberated had apartheid and colonialism not been done away with. Nzongola-Ntalaja (1987) adds that, Cabral's second major contribution to the theory of the national liberation struggle resides in his demonstration that the struggle consists of two phases – the national and the social, with the latter being more crucial to its ultimate denouement.

Mbingi (2000) goes a step further than the two-stage theory and proposes a three-stage theory. He subscribes to the view that the first phase of national liberation is civil liberation – the right to vote, freedom of speech, freedom of association and so on; the second one is political liberation – freedom to govern the country; and the last one is economic liberation – economic sovereignty. He argues that most African countries only reach phase two and become stagnant or regress. He is greatly disturbed that no African country has attained the economic phase of the struggle against poverty and his fear is that no political freedom can be sustained with empty stomachs. The nationalists' failure to live up to their promises and meet the expectations of the poor leads to bitterness, disappointment and anger. This is expressed by Noria in *Ways of Dying* and Sergeant and Janabari in *We shall sing for the fatherland*. It is also noticeable when Njooki, in *I will marry when I want* (Ngugi, 1980) expresses her disillusionment and disappointment about freedom as she sings: When we fought for freedom I'd thought that we the poor would milk grade cows. In the past I used to eat wild spinach. Today I am eating the same (p. 39).

In *Ways of Dying* we learn that Noria's petticoat has seen better days, and like [Toloki's] venerable costume, it is held together by pieces of wire and safety pins (p. 142). Sergeant and Janabari wear old ragged military uniforms. The poor have not realized the material benefits they fought for; it is only the rich who have, as Mafutha is portrayed as a well-dressed portly fellow (p. 34) and Nefolovhodwe is portrayed as [a] fat man in a white suit (p. 189). Undoubtedly, the black elite have gone wild in their opulence and ostentation, an element which stratifies the black society further. Owing to their lack of material benefits, the recently achieved freedom in South Africa is meaningless to Janabari and Sergeant for it does not address their economic needs. They are disillusioned because freedom has not yielded tangible benefits. The leaders have betrayed the cause of the South African revolution as the outcome of the struggle does not coincide with the expectations of the peasants (Ogude, 1999, p. 25).

Also, Mda's analysis of the problem of class in nationalist discourse gives us a compelling context to examine the dynamics of the national liberation struggle. His focus on class conflict and contradictions among the black majority reveals new possibilities of understanding the liberation struggle as complex and far from the unitary process many nationalist leaders tend to project. This exposure would help the people to understand and reject nationalist myths and false promises by exposing the camouflaged interests and motives of the nationalists. As part of the definition of terms in this research work, one can evidently see how class is being used in *Ways of Dying* from the points given above.

Taking into cognizance the assumption of political power by the African petit bourgeoisie, one would probably find Ngugi's xenophobia understandable: Ngugi wa Thiongo's xenophobia is of a different sort. He is not afraid of people but of an economic system that oppresses Africans, making them subservient to Western interests. He places his faith not in politicians, landowners or other representatives of the over privileged African elite but in the masses – the ordinary peasants and workers, who, he hopes, will one day rise up and overthrow their oppressors, establishing a more equitable economic system in the process. He is not a misanthrope but a Marxist (Lindfors, 1997, p. 158).

The question of class seems to be quite frustrating to the underclass in many postcolonial states in Africa. This is because this question has been suppressed in many liberation struggles in the African continent. Amuta (1989) attributes this suppression to the fact that 'the colonial heritage of the African continent coupled with the near absolute absence of an industrial capitalist class in Africa by the late 1950s and early 1960s creates a context in which national liberation ... takes precedence over the class question (p. 62). Amuta's account of the suppression of class issues is one among others, and whatever else one may use to account for the silence; the crux of the matter is that the suppression of the class question is a frustration and disappointment to the peasants and workers.

The negligence and betrayal of the interests and aspirations of the underclass is rather of the nationalists. For instance, Aronson (1990) argues that the equality and good life for all that the ANC claimed to be pursuing was only a camouflage to get state power for the benefit of the nationalists. He notes that the ANC does not: ... aim at a radical social transformation beyond abolishing apartheid. As many of its critics within the liberation struggle point out, the ANC/UDF movement, which takes the Freedom Charter as its touchstone, is committed to a respectable, moderate, and Universalist vision – a middle class vision of a non-racial South Africa governed by a broad coalition of social forces. (Aronson, 1990, p. 128).

According to Stratton (1994) the assessment of the liberation struggle is quite encouraging, for it shows the discrepancy between promises and fulfillment, theory and practice, of the liberation struggle as well as the perpetual suffering of the underclass even after independence. Mda is also persuaded that within the national liberation struggle there are elements of greed for state power and money. Hence, the perpetual poverty of the masses portrayed in *Ways of Dying* does not take him by surprise.

However, it comes as a disappointment to those who had cherished the dream that national liberation would mean the liberation of everybody. If national liberation proves to be the liberation of the few middle class elite, as portrayed in *We shall sing for the fatherland* (1981), then how can the new nation be truly free to determine its own destiny? These are some of the questions that inform the writing of some of Mda's works like *We shall sing for the fatherland* and *Ways of Dying*. These texts confront the dissonances, contradictions and omissions of nationalist literature by questioning the meaning of freedom when people are still landless, jobless, homeless and insecure while the opposite is true for the middle class minority.

Mda's *We shall sing for the fatherland* is a story of two men whose neglect and isolation in post-apartheid South Africa has reduced them into hoboes. They participated in the liberation struggle and

cherished its ideals. Prior to national liberation, they fought together with those who drive them to the periphery of the society in post-apartheid South Africa. Owing to their betrayal, they question the meaning of freedom as it has not met their expectations for social and financial relief. What makes matters worse is that they are now oppressed not by the whites but by the very blacks with whom they fought for liberation. For this reason, Mandela warns we are sitting on a time bomb ... their enemy is now you and me, people who drive a car and have a house ... and it's a very grave situation (Jacobs & Calland, 2003, p. 41).

Owing to the continuous suffering of the poor, Mda is at war with apartheid and its attendant social evils including its economic system. The fact that even in the new South Africa there are still millions of people suffering because of poverty and a select few who benefit from the new system makes Mda question the nature, trend and pace of transformation of apartheid policies. It could be argued that the nationalist leadership that took over power after the democratic elections never defined in advance how, when and what apartheid's social and economic policies would be replaced with. In fact, it is such uncertainties within the liberation struggle that Mda exposes as they tend to have deleterious effects on the poor.

In *Ways of Dying*, it is poverty that drives Noria into prostitution. Interestingly, the oppression of black people that manifests itself through poverty leads the oppressed to use apartheid's ridiculous and oppressive laws to turn against it. Noria's involvement in prostitution serves as a dual purpose. It alleviates her poverty and undermines the apartheid system. Now she affords some luxury that she could not afford before and she enjoys ridiculing the Colour Bar Act that forbade any form of sexual relationship between blacks and whites. For instance, at the hotel, Noria learnt the art of entertaining white men (p. 80). Having ridiculed the apartheid laws, she turns against the church, which played a vital role in the colonization of the African people as she is one of the prostitutes who work for the Bible Society. This is a clear mockery of the church's claim to moral integrity. It exposes the double moral standards applied by this institution. The diabolic Afrikaner government was based on the doctrines of the Christian church and Mda seems to

have a problem in reconciling its claim to righteousness and holiness with the evil it does on the lives of black people. The church made way for apartheid capitalism which Janabari and Sergeant in *We shall sing for the fatherland* view as responsible for their misery.

CHAPTER FOUR

URBANATURAL ROOSTING: AN ECOCRITICAL ANALYSIS IN MDA'S NOVELS

4.1 Introduction

In recent years, ecological literary criticism has moved from the margins of the academy to become an increasingly mainstream mode of analysis, more so than in Romanticist circles. Early new historicist scholarship in the 1980s tended to view Romantic writing about nature as evading fields of social, economic, and political struggle. Beginning in the 1990s, Jonathan Bate, Karl Kroeber, Lawrence Buell, James McKusick and others seek to reassert the primacy of nature in the Romantic enterprise and to retrieve Romantic environmental thought as a foundation for a new ecopolitics appropriate to the age of global warming.

To this point, Romantic ecocriticism risks becoming as rigid as the new historicist skepticism it displaced, giving a version of the Romantics that largely echoes twenty-first-century ecological sensibilities, and so inviting a new wave of critical and revisionary accounts. The most prominent recent intervention in Romantic ecocriticism has been led by Timothy Morton, who in a pair of influential books--*Ecology Without Nature* (2007) and *The Ecological Thought* (2010)--challenged the basic assumptions of virtually all ecological thought, mainstream and radical, of the last two centuries. Morton argues that the concept of Nature is an aestheticized abstraction that feeds into anthropocentric fantasies of domination, and has done more ecological harm than good.

Nichols's (2011) *Beyond Romantic Ecocriticism* enters this contested terrain with a call for an environmental criticism grounded in what he calls 'urbanature.' Although Nichols's book is less iconoclastic towards main-stream ecocriticism than Morton's work, the two authors share a suspicion towards the concept of 'Nature' as it has traditionally been applied. The conventional view of nature denotes wilderness; spaces are 'natural' to the extent that they are uninhabited or unaffected by human

beings and correspondingly spaces that have been cultivated or transformed by human activity are ‘unnatural’. In accord with much recent ecocritical work, Nichols (2011) rejects this view of nature as something apart from and inherently imperiled by human civilization, and instead uses the term ‘urbanature’ to articulate the ‘idea that human beings are never cut off from wild nature by human culture’ (p. xv). Where Morton argues that ecocriticism needs to cast off the concept of nature altogether, Nichols argues for expanding our sense of nature to encompass human beings and the spaces we cultivate and develop. (<http://www.freepatentsonline.com/article/College-Literature/298752193.html>).

Urbanature suggests that all humans and nonhuman lives as well as all animate objects around those lives which are linked in a complex web of interdependent interrelatedness. Nichols (2011) argues that the historical dangers of a romantic version of nature needs to be replaced by ‘urbanatural roosting’, a view that sees urban life and the natural world as closely linked and argues for humans to live more lightly on the planet, the way virtually all other species do. (www.wikiwand.com/en/Ecocriticism). The focus of this Chapter therefore explains the way Mda employs urbanatural roosting in *The Heart of Redness*, *The Whale Caller* and *Ways of Dying*.

4.2 Urbanatural Roosting in *The Heart of Redness*, *The Whale Caller* and *Ways of Dying*

Zakes Mda’s *The Heart of Redness*

Camagu’s Connectedness to Majola Snake and Landscape

Camagu is identified to undergo a transformation at the course of the narrative: ‘from the beginning, he relies on Western knowledge and rationality. He is more drawn towards the side of the Unbelievers and wonders ‘why the Believers are so bent on opposing development that seems to be of benefit to everyone in the village’ (p. 71). However, he carefully appreciates the local mythical and spiritual aura. One of the key events that brings back Camagu’s cultural connectedness and confronts him with his own traditional roots is his encounter with a brown mole snake. On one of his first days in

Qolorha, he finds a snake in his bed and is overjoyed because the Majola snake is the totem of his amaMpondomise clan: Camagu is beside himself with excitement. He has never been visited by Majola, the brown mole snake which is the totem of his clan. He has heard in stories how the snake visits every newborn child; how it sometimes pays a visit to chosen members of the clan to give them good fortune. He is the chosen one today. (p. 98)

Camagu's encounter with his totem, however, brings back his historical and cultural memory as he celebrates his lucky encounter. It is this encounter with his totem which opens Camagu's awareness and appreciation of local traditions and their link to mythical interpretations of the world that have been passed on from generation to generation. Camagu does not think of traditions and the celebration of myths as backward or reactionary but rather grows even more appreciative of them than most of the villagers. In fact, the encounter with the Majola snake is one of the key incidents which encourage Camagu to look at the past, at historical memory and appreciate the cultural practices and traditions which symbolize a coherence of past and present. According to Chase and Shaw (1989), traditions are represented as the means by which our own lives are connected with the past. Tradition is the enactment and dramatization of continuity; it is the thread which binds our separate lives to the broad canvas of history. (p. 11).

Ecocriticism is deeply entangled with the practices of tradition, not only, as Chase and Shaw (1989) point out, because they share a conservative nature through which the past is filtered and manipulated to serve particular purposes in the present but also in a more positive way. As the example of Camagu suggests, the totem, as part of tradition, reconnects Camagu with his cultural self. Moreover, Bell (2009) suggests the fact that the well-educated Camagu recognizes his own totem suggests relevance for the African belief system in contemporary and modern South Africa (p. 23). Also, Camagu's encounter with his totem strengthens his identity as an African from the amaMpondomise clan. Though, the experience of

his cultural roots brings him to identify and accept alternative ways to Western mainstream thinking. Thereafter, Camagu is more critical of the dangers of capitalist development to both landscape and culture.

