

**AFRICAN TRADITIONAL CULTURE  
AND MODERNITY IN ZAKES MDA'S  
*THE HEART OF REDNESS***

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WESTERN CAPE

A mini-thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts, in the Department of English, University of the Western Cape.

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**December 2005**

**KEYWORDS:**

Zakes Mda

Modernity

Traditional values

South African Literature

*The Heart of Redness*

Xhosa culture

Cattle-killing

Post-colonial theory

Literary Criticism

Hybridity



## DECLARATION

I declare that “African Traditional Culture and Modernity in Zakes Mda’s *The Heart of Redness*” is my work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have paraphrased or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

**Prosper Ndayi Birama**



**December 2005**

## DEDICATION

To my wife and children, brothers and sisters, respectively Nyiramwiza Chantal, Birama Bienvenu, Umutoni Solange, Himbaza Claude, Muzungu Dénise, Nyirampundu Spéciose, and Ndasunikwa Eric, I dedicate this work.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My heartfelt and sincere thanks go to the following:

The almighty God without whom everything I did and still do, would be futile.

The Government of Rwanda, which sponsored my studies in South Africa.

My resolute and highly devoted supervisor, Dr. Hermann Wittenberg, whose remarks, pieces of advice and careful academic guidance have been the cornerstones for the completion of this work.

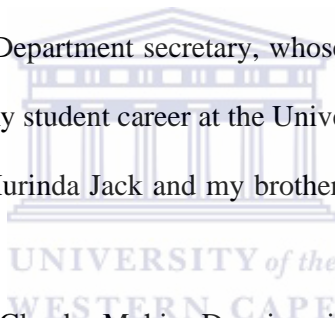
Prof. Wendy Woodward, whose lectures on South African and Indian Literature, motivated me to choose my topic.

Mrs. Sampson, the English Department secretary, whose continuous encouragements have been of much help in my student career at the University of the Western Cape.

My uncles Ndayi Venant, Murinda Jack and my brother-in-law Ndagi Isidore for their moral support.

My dear friends Bayingana Claude, Muhire Dennis, with whom I shared the soft as well as hard life at UWC.

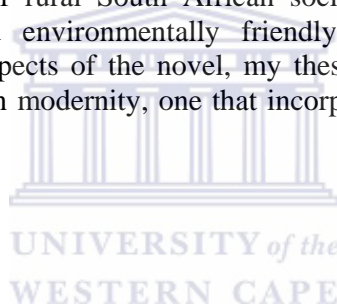
To all the above-mentioned and others, may God bless you eternally.



## ABSTRACT

In my thesis entitled 'African Tradition and Modernity in Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness*', I analyze the way Western modernity and African traditions interact in Mda's novel. I suggest that both modernity and tradition interact to produce a hybrid culture. This will become apparent in my analysis of the way Mda depicts the cattle-killing episode and the effects of Nongqawuse's prophecy, and also in the novel's contemporary characters. Mda shows the development of an African modernity through the semi-autobiographical figure of Camagu who is not slavishly indebted to Western ideas of progress, but is a hybrid of African values and a modern identity.

In my thesis I will look at the way Mda also addresses the issue of the oppression of the Xhosa in colonial history, and the way he demonstrates that the divisions of the past deeply influence post-apartheid South Africa. In this regard, I will show how *The Heart of Redness* is a critique not only of colonial oppression, but also of the newer injustices plaguing the post-apartheid South African society. The focus of Mda's critique in this regard is the proposed casino that stands as a model of environmentally destructive, unsustainable and capitalist development. Instead, Mda's novel shows an alternative modernization of rural South African society, one which is based on community upliftment and environmentally friendly development. Through an exploration of the above aspects of the novel, my thesis shows that Mda's writing exemplifies a hybrid African modernity, one that incorporates Western ideas as well as African values.

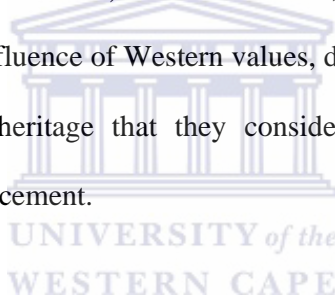


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## INTRODUCTION

The conflict between traditional African values and Western modernity is one of the major issues African writers deal with. Very often these values are seen to be in opposition. Some African post-colonial writers such as Ngugi wa Thiongo criticize the loss of African values with the advent of colonisation and the continued influence of Western modernity in post-colonial Africa. In *Decolonising the Mind*, Ngugi wa Thiongo argues that Western values had the effect of “a cultural bomb, which aimed at annihilating a people’s belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves” (1986: 25). In other words, Ngugi is saying that some African writers, under the influence of Western values, distance themselves from their African past and cultural heritage that they consider as blocking progress and obstructing the way to advancement.



Frantz Fanon similarly shows the negative aspect of African cultural denigration when he argues that

A black man who has lived in France is radically transformed when he is back. He changes because for him, the metropolis represents the tabernacle. He can not speak his native language and always adopts a critical attitude towards his compatriots (1965: 38).

It is precisely this conflict between Western modernity and traditional values that is addressed in Zakes Mda’s *The Heart of Redness* (2000), though in unusual ways. Mda regards the conflict between Western modernity and African tradition not as a simple binary opposition, but as a more complex interaction. This interaction implies a process of cultural transformation and evolution. Post-colonial cultures are not static,



but as Bill Ashcroft argues in his book *Post-colonial Transformation* (2001), “all cultures move in a constant state of transformation” (2001: 5). In this thesis I will look at *The Heart of Redness* within a broad post-colonial studies framework. Bill Ashcroft defines this approach to cultural and literary analysis as follows: “Post-colonial studies developed as a way of addressing the cultural production of those societies affected by the historical phenomenon of colonialism” (2001: 7).

At the same time, such cultural transformation involves a cultural hybridity, which as Homi K. Bhabha puts it, “emerge in moments of historical transformation” (1994: 2). For Bhabha, the recognition of cultural difference and the acceptance of other people’s culture as embodying valuable aspects is a key to cultural transformation. Indeed, Bhabha defines hybridity as “the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects in such a way as to deform and displace all sites of discrimination and domination” (1994: 112). Bhabha argues that hybridity occurs when the colonized assume colonial culture but do not merely copy and repeat it in the way criticized by Fanon, but “deform and displace” it in such a way as to undermine the dominance of the coloniser. This means that hybridity requires the overthrow of the conception that colonial culture is superior while the culture of the colonized is inferior. Indeed, Bhabha’s notion of hybridity will be a key tool that I will use in my thesis. Post-colonial writers such as Robert Young, Edward Said, Bill Ashcroft and others have discussed this concept. Their contribution to the notion of hybridity will be discussed in detail in chapter two.

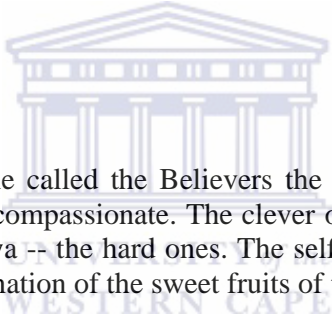
In my thesis, I will analyse *The Heart of Redness* (2000) by Zakes Mda, one of Africa’s most prolific and prominent post-colonial writers. Zanemvula Kizito Gatyeni

Mda, better known as Zakes Mda, was born in Herschel, South Africa, in 1948. He is well known for his contribution to the development of dramatic art through his writings, teaching and productions. Besides a large volume of plays, Mda wrote five novels: *Ways of Dying* (1995), *She Plays with the Darkness* (1995), *The Heart of Redness* (2000), *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2002) and most recently, *The Whale Caller* (2005). His early novel, *Ways of Dying* (1995), won him the M-Net Book Prize in 1997, while *The Heart of Redness* was awarded the 2001 Commonwealth Writers' Prize for the African region.

*The Heart of Redness* is partly concerned with the infamous cattle-killing of 1856-1857. A young Xhosa prophetess named Nongqawuse triggered this historical catastrophe by appealing to the Xhosa to kill their cattle and burn their crops. According to her prophecy, the cattle and crops were bewitched and consequently deserved destruction to facilitate the rebirth of the Xhosa ancestors who would bring new cattle and drive English settlers into the sea. However, it is important to note that the Xhosa had lost seven wars against the British and according to Jeff Peires, "engaged in a millenarian campaign" (1989: 54), to recover their land and independence. This cult of the cattle-killing involved supernatural forces, which the Xhosa thought would rid them of white domination. There is some speculation that Nongqawuse's prophecy might have been caused by her own loss of family members during the colonial aggression. Peires puts these questions as follows, and wonders if

Nongqawuse, the prophetess of the cattle-killing, has been this orphan of the Waterkloof? Might she have seen her mother shot dead with tens of other Xhosa women by the colony's black auxiliaries? Might she have seen her father's body suspended on a tree, the blood still trickling from his forehead? We shall never know for certain. But we certainly should not dismiss the possibility. (1989: 63-64)

Nongqawuse's prophecy split the Xhosa community into Believers and Unbelievers. The former enthusiastically killed their prized cattle and burned their crops, the latter were sceptical and refused. The Believers accused the Unbelievers of dealing with witchcraft: by not fulfilling their ancestors' preconditions for their arrival, they were disobeying the prophecy and disgusting the new people. It is important to note that the Believers regarded this destruction as a renewal, a resurrection, and a rebirth. For them, if the prophecy was carried out properly, it would bring about prosperity and renewal to the living Xhosa. They considered the Unbelievers' disobedience a betrayal of the community's redemption. In *The Heart of Redness* this division is shown as follows:

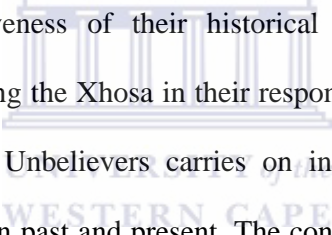


The amaXhosa people called the Believers the AmaThamba -- those whose hearts were soft and compassionate. The clever ones... The Unbelievers were called the amaGogotya -- the hard ones. The selfish and greedy men who rob the entire amaXhosa nation of the sweet fruits of the resurrection. (2000: 98)