In Qolorha, Camagu's choice in search of his cultural and historical self is designed by three female attractions. First, Camagu is caught by the magic of tradition through NomaRussia's voice. Qukezwa, the female bearer of 'Africanness' attracts not only Camagu's sexual but also his cultural desires and appreciation of ancient traditions and the natural environment. In Johannesburg, Camagu feels empty, disoriented and drained of his enthusiasm to make South Africa his home as symbolized by his lack of dreams: 'Camagu used to see himself as a peddler of dreams. That was when he could make things happen. Now he has lost his touch. He needs a peddler of dreams himself, with a bag full of dreams waiting to be dreamt. A whole storage full of dreams.' (p. 36)

In Qolorha, Camagu finds his peddler of dreams in the natural landscape and Qukezwa. They both inspire his mystical imagination, his link to the past and to the myth of the surroundings, his connection to his clan and his ancestors as well as to culture and tradition. Moreover, Dannenberg (2009) points out, 'Qukezwa commences his cultural reeducation in the realities of the local natural environment' (p. 185). Qukezwa introduces Camagu to the natural environment of Nongqawuse's valley – the place where Camagu finally gets '[r]estored to a sense of local identity' (p. 188). In line with Mda's understanding of landscape, the natural world, trees, rivers, plants are the bearers of the past – at the same time they inhabit the passage of time; the past, the present and the future.

Owing to Camagu's encounter with Qukezwa, he is also drawn into the mystical world and the rich heritage of the Xhosa people. This move suggests an opening up of the modern identity towards the appreciation of traditional culture. Instead of seeing the appreciation of local colour as a backward entity, the narrative demonstrates the dynamism of traditional life. Thus, the value and the importance of negotiating the different and seemingly opposing forces, modern and traditional, in contemporary society

in terms of personal and national identity are emphasized. The dreams that Camagu needs to dream are stored in the landscape of memories to which he finds access and appreciation through Qukezwa. At the end of the novel, Camagu is a character who can make things happen again. He is embedded in a family and established home when he marries Qukezwa and settles permanently in Qolorha: 'Although he has not said it in so many words, he regards Qolorha as his home now, and it is reasonable for Dalton to suspect he will not be thinking of going to America or even back to Johannesburg in the near future. He often says this is the most beautiful place in the world'. (p. 139)

Furthermore, Camagu also becomes an active and accepted member of the village community when Nongqawuse's valley is declared a heritage site and the backpacker eco-tourism project and cooperative he set up turns out to be profiting the local community. In his encounter with the villagers, he is 'spiritually transformed' (Lloyd, 2001, p. 35); he re-discovers his own traditional roots and finds his new home amongst the community of Qolorha: 'His sojourn at the village actually initiates a process of rediscovering his Xhosa identity, lost to him during the long years of exile' (Lloyd, 2001, p. 37). Qolorha is the place where Camagu has found his soul.

More so, the past provides a significant source of meaning and healing in the present. Ancestors therefore play a key role in the lives of the present characters (Believers or Unbelievers). For instance, Bhonco's belief in the ancestors and the Otherworld permits him to follow mystical practices in order to commune with the ancestors. Koyana, (2003) the movements between past and present 'are connected to African spirituality as it manifests itself in this particular place' (p. 59). The rural village of Qolorha is a place that lives by myths and magic which gives expression to the Xhosa's belief system. In Xhosa cosmology, the afterworld and the presence of the past in the present through spirits, ancestors and their messengers form the very basis of everyday life (Koyana, 2003, p. 59). As spiritual beings, the ancestors become mediators between ordinary mortals and God. Life in the world of the ancestors is a continuation

of life on earth and thus transgresses a Western linear understanding of time. Consequently, in accordance with the narrative's breaking from Western chronology, ancestors represent a frequent trope in the novel.

The Unbelievers commune with their ancestors in a trance dance, an age-old tradition borrowed from the abaThwa people, who are often referred to as the 'original people' of Southern Africa. According to Bhonco's logic, the trance dance helps the Unbelievers to induce sadness and thus supports their cult of being 'such sombre people that they do not believe even in those things that can bring happiness to their lives' (Mda, 2000, p. 3). It is important to note that the spiritual re-living of the past does not bring the Unbelievers to the Otherworld, the world of the ancestors that runs parallel to his world' (p. 262) but to the past world where the ancestors lived in flesh and blood before they died and entered the Otherworld (p. 73).

However, what the Unbelievers find in the past fills them with happiness for the present and future. The journey to the past virtual world is a temporary escape from the present and gives the present selves strength to cope with the challenges of their daily lives. Thus, their return to the past bears ecocritical elements, and the trance dance becomes a way to access and connect with their cultural past world. Moreover, their mental journey to the past is not rationally questioned or devalued as a trivial, dreamy longing to connect to a bygone past. For example, in Xhosa cosmology, time is not understood as linear but as cyclic. Thus, the connection between the world of the living and the world of the dead is not separated from each other but, rather, the world of the ancestors gives meaning and strength to the world of the living. From the above, it will be deduced that the past time runs across different cultures and world views which supports and demonstrates the study's thesis that nature/culture is observed as human condition and psychological strategy for human beings to connect their present with their past in order to endure or find meaning in the present and the future.

The Unbelievers' memory ritual becomes a survival strategy in the present. Accordingly, it is almost an existential shock to them when the abaThwa demand their dance back: 'But how are we going to survive without the dance? How are we going to induce sadness in our lives without visiting the sad times of the forefathers?' (p. 188). This therefore suggests that the past also functions as a source of appreciating the present through conveyed and imagined experiences.

Gohrisch (2006) writes that, '[t]he irony of the memory-ritual draws the reader's attention to the changed realities in South Africa, which call for a critical rewriting of the disconnected past to enable a shared future' (p. 241). Hence, ecocritical elements in such traditional practices like the trance dance can provide a link between past, present and future. While accepting the reversed logic and the ability to connect timescapes, the traditional and spiritual act of the trance dance can be analyzed as an ecocritical practice which helps to provide access to different temporal dimensions.

The Believers Relationship to the Environment in *The Heart of Redness*

As the Unbelievers celebrate their cult of unbelief, the Believers also celebrate their cult of belief by rejecting Western progress. Moreover, the Believers' ecocritical sense is entangled with their ancestral home and its natural surroundings. This becomes most explicit in Zim and Qukezwa, who are portrayed as the characters with ecocritical attachment to the landscape. Hence, Zim does not question his place on earth; his place is Qolorha while his community is the Believers. Zim talks passionately about his valley: 'When he began to walk, he walked in this valley. He looked after cattle in this valley. He was circumcised here. His grandfather's fields were here. His whole life is centered in this valley. He is one with Intlambo-ka-Nongqawuse – Nongqawuse's Valley'. (p. 46). Zim often visits Nongqawuse's Pool and recalls the prophecies in his yearning for the days before the colonial invasion destroyed amaXhosa tradition as well as the natural landscape.

Furthermore, the Believers are constantly in contact with their ancestors through communication with birds and bees, which are messengers, and through talking in whistles, in ‘the language of the spirits’ (p. 117). The Believers take inspiration and meaning from the myths and practices of the past and the Otherworld. The ancestors communicate with Zim in particular, whose worldview is deeply rooted in the myths and traditions of his culture, through birds, bees and the natural world. Zim ‘[u]nlike Bhonco, [...] does not mourn the past but communicates with the world of the present ancestors’ (p. 36). The strong connection to the ancestors is also carried on by his daughter and sometimes, ‘[t]hey both sound like birds of the forest’ (p. 46).

Qukezwa is the living link to the ancestor in the present and the hope of carrying the traditions into the future. Su (2005) points to the significance of the ancestor figure as representing the reconnection to cultural knowledge and traditions. In South Africa, these were largely suppressed by colonial/apartheid states and ignored by historiography: ‘The ancestor figure becomes the crucial mediator between a late imperial or postcolonial present and a pre-colonial past, and the reconnection with the ancestor figure enables the recovery and transmission of memory to the next generation.’ (p. 13). The communication with and belief in the ancestors becomes a ‘restitutive link’ (Davis, 1979, p. 36) between the pre-colonial past and the postcolonial present. Thus, Zim’s and Qukezwa’s ecocritical re-imagination thereby become a way to connect the present culture with the past nature/culture and to thereby establish natural/cultural coherence.

Furthermore, Qukezwa’s and the Believers’ ecocritical reasoning for the times before the colonial disruption can be seen as a reaction to the dangers of contemporary disruption –the forces of capital globalization entering the village. The social systems and natural environments can be an important trajectory for creating alternatives in the present and for the future. Turner (1987) implies historical decline and loss, involving a departure from some golden age of ‘homefulness.’ This sense of loss is a feature of

historical and social upheaval: 'The ecological mood is of particular importance in contemporary cultures in association with the loss of rural simplicity, traditional stability and cultural integration following the impact of industrial, urban, capitalist culture on feudal social organization. (p. 150)

Consequently, Zim's harking back to the past; the Believers' can be positively interpreted as countering the capitalist/neo-imperial forces which will eventually substitute local traditions and rural values for global homogenization and urban anonymity. By including the Believers' narrative, the pre-colonial past, as well as the cultural practices during colonialism are rehabilitated, it is an elusive phenomenon with ambiguous forces. While it is a way for the Believers to make sense of their cultural selves in the disruptive times of globalization, they are also in danger of hindering their own development by idealizing the past through restorative forms.

Aesthetic Relationship between Nature and Culture in *The Heart of Redness*

Hammond-Tooke (1997) observes that the diviner in Mda's *The Heart of Redness* is typically described in anthropological literature as a link between nature and culture, providing a channel through which the primal energies may effectively be managed in the civic sphere. Diviners are called to their vocation by the ancestors. Hammond-Tooke (1997) mentions that when the ancestors first manifest themselves to the novice diviner, they do so either through dreams and visions or in the appearance of a wild animal. He argues that in as much as the ancestor is usually associated with cattle and their social significance, the appearance of the ancestor in the form of a wild animal allows for the incorporation of Nature as well as Culture ... into the diviners' cognitive system. Prins and Lewis (1992) 'use similar terms in describing the diviner as mediator in the symbolical battle between nature and culture' (p. 135).

Although the differentiation between nature and culture is necessary for aesthetics in Mda's *The Heart of Redness* as it conceptualises the scope of human sociality, the differentiation is also notoriously difficult to sustain. In his classic deconstruction of these terms in respect of the writings of Rousseau and

Levi-Strauss, Derrida (1976) does not suggest, however, that 'the terms be abandoned, merely that the logic of their deployment in any given context be scrutinised. Such scrutiny is necessary in order to ascertain the idea of the human that emerges from the terms and to identify the power relations supported by this idea'. (p. 6). It seems to me that the problematic identified by Derrida can be addressed by following Larsen (2007) in deploying the terms nature and culture not as ontological categories but as epistemological categories. In other words, the terms should be seen to denote meanings rather than things. They mark a boundary, a distinction, a conceptualisation, one which is not fixed but shifts according to the context in which the terms are used.

To say that the diviner in Xhosa society mediates between nature and culture thus requires more careful elucidation. Prins and Lewis (1992) employ the opposition nature and culture to signify meanings the Xhosa ascribed to the forest and the homestead respectively. In the account they provide of these meanings, the forest (*ihlati*) represents a place of danger, where witches gather, where sorcerers and diviners obtain medicinal plants, and where predators lurk. The homestead (*umzi*) represents a place of safety, where the structures and customs of social life prevail, where crops are cultivated and cattle are reared, and where the ancestors (*izinyanya*) are propitiated through appropriate rituals. Between forest and homestead is grassland (*ithafa*), which represents an intermediate space which is not quite homestead but which may become domesticated. Other intermediate areas include rivers, which link forested mountains with homesteads on the plains.

The distinction between forest and homestead which Prins and Lewis (1992) interpret in terms of the classic anthropological distinction between nature and culture corresponds broadly with the idea of the wild and the tame. The forest is dangerous because it contains not only wild animals but also spiritual or psychic energies that could be destructive if indiscriminately invoked. It is a place of sublime power, but also a place of refuge in times of war. The homestead is a place of relative safety in as much as it is

governed by civic laws, practices and relations that regulate social interaction. It may be invaded, though, by danger, which is why rituals are required to purify this space of unwanted energies. In thinking, then, about the applicability of the distinction between nature and culture to Xhosa cosmology, it would seem that nature signifies that which lies beyond the parameters of daily human social existence, whereas culture signifies that which customarily falls under human organisation.