On the one hand, the Unbelievers considered Nongqawuse's prophecy as a conspiracy of white people to rule the Xhosa. Some of them confirmed that Nongqawuse had been used by the British colonists to destroy the Xhosa people. On the other hand, the Believers welcomed the prophecy as their redemption. They fully implemented it as a way of eradicating the lung sickness that was ravaging their cattle. Peires also notes that among other reasons of the Believers' obedience to the prophecy was that the Russians who once defeated the British in the Crimean war and who were recognized as blacks, would be back to help the Xhosa restore their dignity from the British supremacy. The Russians were even identified by the Believers as their ancestors. Mda puts it as follows:

People got to know of the Russians for the first time. Although the British insisted that they were white people like themselves, the amaXhosa knew that it was all a lie. The Russians were a black nation. They were the spirits of amaXhosa soldiers who had died in the various wars against the British colonists. (2000: 93)

For the Believers, the cleansing of the land through cattle-killing and crop burning was a proper preparation for the dead ancestors to rise and protect their progeny and the Xhosa land at large. Unfortunately, the consequences of the belief and implementation of Nongqawuse's prophecy became more destructive than redemptive. The illusive prosperity and renewal instead resulted in the impoverishment and total subjugation of the Xhosa by their rival British settlers.



Mda then uses the divisiveness of their historical event as a way to depict contemporary divisions among the Xhosa in their response to modernity. The ancient rift between Believers and Unbelievers carries on in the present. The novel, in complex ways, shifts between past and present. The contemporary differences can be observed through Bhonco and Zim, Unbeliever and Believer respectively. Bhonco refuses to believe in anything that brings happiness. He always reacts to joyful actions with tears. The Unbelievers in general still lament the sufferings of the middle generations, which refer to the colonial and apartheid eras. They still transport themselves to the sad events of the past. They look at the past with grief and are mainly concerned with the rejection of their present state of 'backwardness' to 'modern progress' that would be reparation for past catastrophes. This means that the Unbelievers still regret the bad past instead of working for their development.

Unlike the Unbelievers, the Believers with Zim as their leading figure do not lament the traumatic past. Instead, they rejoice at its end. They tend to be skeptical of modern progress advocated by the Unbelievers and are bound to a type of development in the African context, which has to be grounded in Xhosa traditional culture.

Mda, however, not only addresses the issue of Xhosa oppression in colonial history, largely leaving out the period of apartheid oppression, but he also shows that post-apartheid South Africa is deeply influenced by the colonial divisions, which still persist in the present. Although *The Heart of Redness* is historically inspired, it is a contemporary South African novel. It draws on historical events to illuminate the present South African political, economic and social situation. This appears in Ndibe Okey's argument where he states that "Mda wishes us to see that the past is never a category of antiquity but vitally potent in the present" (2002: 34). In this case, it is important to notice that Bhonco and Zim in *The Heart of Redness* are respectively modern Unbeliever and Believer. This means that the past has always had repercussions in the present.

Mda's novel does not only address flaws in South Africa's current political transformation, but is also concerned with environmental issues. Indeed, the equivalent of the cattle-killing catastrophe of 1856-1857 is the current environmental destruction of lands of the Xhosa people. Just as the Believers then blindly followed the prophecy of Nongqawuse to restore the power and wealth of the Xhosa, now the people of Qolorha are on the verge of repeating a similarly tragic move by embracing the supposed progress and modernization promised by the casino. Zakes Mda refers to the contemporary Unbelievers as the beneficiaries of the current capitalist society.

They are the aristocrats of Western modernity that has destroyed the natural beauty of the country. They advocate a type of development that is sectarian in the way it empowers only few people while most of South Africans live in poverty. Qukezwa, one of Mda's female characters in *The Heart of Redness*, prophesied this and Camagu, the main character, puts this as follows:

You talk of all these rides and all these wonderful things, but for whose benefit are they? What will these villagers who are sitting here get from these things? These things will be enjoyed only by rich people who will come here and pollute our rivers and our ocean. (2000: 231)

Qukezwa's prophecy of environmental doom attempts to counter the destruction of the previous prophecy. In this way, the Believers of today have an opportunity to reverse the destruction suffered by the Xhosa people in the past. It is important to note that the prime objective of the cattle-killing was the transformation of the land from 'bad' to 'good' that can be compared to the present efforts to avoid environmental suicide. This appears in *The Heart of Redness* in the way the casino threatens to pollute and destroy the natural and original beauty of the land, through the introduction of a capitalist modern society.

Moreover, Mda's *The Heart of Redness* presents contemporary modern South Africa as not totally different from the 1856 Xhosa cattle-killing as far as death is concerned. In this instance, he shows that the proliferation of deaths in South Africa due to industrial pollution, pandemic diseases such as Aids, road accidents, poverty, is typically not differentiable from deaths that the cattle-killing movement and lungsickness orchestrated in the sixteenth century. David Attwell, in a review "Mda turns to Nongqawuse for inspiration" (2001) in *Sunday Independent*, claims that

“modernity seems endemically linked to death, something also apparent in the actions of the Unbelievers in *The Heart of Redness*” (2005: 195).

Indeed, *The Heart of Redness* is built upon two fundamentally opposed tendencies, one related to the maintenance of ‘redness’ that symbolizes ‘tradition’ by the Believers, while the Unbelievers preach and embrace modernity that, according to them, occasions advancement and progress. Both tendencies refer to two historically different moments in South Africa. On the one hand, Mda recalls the prophetic and catastrophic event in Xhosa land during the 1850s that he revives. On the other hand, the novelist characterizes the post-apartheid and democratic period of the 1990s, equating the consequences of both eras on South Africans.

Mda’s characters are also opposed on issues related to the embrace of Western modernity or promotion of cultural values. In this respect, what is most striking is the way some of his characters such as Camagu and John Dalton are presented as embodying both hybrid modes of life. Camagu, the main character in the novel, is a black South African, with a doctorate in communications and development, who has spent most of his life in the United States of America. On his return to South Africa to vote and participate in the reconstruction of the country in 1994, he is discriminated against and marginalized for his non-participation in liberation struggles. This appears in *The Heart of Redness* as follows:

Only then did Camagu understand the full implications of life in this new democratic society. He did not qualify for any important position because he was not a member of the ‘Aristocrats of the revolution’. (2000: 36)

Despite his educational status, his doctorate and his professional career, he cannot find a job in the new South Africa. Disillusioned by the new political system, he decides to return to America. On his way to the airport, Camagu abruptly changes direction and goes to Qolorha, a tiny village in the former Transkei, in pursuit of NomaRussia, a woman he briefly encountered in Hillbrow (Johannesburg), angelically singing during a wake ceremony. Driven by the feeling of his foreignness in his own country, Camagu's journey aimed at a rediscovery of his African cultural identity. The Western knowledge that he acquired could not enable him to fit in the new South Africa. This means that despite his acquaintance with Western life, Camagu relativises the importance of Western modernity through his attraction to rural life and primarily his engagement with Qukezwa, a traditional woman, as opposed to Xoliswa Ximiya, a modern Western-oriented woman that he fancied before. Qukezwa, daughter of Zim, a Believer, is a character representing the natural fertility and cultural beauty of Qolorha. She also became Camagu's ultimate solution to his identity problem when both decide to marry. On the other hand, Xoliswa Ximiya, daughter of Bhonco, an Unbeliever, represents the Western modern woman because of her education and her strong repudiation of 'redness' that she equates with backwardness, barbarism and heathenism. For her, Western modernity gives way to advancement and progress.

Bhonco, an Unbeliever, is typified as supporting modernity in the context of economic empowerment and progress, thus advocating the casino and the industrial society. In contrast, Zim's believing status goes along with his rejection of the casino that the Unbelievers welcome. Another character worth noting due to his manifested hybrid status is John Dalton. He adopted Xhosa culture completely despite his white skin. Through these varied characters, Mda presents the conflict between tradition and



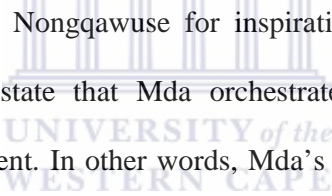
modernity as a complex interchange with roots in the traumatic past. Tradition and modernity, as we will see in more detail in the following parts of this dissertation, are not however necessarily conceived of as binary opposites, but merge in the form of new hybrid identities.



## Chapter One

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter I will look at *The Heart of Redness*, discussing different analyses from a range of reviews and articles. *The Heart of Redness* has attracted considerable attention from reviewers and critics since its publication, with a range of full articles and reviews devoted to the text. The analyses in these reviews and articles focus on a variety of issues ranging from identity recovery and social integration to economic and political situations prevailing in the new South Africa as expressed in Mda's novel.



In a review "Mda turns to Nongqawuse for inspiration" in *Sunday Independent*, David Attwell is right to state that Mda orchestrates his narrative around the conjunction of past and present. In other words, Mda's use of past events to explain contemporary situations is a way of showing that the past illuminates the present and consequently that it should not be consigned to oblivion. He shows this through a fictional re-enactment of the historical cattle-killing and the depiction of contemporary history. Attwell argues that "the cattle-killing has surfaced to become a central myth of post-apartheid narrative" (2001: 1). Attwell's analysis links the catastrophe of the 1850s to the current catastrophes that South Africans are enduring such as poverty, criminality, and the Aids pandemic.

Describing Mda's main character Camagu, Attwell states that he is a returnee who grew increasingly displaced and disaffected by the post-apartheid order, but whose destiny is to recover a sense of identity. Camagu needs to discover who he is in the

professional sense, but more importantly in cultural terms. This explains his marital choice, preferring finally Qukezwa over Xoliswa.

In his book *Rewriting Modernity* (2005), David Attwell revisits the novel and analyses it in terms of the way the text engages with the idea of an African modernity. For Attwell, instead of focussing 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” (2005: 196). According to Attwell, *The Heart of Redness* “is concerned with two historical moments, both encapsulating the Xhosa’s engagement with ongoing modernity” (2005: 196). In the first, around 1857, concerns 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.

David 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 that I will look at more closely in the following chapter. In this regard, Attwell also notes that Mda hybridises language through his combination of his native language and English. He puts this as follows: “in *The*

*Heart of Redness*, Mda went beyond the literary to the anthropological through his use of diagglossia (unitalicised terms from isiXhosa used extensively along side English)” (2005: 196).