If nature is what resists conceptualisation, totalisation and assimilation, and culture is what has been named, mastered and assimilated, then the diviner could be seen as a liminal figure who, in occupying the space between nature and culture, is able to move between these domains, exploring the unknown space beyond culture and interpreting the obscure significations of nature into cultural meanings. That the diviner is indeed an interpreter of signs, carrying meanings across from the domain of nature to the domain of culture, is suggested by the way in which the initiation of the diviner is described. According to Prins and Lewis (1992), when called to the profession by the ancestors, 'the novice diviner experiences symptoms (thwasa) such as withdrawal, troubling dreams, and periods of unconsciousness, and encounters an ancestral spirit in the form of a wild animal' (p. 140). One might say that the diviner reads dream images and wild animals as signifiers of a hidden reality contiguous with manifest reality, accessing a realm of meaning indiscernible to those who have not received instruction in the appropriate interpretive practices. The diviner interprets or speaks on behalf of nature.

Mda's *The Heart of Redness* concerns itself with the prophetic mode of thought, and describes Nongqawuse's role in the events around the cattle killing of the 1850s, prophetic authority in the novel is invested not in Nongqawuse which is equally demonstrated in the fictional characters of Qukezwa and Camagu. In Qolorha, Camagu fails at first to find the young woman he is looking for, and who largely disappears at this point from the narrative. Instead he meets Xoliswa, a moderniser descended from the line of unbelievers, and Qukezwa, a traditionalist descended from the line of believers. His relationship with

Xoliswa deteriorates when he realises he shares neither her disdain for what she regards as the regressive practices of traditionalism nor her approval of what she regards as the progressive features of modernity. In contrast, he finds himself increasingly drawn to the somewhat enigmatic and whimsical Qukezwa, who communicates with birds, rides her horse without saddle or bridle, knows the natural environment intimately, and has uncanny insight into his thoughts and feelings.

Soon after his arrival in Qolorha, Camagu begins to have dreams of a river with water flowing through him. Then, after an exhilarating ride one night with Qukezwa on her horse, he begins to have erotic dreams about her. He subsequently discovers she has fallen pregnant, an immaculate conception prompted seemingly from the feelings they have for one another as the village matrons confirm her virginity. In the course of the relationship, which introduces Camagu to Qukezwa's world of nature mysticism, he is visited by Majola, totem snake of his clan. In terms of the initiatory practices of Xhosa divination, these events--alienation from cosmopolitan life, disconcerting dreams involving the liminal space of the river, and a visitation by the ancestors in the form of a snake--point to the fact that Camagu has received a calling.

Camagu is drawn into the communal affairs of the village as mediator between modernity, which he has known all his life and has willingly renounced in coming to Qolorha, and traditionalism, which he remembers from childhood and is in the process of rediscovering. The local crisis around which the conflict between modernity and traditionalism revolves concerns a proposed gambling complex and holiday resort that will have social and environmental consequences.

Through the introduction of the ecological theme, the novel entwines the question of modernisation and traditionalism with the question of nature and culture. The village modernisers (unbelievers) who support the development scheme have no ecological sensibility. Scornful of the traditionalists (believers), they see no value in the indigenous forests the traditionalists seek to protect. The developers will replace the straggly local stuff with real trees, tall trees without thorns, planted at regular intervals. The

modernisers do not have an aesthetic sense of the heterogeneity and complex interrelatedness of plants and animals in the uncultivated rough country. Their attitude to nature is instrumentalist, based on an objectifying relation. For them, nature is an unfathomable chaos, a wilderness that human intervention brings under control and renders useful and profitable.

In contrast, the traditionalists have a highly developed ecocritical sensibility that expresses itself as aesthetic response to the natural environment, as appreciation of the sensual variety and beauty of natural phenomena, as knowledge of habitats and systems and how to harvest food, for example, from the sea, and finally as ability to communicate with animals, in particular with birds. For the traditionalists, nature has an inherent value independent of, though not necessarily excluding human economic need. The ecocritical attitude to which Camagu is increasingly drawn is exemplified by Qukezwa. Not only does she have a detailed knowledge of plant and animal life around Qolorha, she is also aware of the threat posed by alien plants to the indigenous vegetation and takes on the role of environmental activist when she breaks the law to chop down invasive wattle trees.

As a mediator between nature and culture, one who understands the properties and energies of nature and is able to harness these for purposes of social renewal, Qukezwa approximates the role of the diviner and redraws the boundary between culture and nature in terms of contemporary forms of knowledge and redefines the practice of mediation in terms of contemporary needs, re-imagining the spiritual relation as an ecocritical relation. Qukezwa does not simply regard nature as an object of understanding that requires human management, but imbues it with the qualities of subjectivity, of being, so that even inanimate nature is seen to have a vital life force. An ecocritical understanding that incorporates an atavistic spiritual relation with nature can appropriately be called reverential ecocriticism. The reverential attitude to nature draws attention to its restorative properties, the sense it provides of a connection with what transcends the human through the integration of all life forms. In terms of the novel's

concerns, the role of the diviner remains that of establishing a meaningful relation between human society and the natural order, but the human and natural worlds have been located differently in relation to one another.

Qukezwa lives up to the significance of the term qukezwa, meaning the person elected to bring the community together, to facilitate social integration. But she is also the person who shakes things up. Integration is posited on a disruption of existing structures and attitudes, which have to be undone before a new formation is able to emerge. Through Qukezwa, traditionalism is shown not to be unchanging and static, but to contain the potentialities of modernity. It is her visionary grasp of the dynamic of traditional belief, rather than her strict adherence to custom, that allows the modern, what is appropriately modern, to become manifest. From her first appearance in the novel, when she makes proposition to Camagu by taking on a typically male role in assuming initiative in the sexual relationship, Qukezwa is presented as unconventional. Although she promotes the traditional knowledge and practices of the community, she is nevertheless a free spirit, solitary in her communion with nature, outspoken about the pretensions of the modernisers, challenging in her relationship with authority, and disruptive with her sexuality. Her investment in libidinal pleasure suggests that her access to nature mobilises the transgressive power of desire and fantasy.

In this way, nature is aligned with the unconscious, with a kind of pleasure principle. Qukezwa delights in the free-play of the senses, which are attuned to resonances and joys that cannot be discerned by those who are too much restrained by custom. The diviner is by definition a special person, elected by the ancestors to perform the function of mediator between, on the one hand, the human community with its established practices and customs and, on the other hand, the indeterminate forces of nature. The diviner inhabits an in-between space, the space of interpretation, translating the signifiers of nature, that which exceeds the symbolic of culture, into the sign systems of a given cultural community.

From the outset, Qukezwa exercises a power of fascination over Camagu, occupying his waking thoughts, infiltrating his dreams, provoking him to behave in unaccustomed ways, opening him up to sensual enjoyment. It is as if he has been bewitched by her. Of course, he has fallen in love, and has therefore been bewitched in a metaphorical manner of speaking, but through her mother, Qukezwa is also associated more literally with witchcraft, even though she herself does not resort to such practices. Her ability to communicate with birds and the extraordinary effects of her split-tone singing further enhances the sense of her abilities beyond the norm.

The novel invests Qukezwa with special knowledge and powers of insight. Her mediation of nature may be different from that exercised by traditional diviners, but she similarly harnesses natural resources for purposes not only of physical survival but also of psychic welfare. Camagu is in a position to negotiate the conflicting demands of traditionalism and modernism only because he has learnt from Qukezwa the significance of the Nongqawuse story and the value of the natural environment. By the end of the novel,

Camagu has abandoned his sceptical cosmopolitan attitudes sufficiently to claim that Nongqawuse's prophecies arose out of the spiritual and material anguish of the amaXhosa nation (p. 283).

Camagu does not endorse the prophecies but he respects their existential legitimacy. Similarly, he has come to embrace Qukezwa's environmentalism, seeing the necessity of protecting natural resources against unsustainable exploitation and appreciating her aesthetic relationship with nature.

Zakes Mda's *The Whale Caller*

The Link between the Real World and the Spiritual World in *The Whale Caller*

The Whale Caller's compensation for the times when he feels sad and depressed is embodied in his spiritual god-like figure Mr. Yodd thereby; rituals of self-flagellation and mortification provide him with personal happiness. Mr. Yodd's spirituality is supported by his very name which shows sounding parallels

to both God and the Yod-figure in astrology. 'Yodd' defines a triangular pattern in an astrology chart, also referred to as The Finger of God, or the Finger of Fate. Hence, Mr. Yodd functions as a link between the real world and the spiritual world. The Mr. Yodd therapy' mainly consists of the Whale Caller confessing intimate thoughts and feelings which distress him. Thus, one can argue that the Whale Caller's constructed deity, incorporating the planted seeds of Christian concepts of guilt and penitence, serves as a safety valve, a release from his present discomforts, whereas the periods in the past which he repeatedly journeys back to are expressions of temporary happiness, all the same giving expression to present lacks and deficiencies.

Moreover, while the Whale Caller feels a strong connection to the natural world, his journeys to pre-colonial indigenous myths suggest that he misses a cultural spiritual link to the natural world in the present. Woodward (2009) suggests that, surely the most profound tragedy can be ascribed to the lack (due to colonialism) of an indigenous ecological tradition that can save earth others, as well as ourselves (p. 350). Colonialism and the civilizing mission have cut off 'indigenous' inhabitants from their own forms of spirituality and implanted their seeds of Christianity successfully into the colonized subjects and their heirs. The Whale Caller's analepses to the times of his childhood reveal his own growing up under the mantle of Christianity.

The writer who has variously stated his criticism of religion and dogmatic belief systems, seems to mock the Whale Caller's construction of a god-like figure who only answers his concerns with laughter without giving him any useful advice. At the same time shows the human need to believe as a source of strength for the present. Following the argument that the Whale Caller decries a loss of spiritual or mythical connection to the whales he has found two substitutes in the present his breaching the mists of the past and his construction of a spiritual figure combining Christian and animist belief systems – Mr. Yodd. While the Khoikhoi, as suggested by the Whale Caller's reminiscences, have a balanced and spiritual

relationship with the non-human world, this connection seems lost in the present and the Whale Caller must borrow from other indigenous whale cultures.

Also, *The Whale Caller* does not only recall local age-old practices but also incorporates the ancient myths of transoceanic indigenous cultures in his musings about pre-colonial pasts. As argued here, the Whale Caller bemoans a spiritual vacuum in the relationship with the non-human world in his cultural heritage. The contact between cultures and their myths thereby provides a way to borrow or gain inspiration from traditions and stories. Through the whales, the narrative weaves a fabric of transcultural myths connecting not only oceans and coastlines but also local cultures, feeding on stories about the whales. Thus, just as the southern right whales share various oceanic homes, regardless of national allocation of the waters, so do the inhabitants along those adjacent coastlines share a relationship with the whales. Due to a lack of an indigenous interaction with whales apart from an ecological one long ago, the Whale Caller feeds on myths and oral traditions from across the ocean such as those belonging to the Australian Aborigines and the indigenous people of Papua New Guinea. Thereby, the narrative connects indigenous cultures which welcome the same whales at different times of the year and interweaves oral traditions and mythologies.

Besides, in order to activate an overall ignorant Saluni's interest in the magic of the impressive giants, the Whale Caller tells her the beautiful Australian Aboriginal fable of Whale Man, starfish Man and the origins of the whale's blow:

It is a story from across the vast Indian Ocean, from a people who share their love for southern rights with the Khoikhoi people who lived along the shores of present-day Hermanus way back then when everything here was young and just as young in the continent of Aboriginal Dreaming. (p. 138).

Although the two indigenous cultures (Khoikhoi and Aborigines) are geographically distant as they certainly have an appreciation for the mammals as well as some cultural traditions in common. Hence, the Khoikhoi stranded whale feast mentioned above, finds strong parallels in Australian Aboriginal culture: ‘Way back in the Dreamtime of Australian Aborigines the stranding of whales and dolphins attracted people to binges of feasting, as it did with the Khoikhoi of old in what later became the Western Cape’. (p. 200).

However, the Khoikhoi, as the narrative suggests, has lost their connection to whales due to being forced inland, away from the coast. According to historians, the landing of the Europeans on the coastlines increasingly and forcefully drew the Khoikhoi from the shores to the inner and more hostile areas of the Kalahari where they joined the Sanhunter-gatherers (Beck 2000; Davenport and Saunders 2000). As a result, the Khoikhoi were hindered from developing their relationship to the whales and the sea as well as from creating cultural stories – embedded in historical memory – which would give meaning, explanations and assistance to their coastal existence. The lack of mythical stories from the original inhabitants of South Africa might allude to the disruption of a coherent indigenous culture by the destructive forces of colonialism. This departs from Woodward’s (2009) argument that the Khoikhoi lacks a mystical relationship with whales by and large: ‘For Mda what is implicitly lacking in Khoikhoi relationships with whales, even as they use whale skeletons for their houses and baleen for the roofs, is that they cannot account mythically for these mammals as the Australian Aborigines do in their story of Whale Man’ (p. 335).