Ludo Stynen, 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. His argument focuses on Mda’s critique of the current political system in South Africa, even though his narrative hides this under much history and depicts contemporary village life. Writing about Camagu, Stynen sees 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. (2003: 2)

I do not share Stynen’s notion that Mda’s main concern in *The Heart of Redness* is to criticise the current political system in his country, but this political aspect of the novel is nevertheless one of the key points that I will develop in my second chapter.

Michael Titlestad and Mike Kissack in their article “The foot does not sniff: imagining the post anti-apartheid intellectual” (2003), examine the role of literature in post-apartheid South Africa. Mda’s novel contributes towards this examination of 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.

Focussing on Camagu, the central character of the novel, Titlestad and Kissack see in him the current dilemma of “post-anti-apartheid intellectual” (2003: 4). Taking into account Mda’s presentation of this intellectual character in *The Heart of Redness*, Titlestad and Kissack state that “the post-colonial intellectual clarifies and expands his understanding of colonialism and its ongoing expansion in the present”(2003: 5). This means that post-colonial intellectuals such as Camagu in *The Heart of Redness* help us to understand the neo-colonialism prevailing in the post-colonial governance.

Describing Camagu, these critics show how he has been in exile since his family left South Africa for America in the 1960s. Back in his home country thirty years later, Camagu is disillusioned by the political system of the post-apartheid era. Despite his doctorate in communications and economic development, he is compelled to take up a lowly occupation of teaching in a private school. The two analysts describe the disintegration of Camagu’s identity as follows: “It is this sense of being trapped in an exilic condition, of being a stranger in his own land, which has driven Camagu to plan his return to New York” (2003: 6). Titlestad and Kissack further describe Camagu’s seduction of NomaRussia and his later attachment to Qukezwa, the highly libidinal daughter of Zim, as “a way of being closer to neither the force of desire nor forms of affective memory” (2003: 7).

According to these critics, NomaRussia and Qukezwa represent Camagu’s sexual passion. His intellectual and rational identity is relativised because Camagu reduces himself to the level of uneducated village women despite his education: “NomaRussia and Qukezwa, who in many respects are represented as a contemporary manifestation

of the spirit of Nongqawuse, are figures of erotic attachment that remind Camagu of the limits of rational cognition” (2003: 8). Titlestad and Kissack add that:

Mda renders Camagu’s desire then as a route to learning and reaching beyond the constraints of ‘enlightenment’ towards an almost somatic recognition of both repressed desire and unspeakable trauma (the memory of the cattle-killing and the brutality of apartheid). (2003: 8)

Indeed, I do agree with Titlestad and Kissack that Camagu’s journey from Johannesburg to Qolorha was a blind journey due to his desperation, disillusionment and disintegration in the city. The fact of leaving Johannesburg should not be understood in the context of a romantic adventure, but as a search for identity and integration that he failed to achieve in the city.

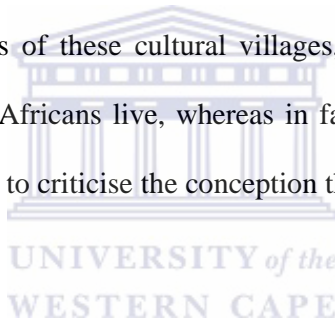
They also examine the relationship between Camagu and John Dalton, the latter being a white man fully involved in Xhosa culture. In this respect, Titlestad and Kissack look at Camagu and John Dalton as primarily concerned with the future of Qolorha in their attempt to modify the village through the cultural village initiative. According to both analysts, Camagu and Dalton are figures striving for the villagers’ redemption from misery. I completely agree with them on Camagu and Dalton, but in my further analysis, I will extend this point showing how John Dalton is another hybrid and influential character like Camagu in *The Heart of Redness*.

Camagu and Dalton want to make Qolorha a “national heritage site”. This initiative would celebrate Nongqawuse’s legacy because Qolorha would be named “a place of miracles” and a “national heritage site” (2000: 233). Through tourism, the place of catastrophic miracles associated with the cattle-killing will become “the community’s salvation” (2003: 9). As the two analysts further mention, through the cultural village

initiative, tradition will not belong to the past, but will persist in the present in the interests of the community and individuals's self-representation and preservation. In this regard, it is important to highlight Mda's idea expressed in his interview with Julie Wark, where he says that he does not advocate going back to the past although the past always has a strong impact in the present. Criticising the cultural village initiative found in *The Heart of Redness*, he ridicules

The whole notion of cultural villages that are big tourist attractions in South Africa. They purport to portray the culture of the African peoples of South Africa but in fact misrepresent that culture as a museum piece, as if it has been static since the pre-colonial times. (n.d: on line)

Explaining the inadequateness of these cultural villages, Mda states that they tend to portray African culture, how Africans live, whereas in fact no African in South Africa lives like that today. He wants to criticise the conception that African culture is static and backward.



Analysing Mda's *The Heart of Redness*, Harry Sewlall in "Deconstructing Empire in Joseph Conrad and Zakes Mda", states that the novel engages with history, combining real events, magic and superstition. Similarly to Titlestad and Kissack, Sewlall argues that Mda takes a position on post-apartheid South Africa through his way of "problematizing another brand of colonialism, that of the enriched elite in government structures" (2003: 331).

For Sewlall, what is common to both Conrad and Mda is that they deal with the theme of "imperialism that provides the backdrop for the exploration of subjectivity within the context of the 'Contact-Zones' " (2003: 332). He relies on Marry Louise Pratt's

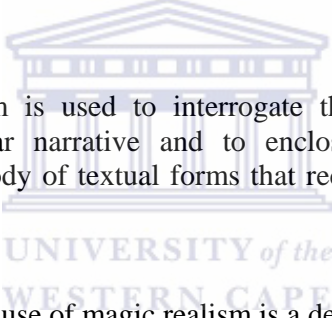
definition of the ‘contact-zones’ as “the social spaces where different cultures meet, confront each other, in the context of domination and subordination” (2003: 332). Here, the contact-zones, which generate cultural hybridity, will be ranged among my main points of analysis in my following section. In this regard, although Mda did not mention Joseph Conrad explicitly in his novel, Sewlall shows us that it is important to read *The Heart of Redness* in the light of Conrad’s treatment of the European colonisation of Africa. But, unlike *Heart of Darkness*, Sewlall argues “*The Heart of Redness* embodies multi-vocal characters with different viewpoints regarding religious beliefs, tradition and modernity” (2003: 338).

Writing about one of Mda’s intellectual characters, Xoliswa Ximiya, daughter of the Unbeliever Bhonco, Sewlall 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 Quekzwa. 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*” (2003: 338). In this respect, Sewlall does not show that Camagu’s rejection of Xoliswa is a way of criticising and rejecting the version of Western modernity that Xoliswa embodies. In my main chapter, Sewlall’s point will help me 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 uncivilised 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: 302). Sewlall associates the appearance of the marks on Xoliswa’s body with magic and supports Bill Ashcroft 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. (2003: 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: 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. Explaining this statement, he elaborates that “in fantasy you find that something strange or the supernatural happens and the characters are aware that something strange or supernatural is happening and deal with it accordingly”(n.d: on line). While rejecting the idea that his book is magic realist, Mda

adds that “in African stories the supernatural and the strange are accepted in deadpan manner” (n.d: on line). I concur with Sewlall that the scars on Xoliswa’s body disillusion her about the conception she has regarding Western modernity as an alternative to the replacement of tradition that she considers as barbaric. Sewlall has also recognized the essential hybridity of *The Heart of Redness*:

The text of *The Heart of Redness* may be considered as a site of hybridity, which combines strategies such as ambivalence, mimicry, double-voicing and splitting, to destabilise the colonial discourses of alterity. (2003: 338)

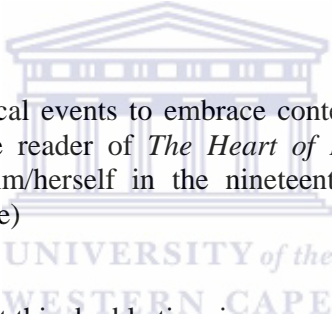
This double-voicing is clearly remarkable in *The Heart of Redness* regarding the treatment of the dead bodies of Xhosa and British soldiers. When Xhosa soldiers noticed how their rival British soldiers were cutting ears off the Xhosa dead soldiers, Twin-Twin asks in puzzlement, “What are they doing that for? Are they wizards?” (2000: 20). In return, the Xhosa soldiers mutilated British soldiers’ dead bodies as a way to neutralise the white magic. In this mutual savagery, Sewlall maintains that if one savage act initiates another, the question is, who is the savage and who is civilized? He writes: “this double-voiced, dual perspective splits the difference between self and other so that both positions are partial and neither is sufficient unto itself” (2003: 339). In this instance, Sewlall equates the atrocities and savagery of both conflicting parties of *The Heart of Redness*. Jeff Peires supports this idea of mutual savagery as follows: “atrocities breed atrocities and it would be wrong for the historian to pass judgement on those who killed and tortured in this most merciless of all frontier wars” (1989: 23).

In Mda's novel, the mutual atrocities are confirmed by one of the captured British soldiers explaining to the Xhosa that they were cutting heads off dead Xhosa soldiers for scientific purposes. This did not convince the Xhosa and Mda puts it as follows: "Souvenirs! Scientific enquiry! It did not make sense. It was nothing but the witchcraft of the white man" (2000: 21). In my view, the boiling of the heads of slain Xhosa warriors by the British complicates the idea of African savagery and Western civilization and Sewlall supports this as follows: "the image of British soldiers boiling the head of a Xhosa ancestor is a neat, double-voiced ironic ploy, which again interrogates versions of savagery as imbricated in Western discourses" (2003: 340). Here, I completely agree with Sewlall when he points out that Mda wants to unveil the cruelty and atrocities that accompany the imperial and colonial domination.

In her article, "Post-Colonial Alterities and Global Hybridities in Contemporary South African Novel: Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness* and Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to our Hillbrow*," Hilary P. Dannenberg is concerned with contrasting the narrative techniques and the configuration of the question of identity, alterity, and hybridity of Mda's *The Heart of Redness* and Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to our Hillbrow*. In this analysis, Dannenberg cites Bhabha, stating that "both novels have in common the portrayal of individuals who have moved beyond the camps of identity and alterity and are located in a 'third space of cultural hybridity' " (1994: 20).