Whether or not they ever had myths or could not further develop their myths due to colonial disruption, what seems important to Mda is to recuperate indigenous practices and mythologies and connect them across cultures in the present as they provide a source of knowledge which passes over cultural borders. The spiritual lack which hinders mystical invention in natural life becomes dramatic when

Sharisha beaches after following the Whale Caller's calling with the kelp horn. In contrast to the Strong Man from the myth of the Australian aboriginal Ramindjeri clan, the Whale Caller is unable to activate mythical powers to save her. The Strong Man, whose totem was the whale, could sing a female whale and her calf away from the dangerous shallow waters.

The narrative's contrast of the Whale Caller and the Strong Man exposes the whole drama of the colonial and cultural disruption from the natural and mythical world. While the Whale Caller has the ability to sing Sharisha to the shore where she eventually dies the fatal death, he fails to guide her out of the bay which is dangerously shallow after a storm. Indigenous stories and local myths, one might interpret it as ruptured, suppressed and finally forgotten owing to colonial attempts. Moreover, unlike the Strong Man, who uses his powers to help the whales, the Whale Caller's reason for musically calling Sharisha in the first place, even though he expects her to have left the local waters are solely egoistical.

Not being able to use his musical power to save Sharisha, emergency rescue teams from Cape Town arrive and attempt to save her. Tragically, Sharisha dies a spectacular death. The scientists and rescuers are as helpless as the Khoikhoi of old. 'Those danced their thanks to Tsiqua for a beached whale which provided them with food, however their dance froze after mass stranding and the laughter in the eyes of the dancers melt[ed] into tears that [left] stains on the sand' (p. 2). Contrasting the traditional Khoikhoi feasting on a beached whale, the comically portrayed crowd of wanna-be important politicians and other spectators celebrate a carnival death ceremony sparked by fireworks. The whale's detonation, which also signifies her funeral, is represented as a mixture of a religious ritual killing and a rock concert:

Like a high priest in a ritual sacrifice a man stands over a contraption that is connected to the whale with a long red cable. With all due solemnity he triggers the explosives. Sharisha goes up in a gigantic ball of smoke and flame. [...] It is like Guy Fawkes fireworks. The glorious death brightens the sky like the

pyrotechnics that are used by rock bands in cities like Cape Town and Johannesburg. [...] The onlookers cheer and applaud like the carnival crowd they have become. (p. 205).

The explosion should keep Sharisha from further suffering. Yet the death ceremony does not bemoan the whale as a dying subject but gazes at it disrespectfully only to applaud the bloody spectacle which follows. Again, the narrative contrasts an emphatic, balanced past with a destructive, even sadistic present. The underlying irony is that the carnivalesque crowd applauds their dying ecosystem – and thereby their very source of life. While the story of Whale Man enriches the Whale Caller's own connection to the natural, he also knows of indigenous stories which he cannot identify with, such as the practices of the shark callers of New Ireland. Although this story does not focus on whales but on sharks it also tells of a form of communication between the human and the non-human: From the text,

[T]he shark callers of New Ireland – a province of Papua New Guinea – use their voices and rattle of coconut shells under water to attract sharks. The sharks swim to the boat can be speared or netted. Sometimes the rattling noise attracts the shark through a noose. A rope attached to the nooses connected to a wooden propeller that is spun around to tighten the noose while pulling in the rope. The shark is then unable to move. (pp. 11–12).

The shark callers' gruesome way of entrapping sharks in order to kill those counters the Whale Caller's ideal of a harmonious human-nature relationship. He rejects a comparison between him and the shark callers because he does not see whales, or in fact any animals, as objects, but as his equals. Rather, the Whale Caller suggests a parallel between shark callers and the official Whale Crier of Hermanus. This

insinuates that the Whale Crier's indication to tourists as to the whereabouts of the whales might eventually lead to their extinction. Thus, the recollection of local stories serves to inspire critical thinking about contemporary treatment of the non-human world. One might argue therefore that the writer has presented the traditional practices of the shark callers as a cruel counterpart to the Khoikhoi and thus escapes a full idealization of indigenous culture. However, one needs to bear in mind those cautioning voices that question the oft-repeated notion that pre-colonial societies were idyllically living as the first ecologists in complete harmony with nature (Caruthers cited in Woodward 2009, p. 335).

The narrative's cross-cultural, transoceanic interweaving of myths suggests the potentials of past wisdom not only on a local but also on a global scale. Moreover, by connecting different cultures, the narrative counters notions of purity and isolatedness and proposes the healing potential of sharing cultural myths and stories. The imaginative power thereby enables the Whale Caller to re-imagine the stories and myths of a traditional culture he has never encountered but with which he shares his love for whales. The Aboriginals' spirituality with the whales enforces the Whale Caller's own spiritual connection to whales. Hence, such myth borrowing supports the view of a common humanity. Thereby, the implied author emphasizes positive effects of a global connectedness where cultures and people gain a better understanding of who they are through sharing their cultural stories and peculiarities (instead of seeing these as antagonistic).

Besides, the Whale Caller re-imagines a past in which the Khoikhoi sensibly interacted with nature and the animal world thereby inspiring one to critically question present human-nature relationships. He is consciously used to both give a warning of the further exploitation of nature and to didactically pave the way for thinking about more sustainable ways of interacting with the natural surroundings. By presenting the Khoikhoi's ecological way of life, the narrative recuperates the practices of an ancient people as offering alternatives for the present. By contrasting these alternatives with the present, the narrative reveals

present ecological dangers if disrespect for the natural environment continues. Thereby, the implied author is not as naïve as to suggest a return to past times but, instead, suggests an openness to traditions, the past and other cultural practices. In so doing, he challenges one to question the global dominance of Western progress in contemporary times, while celebrating the positive outcomes of globalization – cultural interaction and enrichment.

In fact, the setting of the novel, Hermanus serves as a microscopic depiction of South Africa representing the intertwined invasions of capitalist globalization and tourism. Hermanus is represented as a contact zone of various kinds. In contemporary times, it is a place of vibrant mixtures: local township dwellers and villagers, international and national tourists, the poor and the rich, the marginalized and the elite all reside in the locality. In the same vein, Hermanus of the old times presents a contact zone along colonial parameters and the Khoikhoi indigenous inhabitants and the Dutch settlers and later also the English colonizers. Although he does not overtly refer to the contact between the Khoikhoi and the early colonialists, the narrator mentions that the land was stolen from the Khoikhoi which lead to brutal encounter.

Woodward (2008) examines how the whales function as transoceanic and transnational links between the local and the global, connecting different continents with each other and reinforcing Hermanus as a contact zone. The whales are at home in South African as much as in New Zealand and Australian waters in the present as in the past; they are permanent inhabitants of the waters. Moreover, the narrative connects the different continental cultures in a hybrid mix of the local Kalfiefee, the whale calf festival held annually in Hermanus. So also in the mythical stories of whales and sharks told to the Whale Caller by transoceanic sailors. Hence, similar to Qolorha-by-Sea, the locality of Hermanus does not represent the bounded, isolated and idyllic place so typical of romantic narratives; instead, it is a contact zone in various ways (Feldbrugge, 2010, pp. 157-163).

Zakes Mda's *Ways of Dying*

Ghosts and Spirits in *Ways of Dying*

A common element in *Ways of Dying* is the appearance of ghosts, spirits and supernatural occurrences that are regarded as common in everyday occurrences. In the novel, the unusual period of Vutha's stay in his mother's womb, his return from the dead and his immaculate conception are accepted as being 'normal' by his mother, Noria. She does not question these events but sees them as part of the reality of her life. Jwara is also a subject of magical occurrences in the novel. Inspired by Noria's singing, he discovers the talent to create his artistic figurines. Later when Noria leaves the village, Jwara remains in trance without eating or sleeping for years, until he wastes away and dies. Jwara, who was apparently illiterate, leaves a hand-written in which he bequeaths his figurines to Toloki, after his death. The ghost of Jwara invaded Nefolovhodwe's dreams and ordered him to fetch the figurines from the village and deliver them to Toloki. Initially, Nefolovhodwe refuses to heed Jwara's instructions because he believed that it was beneath his dignity to obey a mere blacksmith (1995a, p. 193). Nefolovhodwe is forced to comply with Jwara's wishes when some of the prized performers of his flea circus begin to die. When Nefolovhodwe eventually makes the trip with his workers to collect the figurines, he is shocked to discover that there were far more of the figurines than he had bargained for. He wonders how Jwara had managed to create all these works, and where he had got the iron and sometimes brass to make so many figurines. Or did they perhaps multiply on their own are also narratives that tell the tragic story of his life, and the way he dies and relives through them.

The connection between stories and ghosts in *Ways of Dying* points to the use of peasant beliefs on its narratives. Spirits and ghosts are often depicted as an essential element of the plot of the stories. The presence of ghosts and spirits in these stories are also reminders that within the text there are the ghosts of stories that are still to be articulated, and that these stories remain beneath the surface of the actual story, to

reappear during strategic times. However, one can deduce that ghosts and spirits tease the imagination of the readers. Mda himself has made reference to the exercising of the imagination of both reader and writer as being important to the construction of narratives.

CHAPTER FIVE

BIOCENTRIC FEATURES: AN ECOCRITICAL ANALYSIS IN MDA'S NOVELS

5.1 Introduction

The term biocentrism encompasses all **environmental ethics** that extend the status of moral object from human beings to all living things in nature. Biocentric ethics calls for a rethinking of the relationship between humans and nature. It states that **nature** does not exist simply to be used or **consumed** by humans, but that humans are simply one species amongst many, and that because we are part of an **ecosystem**, any actions which negatively affect the living systems of which we are a part adversely affect us as well. Biocentrists believe that all species have **inherent value**, and that humans are not superior to other species in a **moral** or **ethical** sense. The four main pillars of a biocentric outlook are: humans and all other species are members of **Earth's** community, all species are part of a system of interdependence, all living organisms pursue their own good in their own ways, and human beings are not inherently superior to other living things. The focus of this Chapter is to analyze how Mda has employed biocentric features in *The Heart of Redness* and *Ways of Dying*.

5.2 Biocentric Features in *The Heart of Redness*

Communication between Humans and Other Non-Inhabitants in Xhosa Cosmology

Mda offers pride of place to the musical act of singing as a means of reflecting the spiritual and material joys and anguish of his characters. At the beginning of the narrative, Camagu flees from the toneless night club in Johannesburg's notoriously violence prone suburb Hillbrow, where screeching saxophones rasped his eardrums (p. 27), reflecting his disenchantment with the out-of-tune and corrupt urban life that he finds in post-apartheid South Africa. His Icarus-like resolve to fly away from the corrupt metropolis is precipitated by the sublime singing of NomaRussia, a resident of Qolorha who sings at the wake of her compatriot Twin in Hillbrow. While initially attracted to her melodious singing, Camagu also

finds his anguish reflected in the life and death of Twin; an artist whose creativity suppresses Twin's story functions as a warning and a catalyst to Camagu, whose eagerness to participate in his country's economic development repressed by the nepotism of the neo-colonial political and financial powers.

NomaRussia leads Camagu to Qolorha, where the juxtaposition of Xoliswa's love for western pop music contrasts sharply with Qukezwa's indigenous split tone singing. Portrayed as a caricature, Xoliswa idolizes the United States of America, a fairy-tale country, with beautiful people (p. 64), for her, actors and singers like Dolly Parton and Eddy Murphy embody the acme of glamour and achievement, even as she remains deaf to Qukezwa's unique split tone singing. This is most obvious when she remains resolutely silent and unresponsive during the school concert that celebrates ethnic songs, dances and other cultural practices, signifying her complete detachment from her native society and its cultural expressions. Mda pays tribute to the form of communication that Xhosa believe can connect humans to other inhabitants of their cosmology, including animals, birds, and ancestral spirits. NomaRussia's dirge at Twin's wake is meant as a plea to communicate to his mother in heaven to release her (NomaRussia) from her curse. This belief in the possibility of communication between the living and the dead again casts Xhosa cosmology as having a distinctly different view of life and death; death is seen as another form of living, except that this time it is either in heaven or hell, with its attendant pleasures and pain, and the ancestors wield considerable influence on their living progeny.