This point of hybridity will constitute my key point in explaining the type of culture Mda presents in his novel. Through examples from the novel, I will show how Mda explores ideas of hybridity instead of alterity. Cultural hybridity involves the process of intermingling different cultures while cultural alterity is concerned with the repudiation of other people's culture.

According to Dannenberg, although *The Heart of Redness* is a historical novel in its depiction of the 1856-1857 event and the invasion of Xhosa land by the British, it is a contemporary post-apartheid and postcolonial novel (2003: on line). Exploring this contemporariness, Dannenberg mentions that the people of Qolorha are now also facing an invasion, but one in which they have a little more choice. They are debating whether to allow a new holiday and gambling complex to be built in the village and whether to allow their culture and environment to be transformed in the name of new jobs and economic progress (2003: on line). For Dannenberg, the complexity of *The Heart of Redness* resides in the fact that



it shifts from historical events to embrace contemporary events. Because of this double time, the reader of *The Heart of Redness* will have difficulty whether to locate him/herself in the nineteenth century or late twentieth century. (2003: on line)

Indeed, Dannenberg adds that this double time is an aspect of the novel's treatment of the questions of binary relationships and alterities. For her, the novel's depiction of the two times implies that there are significant correlations between the two different historical periods. Either period of time depicted in *The Heart of Redness* is characterised by invasion or threat of invasion, whether colonial or economic, and creates divisions between Believers and Unbelievers (2003: on line). On the contemporary time level, the descendants of the nineteenth century Believers and Unbelievers are similarly polarised about the new project in the village of Qolorha. Furthermore, Dannenberg shows us that by paralleling a nineteenth-century colonial invasion with a contemporary economic assault, Mda is suggesting that Western

economic progress and the forces of globalisation should not be automatically embraced as bringing benefits but should

like colonialism, be treated with extreme caution and suspicion because they pose more of a threat than a benefit to local culture, precisely because of the power of such an invasion to permanently transform local cultures in the way that colonialism did. (2003: on line)

Describing the central character in *The Heart of Redness*, Dannenberg says that

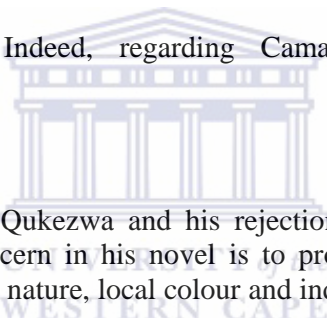
Camagu does not assume the role of a cultural hybrid in the sense of being a bridge builder between cultures, but goes through a developmental process in which he finds that he has to choose between alternative courses and cultural practices when he gets caught up in the debate between the Believers and Unbelievers of Qolorha. (2003: on line)

In this description, she states that Camagu is an outsider because he cannot find a place in contemporary South Africa. Instead of going back to America due to his disillusionment, Camagu decides to forge a new life after he followed NomaRussia to Qolorha. I do agree with Dannenberg regarding Camagu, but unlike her, I assume that Camagu is a complete hybrid because he involved himself in traditional life in addition to his Western identity. In combining both cultures he consequently becomes a true hybrid.

Indeed, Xoliswa Ximiya and Qukezwa play an important role in the novel's exploration of cultural confrontation. Dannenberg says that Camagu's developmental trajectory is influenced and structured by the choice he made between two possible marriage choices, each of which represents different and conflicting values and moral attitudes (2003: on line). I support the analysis that Camagu's final choice of Qukezwa shows that Mda makes a distinction between the values of Western

modernity and African tradition. Comparing and contrasting the two female characters, Dannenberg points out that “Xoliswa is attractive in Western terms. She is intelligent, ambitious, and Western-oriented, but cool in terms of personality and angular in terms of body” (2003: on line). Regarding the developmental project, Xoliswa sees only the advantages that modernisation can generate regardless of the dangers it might cause to the local environment and culture.

Dannenberg adds that unlike Xoliswa, Qukezwa is earthy and has a completely different non-Western attraction. For him, what makes Qukezwa most attractive and seductive, is her colourful and poetic prose and her deep connection to the environment of Qolorha. Indeed, regarding Camagu’s choice of Qukezwa, Dannenberg says that



Camagu’s choice of Qukezwa and his rejection of Xoliswa show the way Mda’s additional concern in his novel is to prove that Western civilisation counts for little, while nature, local colour and independence of spirit count for much. (2003: on line)

This induced Camagu to make a choice between the natural and the local, rejecting the lure of the economic attractions of Western advancement. While considering Dannenberg’s analysis of Qukezwa as fundamental, I will compare her vision comparatively to that of Nongqawuse. Dannenberg further states that

Choosing African tradition instead of Western modernity and siding with the Believers, Camagu makes a realignment of his identity that involves a movement away from being a transformational hybrid to a very local and grounded member of the Qolorha community. (2003: on line)

This process is what Dannenberg calls “dehybridisation” (2003: on line). I disagree with Dannenberg when she points out that Camagu was processed through

dehybridisation because, although he is attracted by the traditional way of life, it did not change him completely. This new culture was added to the Western one to emphasize his hybridity. He tries to forge a new, grounded modern identity in Qolorha, one which is not premised on a slavish mimicry of Western culture.