The author's evocation of this matchless but neglected indigenous art form is itself performative; it serves as a paean to the community's deep imbrications with local seasons and the physical forms of the native country. The Xhosa songs capture the ethereal beauty of the veld and the mountain, the fire and the ice of the African landscape, and render their nuances in all their multi-faceted beauty. In a radical transposition of this musical power, Mda imbues it with the creative ability and zest that does not only stir passion and emotions, but life as well; Camagu's ecstatic state while listening to Qukezwa who brings on a

powerful orgasm while they ride her horse *Gxagxa* together and shortly after she discovers she has conceived a baby. Qukezwa is also believed to have had an immaculate conception, highlighting the fluid merging of Christian and Xhosa religious beliefs arising from contact between the colonizers and missionaries and the local populations. Further, by invoking split-tone singing, Mda gestures towards the extant but unheeded scales and ranges within indigenous music that challenge prevailing conceptions of what constitute 'normal' or desirable ranges in music scales, and draws attention to the cultural norms which delineate what is and what is not possible within a cultural code. Xoliswa's disconnection with or incomprehension of her traditional music then is clearly suggestive of her acquired deafness to its scope and possibilities.

The modern Qukezwa's singing and playing the *umrhubhe*, the musical instrument that sounded like the lonely voice of the mountain spirits (p. 154) is echoed in her ancestor's mastery over the same arts. During the crisis of the Cattle Killing movement, the ancestral Qukezwa turns to music to capture the anguish of the amaXhosa lives, the loss of beloved cattle due to unfamiliar disease of lung sickness, the colonizers' raiding of their lands, and the disappointed hopes of salvation by the non-arrival of the ancestors that Nongqawuse predicted. However, there is also a difference in the attitude of the two sets of Believers: whereas the earlier Believers were content to be led by prophetesses and demonstrated little agency in alleviating their condition beyond following variable orders, the current generation are active participants in resisting neocolonial forces and stand a better chance of negotiating their freedom and autonomy; whereas earlier the song of the *umrhubhe* creates a world of dreams (p. 154), Mda shows the urgent necessity of inhabiting both the practical as well as the spiritual world in the present time.

We can also deduce inter-species communication in Zim and Qukezwa's interaction with the native *amahobohobo* weaverbirds, their horse *Gxagxa*, and the fig tree outside their house. Steinwand's (2011) belief that such forms of ecological reconciliation, demonstrate not only respect and humility, but also

innovation and open-mindedness. This echoes the phenomenologist and philosopher Merleau-Ponty's conviction that 'the self-evidence of perception is not adequate thought or apodictic self-evidence. The world is not what I think, but what I live through. I am open to the world; I have no doubt that I am in communication with it, but I do not possess it. It is inexhaustible' (pp. xviii-xix). This emphasis on the essential inter-relationship between humans and other forms of nature as constitutive elements in the world finds striking resonances with the oral traditions of African epistemologies, so richly described in *The Heart of Redness*. George (2009) attests that many African novels offer a glimpse of the interface where orality and literacy appear as coeval dimensions of modern African reality (p. 17), one that has retained strong connections with humans' imbrications within the forces of nature.

It is evidently shown that if singing and music are powerful alternative means of conveying affective ties between human and non-human others, Mda also foregrounds the Xhosa belief in visions as providing guidance to humans who have lost their connection with their cultural past. Camagu's disenchantment with South African politics and subsequent readiness to leave his country again is counteracted by the enchantment of Xhosa song (sung by NomaRussia), and checked by the appearance of his clan's totem snake in his house. Recognizing the snake and what it symbolizes fill him with a new sense of optimism, and earns him the respect of the villagers when he lets it go unharmed. Camagu's reconnection with his ethnic identity, facilitated by the Majola snake, allows him to begin a meaningful integration in South Africa (specifically Qolorha here), eventually finding both true love and purpose in this sleepy hamlet. This cultural link with the Majola snake clearly echoes the convictions of the amaXhosa Believers, whose attunement with nature is portrayed by Mda in a move that demonstrates the indigenes' affective and spiritual relationship with their surroundings, but is also presented as a necessarily crucial means of safeguarding local ecologies in a late capitalist world.

The decision of Camagu to leave his totem snake unharmed is then replete with epistemological, spiritual and ecological significance. In a critique of African stories linking environmental and colonial power, Tropp (2003) points out that scholars of African divination have described dreaming as an important calling and training as an *igqirhaor divine healer*. Dreams are thought of as gateways through which ancestors communicate their wishes to the novice and normally involve instructions for him/her to adopt certain practices necessary for communal healing and protection. Mda's naming of his protagonist as Camagu, meaning one who has been called by an ancestor, is in itself a clear indicator of the role assigned to him in this reconciliation dialogue between the past and the present. Moreover, the Majola or mole snake, with its historical connections with the royal clan of amaMpondomise, has traditionally been respected and protected from harm even when it appears in people's homes. This intersection of legend, belief, vision and non-violence bodes well for Camagu's imminent transformation from a disillusioned exile to a committed citizen.

This affective and phenomenological approach is reiterated throughout *The Heart of Redness*. Xim's emotional and spiritual sanctuary lies in the gigantic wild fig tree that is the home of the weaver birds and pigeons. Like Mr Yodd the rock rabbit in Mda's *The Whale Caller*, the fig tree serves as his confessional, as a fount of solace, and in this case, also as his connection to his ancestors, particularly his dear departed wife NoEngland. Xim's relationship with the fig tree is as affective as his relationship with his family members; he understands and even communicates in the language of its avian occupants, through whistles, an ability that his daughter inherits from him. Here, songs celebrate the joyous connection between humans and non-humans.

In *The Heart of Redness*, Nongqawuse's valley functions as the contact zone where religious and secular ideologies clash; where the past and the present contend with each other in redefining human relationships with nature, and the spiritual and material aspirations of the community vie for expression.

Intlambo-ka-Nongqawuse, or Nongqawuse's valley, serves as the phenomenological and ethical site for the regeneration of Camagu's subjectivity as the new, empowered citizen of an independent South Africa, one who is free to choose aspects of his/her past as guiding principles even as forging ahead into a new future. The valley is lovingly described in all its natural splendour, home to birds like the partridges, guinea fowls, and Egyptian geese, and plants and flowers like the orchids, cycads, and usundu palms at the site where the Garha river flows into the Indian Ocean.

While Mda plays upon the notion of synchronic or cyclical time in portraying Qukezwa's deeply mystical affinity for the valley, where she potently merges her identity with that of her namesake prophetess – We stood here and saw the wonders (p. 105) - Camagu too is intensely affected by its magnificent beauty. But beyond the physical aspects lie the ethical and ecocritical decisions that Nongqawuse stimulates; this lake becomes the site for Camagu's environmental education, responsible social re-orientation, marital commitment, and the focus of his ecocritical entrepreneurship.

Camagu's initial appreciation of the sea is based solely on its visual appeal as he admires the scenic beauty of this region, concluding a generous artist painted the village of Qolorha-by-Sea, using splashes of lush color (p. 55). But with increasing interaction with the indigene, Qukezwa, he is initiated into a more affective and integrated relationship with it. She stimulates within him a relationship with nature where there is an exchange of respect and affection between humans and non-humans: 'You must drink water from the sea when you are a stranger, so that the sea can get used to you. Then it will love you' (p. 122). This inter-personal bond translates into more than a sentimental gesture; Camagu also learns from Qukezwa and the other village women about the best time to harvest the sea for abalone and mussels, and in turn helps them set up their own cooperative to market this produce to hotels and nearby towns. This cooperative venture affords both parties an opportunity to earn a livelihood, while restricting their harvesting to sustainable levels.

The limitation of Camagu's knowledge of botany initially prevents him from seeing the ecological wisdom of Qukezwa's cutting of the harmful inkberry plants, and his naïve assumption of superior knowledge vis-à-vis a villager is revealed when he accuses her of vandalism. When Qukezwa sets him right on that score, she also uses the opportunity to unmask his illusion that the gullible villagers of Qolorha have bought his fabricated story of NomaRussia and the missing passport. Camagu's easy belief that he has fooled the villagers provokes an angry retort from her: 'Do you think everyone is a baby in this village?' (p. 89), and echoes the subaltern voices across the narratives under study who respond to urban protagonists like others, all of whom at various points are guilty of underestimating the intelligence and wisdom of those who are socially and economically less privileged than them. Camagu learns another lesson when he comes across Qukezwa at the pool, and from centuries of urban privilege over rural people, demands to know why she is always sneaking around (p. 99). Her acerbic response, 'sneaking around? I should think you were sneaking around. This is my lagoon. I live here (p. 99) turns the tables on his assumed ownership and sense of proprietorship by asserting her own right to her native space.

By drawing a distinction between the valorized transnational and the belittled local, a disturbingly frequent recurrence in contemporary discourses on the global and the local, Radhakrishnan (2007) calls attention to the stereotypical representation of each:

the transnational both de jure and de facto is the superior citizen of knowledge or epistemology, whereas the ethnic is the lowly denizen of a backward neighborhood called experience. As a category, transnational is style as substance, living as effortless and felicitous telling, experience as its own metanarrative and epistemology, whereas the ethnic is mired in location, regionalism, and the crude and raw materiality of experience (p. 20).

It is precisely this form of superiority that Mda sets to dismantle, both through his novel and its positioning. Using humour, he invests in Qukezwa's characterization a chutzpah and confidence that contests Camagu's arrogance and affirms her own indigenous knowledge and experience. Camagu's attraction towards Qukezwa also finds its sexual and spiritual expressions at Nongqawuse valley; his physical desire for Xoliswa and NomaRussia is laid to rest when he realizes how the superficial fascination towards their beauty has no place in the face of his attraction towards Qukezwa's free-spirited outlook (p. 152). Qukezwa successfully channels Camagu's passion for sustainable economic development by spelling out the inevitable damages that accrue from the development of a gaming complex in Qolorha, and encourages him to reconsider the consequences of development and its implications for environmental health from an indigenous as opposed to a western paradigm. Qukezwa's model of combining everyday work with environmental protection also inspires him to combine his proposed green tourism projects with an ethical component of conserving natural resources and local jobs.

While his initial erotic dreams center on the illusory NomaRussia, Camagu's and Qukezwa's mutual attraction soon has them invading each other's dreams, embodying their fantasies and communicating their desires. But given his unquenchable desire for the flesh (p. 28), Camagu also needs to learn to view women as more than sexual playthings. Mda valorizes the role played by women in the economic and social life of his country, in the portrayal of NoGiant and MamCirha, who form a cooperative society that jointly harvests the sea and sells the produce to hotels and markets. In his earlier novel, *Ways of Dying*, Mda draws an extensive picture of the many social, medical, and economic projects that are run predominantly by women, despite bearing little political power even in the newly constituted democratic society.

This kind of symbiotic cooperative with the Qolorha women providing the raw materials and labour, and Camagu deploying his knowledge of market distribution, becomes Mda's pragmatic approach

to the question of development and the terms under which it is to be conducted for the mutual benefit of urban and rural citizens; Camagu, for the first time after many years, is a very fulfilled man (p. 139), while the women too benefit by augmenting the meagre income earned by their miner husbands. The transformation Camagu undergoes marks a transformation which is evident when he compares Xoliswa's perspectives with Qukezwa's: Where you see darkness, witchcraft, heathens and barbarians, she sees song and dance and laughter and beauty (p. 189) is his final response to Xoliswa when she confronts him about his affair with Qukezwa.

The two women protagonists serve to embody much more than romantic entanglements for the masculine hero; in certain senses they symbolize the new choices and directions that confront South Africa as it negotiates its way out of a colonized past into an independent future. If Xoliswa resolutely spurns her entire African heritage and looks fixedly at a future that replicates South Africa into the very image of a western nation like the United States, she reflects the choices of the urban elite who likewise either wants to distance itself from their native culture or exploit it for profit. If Qukezwa celebrates her cultural norms and beliefs, then the narrative suggests that while that is admirable and worthy of emulation, it does need to keep pace with modern practices that can help in safeguarding these vulnerable indigenous systems. While arguably both serve as stereotypes in their embodiment of models of western progress versus noble savage, Mda does invest their personas with quirkiness and humour that render them believable.

This stereotyping of the westernized vis-à-vis the patriotic woman in a sense echoes the recurring double strategy seen for example in the clear schisms between the Believers and the Unbelievers. It polarizes the debate on the fundamental differences in approach to issues of progress and development that are admittedly over-simplified in the novel. Camagu (and by extension Mda) seems to realize this as he reflects in the novel that even such seemingly eco-centered tourism projects have to make some allowances for the demands of the rich, urban tourists for a commodified exhibition of native authenticity and cultural

artifacts. The writer then suggests that a compromise between commercial development and ecological conservation is one possible way forward for communities to earn livelihoods even as they safeguard their resources, an attitude that would benefit both Qolorha, and by extension, the country.

Humans versus Non-humans in *The Heart of Redness*

In addition to the above biocentric feature in Mda's *The Heart of Redness*, The appearances of animals in contemporary South African fiction are related to issues of colonialism and apartheid. By and large, Mda's novel shows that human power struggles at the expense of animals are not only a matter of black versus white but results to the situation for the amaXhosa to become bleak after following Nongqawuse's orders to fulfil the prophecy of Cattle killing. They have come down to an animal-like state in which survival is the only thing that counts. It seems as if there are no ethics anymore and their traditions have become obsolete. Eat or be eaten is the only rule their life seems to follow. In order to escape starvation, they even eat dogs, giving the expression dog-eat-dog a bitter kind of literal truth.

In the case of Mda, one aspect of the animal imagery is missed, namely the fact that he uses the depiction of the dogs to criticise the social hierarchy between colonizers and indigenous people. After all it is the 'well fed dogs of the colonist that are stolen and eaten by the amaXhosa people in their struggle for survival, before they themselves get eaten by their hungry family dogs' (p. 25). As subjects of their respective masters, the dogs naturally reflect how well off their owners actually are. The ultimate reason for the devastating famine that makes it necessary for the amaXhosa to steal and eat dogs in the first place is obviously the genocide of isiXhosa cattle.

What the Believers really do by killing their cattle could be provocatively denoted as a collective suicide, which brings their people to the brink of extinction. Considering the great value animals have for every umXhosa. The amaXhosa are taken aback by the fact that the lung sickness is even able to attack horses, which has never happened before. Their astonishment and disbelief, however, does not help

Gxagxa when Twin realizes that his beloved animal is sick, he does not leave its stable although hard for him to watch ‘the beautiful brown-and white horse [...] becoming a bag of bones in front of his eyes’ (p. 74). He neither sleeps nor eats during the long days and nights of Gxagxa’s death fight. He does not even touch the food and drink that are normally his favourite and his wife becomes worried that her husband might die together with his horse. Twin continues his death watch even after Gxagxa has died and does neither speak nor move, no matter what his wife tries to convince him of coming back into the house. She is so helpless, that she even asks Twin-Twin, Twin’s brother whom she normally dislikes, for help.

He is shocked by Twin’s fragility and tries to make him realize that it was just ‘the death of a mere animal’ (p. 75). Although ‘he himself had felt the pain when his favourite ox died’ (p. 75), he finds his brother’s exaggerated sorrow ridiculous and addresses Twin with harsh words which makes the latter speak for the first time by informing Twin-Twin that their people need a prophet who can save them. He pleads that they should give Nongqawuse a chance, since the disease had even killed Gxagxa, the wondrous horse that had astonishingly known the direction to the new pastures for their cattle without needing any guidance by a rider. Twin-Twin is furious about his brother’s believes since he is convinced that Nongqawuse is only a puppet in the hands of her uncle who uses her to get power over the isiXhosa nation and spread his own ideas.

By doing justice to his role as the original Unbeliever, he even suspects that ‘the prophetess was a liar who had been bought by white people to destroy the black race’ (p. 62). This draws the colonizers into matters that at first seemed to be only an internal quarrel among the amaXhosa people. Whether this suspicion is true or not, the whites are at least partially responsible for the killing of the isiXhosa cattle because they bring the lung sickness to South Africa by importing their own cattle, carrying viruses the indigenous animals’ immune system is not able to cope with. Regardless of the whites’ involvement in the development of the situation, the amaXhosa are faced with their best animals dying painfully. Without

being able to do anything against this devastating experience the amaXhosa are susceptible for Nongqawuse's prophecies. The intensity of feeling their helplessness grows with every additional dead animal, which more and more increases their longing for a spiritual solution. They see their only hope in the new, strong and uncontaminated animals their ancestors are said to bring with them from the Otherworld. Thus, the number of Believers rises with every new prophecy Nongqawuse receives from 'the Strangers', as she calls the people that materialize in her visions.

The balance between Believers and Unbelievers among the amaXhosa people finally turns when the prophetess also pronounces that if the people killed all their cattle and set all their granaries alight, the spirits would rise from the dead and drive all the white people into the sea. The message of this additional promise also finds its way inland to King Sarhili, whose father had been deceitfully murdered by a British governor during the war for the land. With numerous followers, he travels to the mouth of the Gxarha River to see for himself the visions that promise revenge on the British. In the waves of the ocean, he identifies his own son on his best horse, which had both recently died, riding with the ancestors. Having being encouraged by his visions, he pronounces that in the next three months he will extinguish all the cattle he possesses.

The first victim was his best bull, which was famous for its beauty in all the land. Poets had recited poems and musicians had composed songs about it. When it fell, people knew that there was no turning back. The cattle had to be killed. The slaughter of the king's best bull triggers a genocide of cattle that is historically known as the cattle killing movement of the amaXhosa. Once again bulls and cows are killed in large numbers shortly after they have been targets of British attacks in the campaign for conquering the land of the amaXhosa and other indigenous tribes.

This tactic of gaining power over an enemy by killing its animals appears repeatedly in contemporary South African fiction. In the case of the cattle killing movement, it is slightly different at

first, since the Believers kill their own animals and not those of others. Their goal is not to harm someone by murdering their animals but to find salvation through an immensely big sacrifice. This pacifistic attitude changes, however, when the Unbelievers not only refuse to kill their livestock but also comply with the whites to save their herds. Also, Twin-Twin, whose ‘unbelieving had started as a matter of common sense [...] was being seen more often with [...] men who were benefiting from the new opportunities offered by the rule of the white man’ (p. 110).

In other words, human power struggle is carried out at the expense of animals in different forms, thereby considering reasons for the genocide of isiXhosa cattle to become clearer. In the course of events, the animals are objectified and for the amaXhosa people lose their existence of esteemed living beings. The lung sickness has turned into a fundamental spiritual dispute between humans, in the course of which the ‘destroyed’ animals are just collateral damage. Driven by their desperate longing for a better future, the Believers only concentrate on the tribal custom of paying homage to a prophet and thus neglect and betray all their other values. With their fanatic actions they finally achieve the opposite of their intentions.

Instead of summoning the ancestors to drive away the conquerors, the Believers make it easier for the white man to conquer the land and rule over the amaXhosa people. This is evident in *The Heart of Redness* as animals become direct targets of violence because attackers know that they can harm their human enemies if they hurt or kill their animals. However, the British attack the cattle of the amaXhosa in their campaign for the land in order to take away the people’s food supply and to break them emotionally by killing their beloved animals. Consequently, the Believers kill the cattle of the Unbelievers to make them give up and surrender to the prophecies of Nongqawuse. To this point, the Believers take revenge on their brothers and sisters who seem to prevent the resurrection of the ancestors by refusing to sacrifice their life stock. This method of harming other people who oppose the attitudes of the attackers is not something that lies in South Africa’s past and this also negates one of the pillars of biocentrism that all living

organisms pursue their own good in their own ways, and human beings are not inherently superior to other living things. (<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/11590263.pdf>)

Ecocritical Based Development in *The Heart of Redness*

Over the course of the novel, Camagu shifts stances between the two groups of Xhosa people and concludes by supporting the Believers' desire to preserve their local traditions and pursue an alternative way. Camagu, welcomes the development project initially and seeks modernization and increased economic activity through a westernized perception of progress as disapproved by Bhonco. Early in the novel, Camagu dismisses an alternate mode of reasoning and questions why the Believers are so bent on opposing development that seems to be of benefit to everyone in the village? (p. 71). At this point, Camagu defines benefit of a conceptualization of progress that moves towards a worldwide standardization of lifestyles in the pursuit of greater globalization. However, Mda exposes the contradictions in the Unbelievers' argument in order to appeal to a post development perspective. *The Heart of Redness* begins with the Chief Unbeliever's heartfelt description of the village stating that 'he is always moved to tears by its wistful beauty' (p. 7). Of course, with the proposed modernization of Qolorha-by-Sea that could possibly destroy the environment. This conflict of opinion is expressed through Bhonco's traditionalistic attitude towards the new-fangled fashion of building hexagons (p. 7) by the Chief Believer; Okay, he stands for progress yet he hasn't progressed from the old-style rondavel to the modern hexagon (p. 94).

In addition, when Xoliswa suggests that he receives treatment for a bee sting, Bhonco exclaims. 'Education has made this girl mad. Has she forgotten that according to tradition of the amaXhosa, bees are the messengers of the ancestors?' (p. 227). Also, NoPetticoat demonstrates a conflict attitude by preferring traditional attire to westernized dress; although she is a strong Unbeliever like her husband, she is sold on the traditional fashions of the amaXhosa (p. 71). To which Camagu supports, explaining that the isikhakha skirt represents backwardness but to others it represents a beautiful cultural heritage (p. 160). By

emphasizing the antithetical nature of the Unbelievers, Mda dismantles the validity of their argument and exposes its flaws in support of an alternate position i.e. 'NoPetticoat concedes that may be there are indeed many different paths to progress' (p. 227).

On the other hand, the Believers build a strong case against the development project. They criticize prevailing Western dominance over ex-colonies which damages traditional ways as well as diminish the opportunity for local communities to 'grow' and 'develop' in their own sense of the term. In support of this, Camagu states that a project of this magnitude cannot be built without cutting down the forest of indigenous trees, without disturbing the bird life and without polluting the rivers (p. 119). Mda's view of ecocriticism is also demonstrated through Camagu's description of Johannesburg ruled by greed (p. 227). By so doing, it therefore reinforces the detrimental impact of development on South Africa: 'Yet, this city swallowed him, and spewed him out a shriveled corpse. 'This ungrateful city decided that he could survive only if he created ugly things that distorted life as we know it' (p. 55).

Marais (2001) explains that post-apartheid South Africa is an increasingly aberrant, mix of repression and reforms; the latter geared primarily at restructuring the social and economic basis for capital accumulation (p. 3) and this dissatisfaction is reflected in the novel. In stark contrast, Camagu states that Qolorha-by-Sea is the most beautiful place on earth (p. 63) and he begins to devise an alternative to the development Project. Camagu asserts that the residents of Qolorha-by-Sea should be active participants in the conception of the project then it will be their project. Then they will look after it (p. 179). Moreover, Camagu highlights the need to understand the community's conception of progress as opposed to an imposed paradigm from external sources; perhaps the first step is to discuss the matter with the villagers, to find out what their priorities are.

Furthermore, cultural reform is also pertinent on the redness in the novel's which title refers to the red ochre of the traditional Xhosa costume. Those who smear their bodies and clothes in the red ochre are

the traditionalist, conservative Xhosa who stand by the traditional rituals and beliefs of their people and resist the enticement of Western cultural influences. As such, 'redness' is putatively an ideal entrenched in past ethics, in the rural over the urban, in the periphery over the centre, and in stability and continuity over progress (Barnard, 2007, p. 161). Those who support the casino are against 'redness', as Bhonco, the leader of the Unbelievers asserts: 'We want developers to come and build the gambling city that will bring money to this community. That will bring modernity to our lives, and will rid us of our redness' (Mda, 2000, p. 105). However, Camagu's journey through the novel identifies the destabilizing effect of labeling terms such as redness, modernity development and civilization, throwing the whole concept of old versus new into question.

This is exemplified in the course of the relationship Camagu forms with two women of Qolorha, Xoliswa Ximiya of the Unbelievers and Qukezwa of the Believers. Camagu's decision to marry Qukezwa, an ardent supporter of ecological sustainability and empowered by a unique and radical feminism, reveals Mda's endorsement of the Believers. Camagu, educated in America and brought up in a different region of South Africa, is the (initially) detached subject through which Mda positions his ethical and political views. At first, Camagu empathizes with the Unbelievers and befriends Ximiya, the beautiful school headmistress, who refuses to wear the assumption that the Western reader is also likely to make, that redness is synonymous with backwardness and progress is its antithesis. However, Camagu soon realizes that the casino investors are not interested in benefiting Qolorha's residents, and the town could profit through other means such as the co-operative seafood and tailoring companies he starts with some of the local women.

Besides, the banks too are unprepared to support local businesses, for while Camagu's co-operative society is on the verge of success, the banks are determined that it should not succeed (p. 206). The economic freedom hoped for South Africa never emerges, for as Klein notes, as for the banks, mines and

monopoly industry that Mandela had pledged to nationalize, they remained firmly in the hands of the same four white-owned mega conglomerates that also control 80 percent of Johannesburg Stock Exchange (p. 206). Disillusioned with these corporate and financial organizations, Camagu discovers that the concept of modernity is not intrinsically linked to progress, and fights against the casino to make the area a national heritage site instead. His relationship with Qukezwa opens his eyes to the importance of sustaining the natural landscape and the indigenous wildlife that will otherwise become extinct. The more he learns, the more he is able to dream of a future in which fusing cosmopolitanism with environmentalism is possible. Indeed, the message Mda sends out is not anti-globalization *per se*, but as Fakir argues, there is a certain type of globalization that is dangerous to South Africa:

I am always reminded by Noam Chomsky's remark that the left is not opposed to globalization, and therefore not anti-globalist, but they are opposed to a form of globalization that increases disparity, marginalizes citizens and abuses human and environmental rights. Globalization can at best be interpreted as a more intensive integration of the global community where cultural affinities and national identity become subsumed in the yearning of global citizenry. (p. 117).

Mda's novel protests against the kind of globalization that encourages inequalities and fails to adequately represent the subaltern. Concurrently, he encourages Fakir's best interpretation of globalization in showing how the preservation of culture and environment can work in favour of communities. Furthermore, Mda shows how marginalized societies can be incorporated into the greater unit of the nation through projects such as the co-operative, whose members rely on connections with the city for the survival of their business.

However, decade before Peires's historical account of the cattle killing, the narrator of one Mtutuzeli Matshoba short fictional works presented a dialectical view of the Nongqawuse story in one of his reflections as he journeys to the Transkei, the newly created Bantustan of the apartheid government: 'In order to understand my interpretation of past and present events in relation to each other, I think it is necessary to review the tale I heard from my instructional voices' (1979, p. 164). Matshoba depicts Nongqawuse as a young, idealistic maiden who dreams of emancipation of her downtrodden people.

In his highly polemical rendering, the land policy of the British government was continued by the Union Government's introduction of the Natives Land Act of 1913. According to Anne McClintock, through the Land Acts of 1913 and 1936, a scant 13 percent of the most arid and broken land was allocated to black South Africans, though they comprise 75 percent of the people (1995, p. 324). In a similar way to Matshoba, Mda provides a revisionist reading of this tragic event, presenting both sides of the story, so that neither the Believers nor the Unbelievers are essentialised (Jacobs, 2002, p. 232). Bhonco, who is the link between his unbelieving ancestors and the new generation of Unbelievers like his daughter, Xoliswa, represents the forward push of modernization in the village of Qolorha-by-Sea. Although Bhonco is pleased to hear Mr. Smith, one of the white entrepreneurs, the outline of his wonderful vision of a resort with merry-go-rounds, jet-skiing, and a roller coaster over the sea, he is not quite happy about one aspect of riding the waves. The new people that were prophesied by the false prophet, Nongqawuse, were supposed to come riding on the waves too. This reminder of the disastrous past, when wondrous things were prophesied for the salvation of the Xhosa nation, resonates ironically with the promises of an equally wondrous future for Qolorha-by-Sea.

However, it is not everyone that is enamoured of the idea of a bustling seaside resort where people will ride waves the way civilized people in advanced countries and even in South Africa, in cities like Durban and Cape Town. Not least of all, Camagu, who questions the benefit of such wonderful things for

the local people? He points out that the children of Qolorha-by-Sea are too poor to enjoy such facilities, which will be monopolized only by rich people who will come here and pollute our rivers and our ocean. To these reservations, Zim, a Believer and an inveterate enemy of the descendants of the Unbelievers, adds his voice, this son of Cesane [Camagu] is right. They will destroy our trees and the plants of our forefathers for nothing. Camagu, who is the mediating voice between the Believers and the Unbelievers, and who, to use a theoretical construct of Bhabha (1994) occupies the zone of the liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, which is not totally opposed to the idea of developing the potential of Qolorha-by-Sea, but his vision is an ecocritically ethical one, [the] promotion of the kind of tourism that will benefit the people, that will not destroy indigenous forests, that will not bring hordes of people who will pollute the rivers and drive away the birds. This issue is challenged by Bhonco's daughter, Xoliswa Ximiya, who asks how he would stop civilization, Camagu shouts, How will I stop you? I will tell you how I will stop you! I will have this village declared a national heritage site. Then no one will touch it. The wonders of Nongqawuse that led to the cattle-killing movement of the amaXhosa here and on that basis, the national heritage site can be declared.

Xoliswa is the local school principal whose intense desire to break away from backwardness, symbolized by the redness in the title of the novel, takes her finally to the city of Pretoria where she lands the high profile job of a deputy director in the national Department of Education. She is also fancied by the villagers as the lover of Camagu, she leaves Qolorha when Camagu turns his attention to the young and voluptuous Qukezwa. Qukezwa thrusts herself into the gaze of the villagers when she appears at the traditional court on the egregious charge of vandalizing trees. Camagu, who attends the proceedings, is mystified by her alleged conduct, as she was also opposed to the destruction of the natural environment of Qolorha in order to make way for the casino resort. What adds to his bewilderment is that she simply cut down the trees and left them there, not even using them as fuel. By Xhosa tradition, her father ought to

have been charged with his young daughter's crime, but Qukezwa insists on answering the charges herself. When she dresses in her red blanket, which the Unbelievers perceive as the mark of her backwardness and so-called barbarism, Qukezwa demurely but defiantly proclaims her guilt, I cut the trees, and I shall cut them again (p. 247).

The court notes that this girl has in the past cut down the inkberry tree because it is poisonous. It is for this very reason that she has cut down the recent spate of trees, as she testifies in her defense:

The trees that I destroyed are as harmful as the inkberry. They are the lantana and wattle trees. They come from other countries ... from Central America, from Australia ... to suffocate our trees. They are dangerous trees that need to be destroyed ... Just like the umga, the seed of the wattle tree is helped by fire. The seed can lie there for ten years, but when fire comes it grows. And it uses all the water. Nothing can grow under the wattle tree. It is an enemy since we do not have enough water in this country (pp. 248-249).

The elders nod in agreement as they are surprised by Qukezwa's uncanny knowledge and say that even if they do not condone what she has done at least she had some attracting charisma. One of them muses on the source of her wisdom for such a slip of a girl who, at her age, should be focusing on red ochre and other matters of good grooming and beauty. What emerges at the village trial of Qukezwa is that the indigenous people of this land have always had their own laws to protect the environment. While Qukezwa's actions are considered criminal because there are no laws prohibiting wattle trees, there are traditional laws in place which allow the destruction of noxious weeds and plants, such as the mimosa. Not only that, we also learn during the court deliberations that only the previous week some boys had been punished by the same court for killing the red-winged starling or the isomi bird, regarded as being holy:

It is a sin to kill isomi. Yes, boys love its delicious meat that tastes like chicken. But from the time we were young we were taught never to kill isomi. We ate these birds only when they died on their own. We watched them living together in huge colonies in the forest or flying in big flocks of thousands These are sacred birds. If an isomi flies into your house your family will be blessed. Isomi is a living Christ on earth. If you kill isomi you will be followed by misfortune in every direction you go. When we punish boys for killing red-winged starlings, we are teaching them about life. We are saving them from future misfortune. (pp. 249-250).

These traditional laws may be rooted in superstition, or even religious injunction, but they effectively legislate on matters of conservation. In the aforementioned extract, the preponderance of the plural pronoun 'we' encodes a communal proprietorship over the ecology of the land. The purpose of punishing the boys is not to hurt them but to educate them about their future. What is foregrounded in this extract is the imperative for ecological education, without which the future of any nation, no matter how sophisticated, would be doomed. Beinart (2002) draws attention to the potentials of humans to endanger their environment if left to their own devices: All human societies, from metropolitan industrial Britain to the Easter Islands, have had the capacity to destroy the natural resources on which they depend (p. 223).

In the novel, the governor Sir George Cathcart, was frustrated like his predecessor Sir Harry Smith in being unable to quell the Xhosa insurrection, order[s] his soldiers to go on a rampage and burn amaXhosa fields and kill amaXhosa cattle wherever they [come] across them'. His successor, Sir George Grey, who the indigenes refer to not by name but by the mocking sobriquet The Man Who Named Ten Rivers, completes the task begun by his predecessors. At the end of the novel, he is heard, filtered through

the narrative voice, proclaiming his great achievement, finally, I have pacified Xhosaland! While he perceives his land policy of penetrating Xhosa land to settle whites as a victory, the ecological and human toll on the region is incalculable: 'Pacified homesteads are in ruins. Pacified men register themselves as pacified labourers in the emerging towns. 'Pacified men in their emaciated thousands. Pacified women remain to tend the soil and build pacified families. When pacified men return, their homesteads have been moved elsewhere, and crammed into tiny pacified villages. The pacified fields have become rich settler farmlands' (p. 312).

This stylized passage encapsulates in rhetorical terms the ambivalent nature of conquest in the name of progress. It would be true to say that such settlements ushered in the kind of progress that makes South Africa today the engine of commerce and industry on the continent of Africa. It would also be true to say that the deleterious impact of such progress on the indigenes is felt even to this day in the Eastern Cape, which is rated the poorest and most underdeveloped province in the country, its political woes not least of all exacerbated by corrupt governance – a fact acknowledged by Mda in the novel. The extract cited above testifies to the destruction of the ecological relationship between the people of the region and their land, and the evils of the migrant labour system as a consequence of it. The migrant labour system was one of the cornerstones of the white apartheid government which ruled South Africa from 1948 until the democratic elections of April 1994.

In order to keep the urban areas free of black people, hostels were created in the cities for male migrant labourers. Their families, who lived in the rural areas, were not allowed to join them in the cities which were kept 'white' by night. The men visited their families once a year, during Christmas. Much of South Africa's social ills of today can be attributed to the migrant labour system which disrupted normal family lives.

5.3 Environmental Import of Songs, Music and Dance in *Ways of Dying* and *The Heart of Redness*

Zakes Mda's *Ways of Dying*

Songs and music are integral part of the African system. Every event attracts one form of song or another: marriage, birth, funeral, calamities, rituals, professional occupation and house chores. Songs, as perceived in the African milieu, go beyond the purview of entertainment, though this is also integral to it. Songs are essential condiments for therapy, didacticism, information, dissemination, recording of historical events and spiritual supplications, to mention just a few. No occasion is complete without corresponding songs through which the nature and mood of the occasion, and even hideous facts, are exposed in suggestive manners. The thematic concerns of novels may be universal, but the songs, usually rendered in their vernacular versions during performances, underscore the cultural undertone. This and other suggestive aspects mark out the African identity and the peculiarity in ecocritical experience.

From the above, we can deduce that the importance of art as it appears in Mda's novels cannot be over emphasized as there are many songs, dances, drawings and other art forms that are related with the characters' lives. The onus of the above is on the functions of song and dance in the novels, most importantly their spiritual and ritual function, and the way at which they relate to the occurring rites of passage. Traditionally, African art functions on several, often overlapping levels. This is the case in the writer's first three novels as well, as song and dance function as forms of protest art as well as forms of celebration. However, the art forms take on specific meanings in each novel. Mda's *Ways of Dying* art forms represent a painful past, but later become a key factor in the characters and the country's passage to maturity while in *The Heart of Redness*, the art forms have a very dual character as they celebrate cultural heritage and demonstrate the separation of the community into traditionalists and modernists.

In *Ways of Dying*, the forms that are most significant are drawing and singing, as these forms accompany the important rite of passage that occurs at the end of the novel. Toloki's drawings, Jwara's

figurines and Noria's song all share a similar function as they collectively promote and facilitate the passage that Toloki and Noria are ready to experience at the tail end of the novel. More specifically, this brings about Toloki's and Noria's healing process, Noria's song encourages *communitas* and the joint purpose of these art forms is to bring them through the liminal phase of their passage, as well as illustrating how their passage exemplifies South Africa's socio-political situation at that moment. At the end of *Ways of Dying*, Toloki and Noria are on the verge of starting a new chapter in their lives. They are ready to leave their difficult past behind and happily live together in the settlement. Their real departure from their old state happens the night before as they join together in a cleansing ritual which serves to disjoint them from the past.

However, on the second phase of their passage begins when Toloki returns to the settlement with art supplies and starts drawing again for the first time since his painful childhood. As Noria inspires him with song, their transition starts:

The drawing becomes frenzied, as Noria's voice rises. Passers-by stop to watch, and are overcome by warm feelings. It is as though Toloki is possessed by this new ability to create human figures. He breathes heavily with excitement, and his palms are clammy. His whole body tingles, as he furiously gives shape to the lines on the paper. His breathing reaches a crescendo that is broken by an orgasmic scream. This leaves him utterly exhausted. At the same moment, Noria's song stops. The spell breaks, and the passers-by go on their way. (pp. 199-200).

Apparently, they share this artistic experience on a spiritual level as well as on a physical level, as Noria's voice seems to guide Toloki's hand and Toloki's scream ends simultaneously with the song. Their experience may be seen as cathartic, as they release their pent-up emotions and are purged by doing so.

More so, the experience makes Toloki's passage tangible: he is not just changing symbolically, but actually transforming from somebody who was stuck in a hurtful past and cut off from contact with others into a person who lives in a community, expressing himself and sharing his artistic expressions with others. The art forms play important parts here, as they connect people, temporarily make them forget about their problems and fill them with hope for the future. The fact that Noria's song comes to an end at the same time that Toloki's passage is expressed as an 'orgasmic scream' suggests that Noria and Toloki are connected in this cathartic experience: like the first phase of their passage and the ritual accompanying it, they experience this second phase of their passage simultaneously and may therefore be seen as fellow liminal personae (p.199).

Also, it is not surprising that the healing experience binds them together, and a feeling of *communitas* develops. This starts from the moment Noria starts to sing, and becomes increasingly clearer as passers-by and children gather around them and are overcome by warm feelings (p. 199). As regards Noria, the healing effect of the art is very understandable and very quick: afterwards she is able to be around Danisa – the little girl who was involved in her son's death – once again. It is clear that Toloki and Noria are no longer troubled by their past, as they regain the two things that were unavailable to them for a very long time: art and harmonious companionship. As they share their art, they bring the two together in recreating a harmonious community.

From the foregoing, Mda's praise to the power of music, singing and dancing are brought to the forefront in many of his plays and novels, *She Plays with the Darkness* (2004), and the subsequent *The Whale Caller* (2005), respectively. In the earlier *Ways of Dying*, the protagonist Noria becomes the creative muse for Jwara, the blacksmith, inspiring him with her singing to go beyond the ordinary horse shoes he manufactures for a living, and to begin fashioning marvelous figurines of the strange creatures that appear in his dreams. Noria sang for the spirits that gave Jwara the power to create (p. 29), and so powerful is her

invocations that even the birds, bees and beetles purportedly stop to listen. With the tumultuous and violent birth of a new South Africa in 1994 as its backdrop, Mda again turns to the arts, sculpture, decorating and singing as ways that impoverished and powerless South Africans adopt to survive the harsh realities of their lives and express their turbulent emotions.

However, while Noria and Toloki's unique form of singing engender new coping mechanisms, Mda further endorses cross-species communication in *The Whale Caller*, which revolves around its protagonist's musical sessions with a beloved whale, whom he names Sharisha. Communicating with the humpback whale (and later her calf) through the music of the kelp horn becomes the *raison d'être* of the whale caller, overriding all other ordinary priorities in life like earning a livelihood, family obligations, etc. Here, the whale caller is intuitively affective; and his respectful relationship with the whales is contrasted with the commercial activity of other whale callers, who use their kelp horn to attract this charismatic mega fauna for the benefit of the whale watching tourism industry in South Africa.

In his article on fiction that explores the concept of interspecies communication, Steinwand (2011), elaborates upon the useful role played by ecocriticism, which can serve as a guide in revealing how human animals participate in postcolonial ecology. The interaction between humans and animals, while ostensibly limited by songs, chatter and play, can importantly embody a spiritual connection between the species that surmount the divide between them. In Mda's most ambitious work on the human animal encounter, the whale caller's relationship with Sharisha is explored at various levels: mystic, sexual, sensual, and romantic. But this complex novel also examines questions of the ethics and limitations of this closeness when the whale caller's trance-like communion with Sharisha ultimately leads to her tragic demise. She stays too close to the coast and is trapped in shallow waters during low tide.

(arts.studenttheses.ub.rug.nl/11020/1/MA_1586483_M_L_Timmerman.pdf, Jun 24, 2011).

Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness*

The function of art in *The Heart of Redness* is demonstrated through the role of dance in the rituals of the Unbelievers as they use dance in their mourning rituals, it keeps them from developing and moving on to the future. In order to achieve contact with the ancestors, they do the traditional dance of the San – called the abaThwa in the novel – until they reach a trance. They do this in order to relive the miseries of the past, as the Unbelievers feel that everything that is wrong in society was caused by the cattle-killings resulting from Belief. In their view, reliving these feelings and focusing on the grief of the past is the way to effectively mourn the past. Their rituals serve as *ideological communitas*, as the Unbelievers make a tradition of reliving the miseries of the past together and turn it into their goal, their ideal (Davies, Holm and Bowker, 1994, p. 7). *Communitas*, however, is characteristic of liminality, and if the Unbelievers hold on to this state of mourning they can never complete their passage, leaving the village divided and conflicted. The fact that the abaThwa finally come and take back their dance, making it impossible for the Unbelievers to continue their rituals, indicates the inevitability of their passage: they must stop being stuck in the past and face the present.

(arts.studenttheses.ub.rug.nl/11020/1/MA_1586483_M_L_Timmerman.pdf.pdf Jun 24, 2011).

Mda has used songs, dance and rituals as a belief, conduct, principle or standard of conduct that need to be passed from generation to generation and ways by which readers relate to environment as it is tied with situations which are subject to change. Mda belongs to African novelist whose pre-occupation is to embrace African tradition who through creativity exposes the environmental ills prevailing in our society today, resulting from the influence of western civilization. Mda is drawing our attention to the changing nature of life in the urban areas and its consequences on the Africans who have been fascinated by the city life, the so-called civilization and forgetting the traditional customs and values in African societies through their destruction of nature.

CHAPTER SIX

6.1 Summary of the Findings

It is clear that ecocriticism represents a substantial part of history and is therefore conceived to be the basic form of historical consciousness prevalent in non-literate societies in the period of their development prior to the emergence of their writing culture. The function of ecocriticism is that, it offers an explanation to the contact between man and nature which serves as an opportunity for man to understand what sort of creature he is. It also considers the relations between literature and the natural world which seeks to expand our understanding of the environment. One of such expressions is the literature of South Africa of Xhosa people in which Zakes Mda attempts to capture the various environmental crises of the area resulting mainly from land exploitation by the colonizers.

This work has attempted an ecocritical reading of Mda's great novels to show an ecological consciousness in his adoption of the values Africans attach to the land that they dwell in and to point at the importance of respecting the natural world. Mda writes most of his novels at the time the discipline called Ecocriticism was formed. The Researcher has discovered that the central tenets in Mda's novels are useful to articulate what the researcher finds valuable in Mda's novels.

The findings of this study were that:

- vi. Mda portrays Xhosa peoples' socio-economic and belief systems as products of their interaction with the natural environment;
- vii. land issues created the two conflicting groups of believers in the traditional ethos and unbelievers which originated from the colonial era;
- viii. Mda portrays Zim and Qukezwa as upholders of traditional culture (believers) while Bhonco and Xoliswa (unbelievers) represent foreign concept;

- ix. the novelist creates an interface between the two extreme groups of believers and unbelievers to channel a course for an ecological friendly development for South Africa; and
- x. Mda metaphorically reunites human and non-human characters of nature through dialogue to achieve an all-encompassing development.

6.2 Contribution to Knowledge

This research has discovered through careful study and analysis that the issue of land as experienced in Mda's novels has been undermined as people of the society are disadvantaged through race, class, identity, nature and environmental racism. It is therefore clear that ecocriticism and modern challenges in Mda's novels has represented a substantial part of history, past and present in Xhosa land which is conceived to be the basic form of historical consciousness prevalent in non-literate societies in the period of their development prior to the emergence of the writing culture.

Besides, it has been observed that Mda's novel, *The Whale Caller* has illustrated how human past ways of living and interacting with his natural surroundings have didactically provided guidelines for environmentally conscious behaviour. The novel has also provided alternative ways of living in the present and functions as a way to counter stereotypes which associate environmental concerns with backwardness and thereby reproduce colonial/apartheid racist mechanisms. The novel is also used as the impetus to examine the past from different perspectives so as to gain a better understanding of both past and present. As illustrated in *The Heart of Redness* and *The Whale Caller*, the novels demonstrate environmentalism as a progressive treatment of the ecosystem which human beings are inevitably part of.

The researcher has also observed that Mda makes obvious in his novels that modern challenges in South Africa today can only be solved ecocritically through an effective force in the recreation and rebuilding of a relationship between humans and nature in a country where the majority of people have been alienated from their natural surrounding due to colonial and apartheid binaries. This can therefore

have creative potential in the rehabilitation of nature, landscape and environmentalism which is a decisive but neglected factor in contemporary South African politics and society.

6.3 Recommendations

This work has studied ecocriticism and modern challenges in Mda's *The Heart of Redness*, *Ways of Dying* and *The Whale Caller*. The researcher therefore recommends Mda's works owing to the manner in which he has used ecocriticism to influence modern African fiction. Besides, the materials borrowed from ecocriticism have the capacity to further improve the form and content modern fiction has shown in the works of Zakes Mda. However, the novels have shown how South African prose exposes the contested and constructed nature of animals/humans relationship as a metaphoric and formal resource for engaging and grappling with human and ecology centered issues in the region. It also exposes the multiple ways of being environmentally aware and the contestedness of ecological sensibility.

Furthermore, this study further recommends that Mda's novels i.e. *The Whale Caller* and *The Heart of Redness* can be read as a warning against an un-reflected assimilation into global culture when this is dominated by a ruthless brand of capitalism. At the same time Mda illuminates the potential of global interaction and cultural borrowings by crossing national borders and recuperating indigenous traditional life, landscape and environmentalism. He thereby writes a form of local postcolonial environmentalism. With witty humour in his didactic tone, Mda calls for urgency and action and gives a strong warning against the destructive forces of global capitalism if one does not take initiative in negotiating and finding modern solutions to social and ecological problems. We can see that the last two chapters analyzed two key novels by Mda in which ecocriticism and modern challenges can be read as a recurrent motif for illuminating differences and continuities between the past and the present, for establishing cultural coherence, and for discussing controversial matters of environmental, cultural and historical preservation.

6.4 Suggestions for Further Study

First and foremost, the domain of ecocriticism is very broad because it is not limited to any literary genre; apart from Lawrence Buell, Cheryll Glotfelty, William Howarth, Simon C. Estok, William Rueckert, Suellen Campbell, Michael P. Cohen and Glen A. Love, who are committed to ecocritical pursuit; more ecocritical readers should emerge to teach and write on the development of ecocriticism with the intent of bringing communication between the natural sciences and the humanities closer together so as to know what human nature has to do with ecocriticism.

Furthermore, in view of our collective guilt on the need to eliminate so many species, concerted efforts should be made to rescue animals from the brink of extinction. We should also consider the environment in which any threatened species lives and try to rescue such, by so doing, we will save lots of species from extinction. According to Williams (2001) despite the rampant disappearance of various plant and animal species, human beings remain prolific in their procreation. In support of Williams, since the earth human population increases daily, legions of other biological life forms should not go into extinction.

More so, as civilization grows more aggressive and arrogant, man begins to despoil and exploit all aspects of nature for his self-aggrandizement, self-glorification and self-indulgence, he rifles the earth for metal, destroys the trees for his habitats and for industry; he destroys the natural beauty of landscape with the setting up of industrial establishments, polluting land, water and air. To this point, since ecocriticism becomes interdisciplinary that seeks to relate nature and man through variegated means and tries to look at the relationship from various viewpoints: sociological, psychological, anthropological, scientific and philosophical, there is, therefore, the need to look at the way the relationship has suffered a gradation in terms of the central concerns.

To this end, the complex of land divide is significant to the discussion of how to pursue environmental justice in South Africa. From the time immemorial, in the works of Mda and others, it has

been satirized that land division was unfair and unjust. In fact, there was a notion of environmental racism which culminates into difficult communication between different layers and groups of society, which, however, delays the process of reconciliation that is necessary for equal divide of land and the fair treatment of people, independent of race or other identity. Therefore, it is hereby suggested that in order to pursue an ideal environmental justice, land ownership should be stimulated to communicate appropriately so that they will be more aware of each other's needs, when pursuing justice in environmental context. However, the researcher's ecocritical view in analyzing Mda's novels should serve to suggest rich potential for further discovery possibly in the field of ecocriticism particularly taking cognizance of the importance of environmental awareness paramount at this crucial period.

6.5 Conclusion

In my analysis of ecocriticism and modern challenges in Mda's novels, my study has shown that land representation in South African prose opens up a window through which to view and appreciate the novelists' conception, construction and handling of a variety of culturally, politically, naturally, philosophically and ecologically significant ideas about human relationships and human-animal/nature relationships. Analyzing human and animal relationship to nature in South African prose also exposes the contested and constructed nature of animals/humans as a metaphoric and formal resource for engaging and grappling with human and ecology centered issues in the region. It also exposes the multiple ways of being environmentally aware and the contestedness of ecological sensibility. My study, therefore suggests two major things that need consideration in further ecocritical debates and endeavours in Africa. First, given the complex connectedness of ecological consciousness to personal, social, economic, political, historical contexts, there is need for ecocritical debates to take into account a writer's existential positionality (which is crucial in his/her construction of knowledge and reality) in attempting to understand his/her ecological consciousness.

In other words, ecocritical practices in African literature should not be blind to the contexts under which particular literary forms, in this case prose are produced to appreciate why humans, animals and nature are represented the way they are in literature. This would help literary critics to avoid universalizing some forms of ecological consciousness and flattening differences between writers whose work is judged either as ecological or un-ecological. Second, there is need for ecocritical debates in Africa to take seriously the awareness and exposure of the interconnectedness of forms of oppression and exploitation in determining the strengths and limits of that writer's liberationist views and efforts.

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