In a word, Dannenberg says that *The Heart of Redness* depicts the preservation of identity and alterity as a necessity. According to her,

If local cultures are to protect themselves from larger globalising cultural forces, a clear sense of local cultural allegiances should override an amorphous hybridity. (2003: on line)

In his article, “An unforgiving Past: South African novelist Zakes Mda chronicles how the ghosts of his nation’s racist past continue to haunt the present”, in *World and I*, Okey Ndibe says that “blacks in South Africa have achieved the ballot and political power, but they remain economically as powerless as ever”(2003: 2). For him, black South Africans might have conquered the “beast of apartheid, but they are still assailed by deadlier spectres such as Aids, violence that generates criminality, which, in return claims the lives of thousands of South Africans, young and old”(2003: 2). In this regard, Ndibe argues that “as it turns out, the new South Africa is not so much new as besieged by the old contagions of rape, gang violence, poverty, disease, political duplicity and a grim, unforgiving outlook” (2003: 1-2).

This analysis shows that the South African nation is now caught in the throes of an implacable past, meaning that the shadows of the past are still cast on the country. Ndibe expresses this as follows: “ the country has officially left behind its odious brew of racial bigotry, but the atrocious legacy of apartheid has spawned a

disturbingly coarse and festering culture of violence and self-loathing”(2003: 2). This point, as I briefly mentioned earlier, enters into the main aspects of the contemporariness of the novel under my analysis that will need to be expanded in my second chapter. Writing about Zakes Mda and Phaswane Mpe, Ndibe states that

These writers are reclaiming some of the native turf long dominated by their white counterparts. Their novels set in the immediate post-apartheid period, a time of unprecedented tensions, uncertainty, anxiety, and frayed hopes, even a creeping sense of forlorn despair and hopelessness. The two writers attempt to vivify the interior lives of a confused, confounded people in a turbulent and convulsive nation. (2003: 2)

Comparing Mda’s *Ways of Dying* and *The Heart of Redness*, Ndibe says that “both novels differ in their thematic concerns, narrative strategies, texture, and ambitions” (2003: 2). However, according to the critic, the two novels bear the unmistakable mark of a confident writer, equipped with talent and suppleness of voice. Ndibe describes Mda as “capable of modulating his voice to suit his story and make the South African setting, whether past or present, richly resonant” (2003: 2).

Describing the prophecy by Nongqawuse and the Xhosa cattle-killing, Ndibe says that given the centrality of cattle to the economy of the Xhosa, Nongqawuse’s call to destroy the cattle was equivalent to a national catastrophe for the Xhosa. I fully support him and this is a very important point that needs to be made because the cattle in Xhosa community are sacred, respected, and constitute the community’s riches. In consequence, slaughtering them systematically equals self-destruction. This is described by Ndibe as follows:

Xhosa killing their cattle, killing themselves, a world coming apart. A brave, elegant African people who had resisted European invaders until an evil



prophecy convinced them to kill their cattle, butcher the animals that fleshed the Xhosa's intricate dreaming of themselves. (2003: 3)

According to Ndibe, *The Heart of Redness* is set in a South Africa newly emerged from white minority rule. Talking about black empowerment that the novel highlights, he says that its rhetoric masks a cynical hypocrisy and betrayal. For him, the "Aristocrats of the revolution" (2000: 36) and their minions are the sole profiteers from the so-called harvests of empowerment. As Ndibe puts it, "one outstanding aspect of Mda's narrative is the relentless depiction of how the prophecies sundered the Xhosa, creating rifts that forced spouse to betray spouse, children to usurp their fathers' thrones, and brothers to set upon one another" (2003: 3).

Complimenting Mda, Ndibe says that "he knows how to draw events and characters from lived history, deepening his narrative, amplifying characters and their motives and imbuing events with serious significance" (2003: 3). In addition, he points out that "Mda amazes the reader through his control and fluency. For him, Mda explores the past and the present, examining differing narratives within narratives, exploring white and black in deadly confrontation" (2003: 3). This achievement is very remarkable and clever because as Ndibe says, "Mda wishes us to see that the past is never a category of antiquity but vitally potent in the present" (2003: 3). The novel combines both nineteenth century and contemporary post-apartheid events. Another point that Ndibe makes us aware of is that in his novel, "Mda seeks to show how particular ancient traumas dog contemporary lives, how they disfigure, dismember, and embitter the present" (2003: 4). I confirm with the Ndibe that Mda's narrative moves with ease between past and present, unifying both categories. His story, says Ndibe,

flows in two streams, alternating between ancestral anguish and contemporary agony, with the former always echoing the latter. Mda uses flashbacks not as a conceit for delineating the past from the present, but to illuminate the dramatic tensions of the here and there. (2003: 4)

Analysing Mda's characters, Ndibe shows that the narrator gives ancestral names to several characters, among them John Dalton, Qukezwa, Xikixa, and Heitsi in order to "reinforce both the continuities and discontinuities of individual and communal lives" (2003: 4). Talking about Xoliswa, a principal in a local secondary school, Ndibe elaborates that she is:

beautiful, fiercely proud, but dour and emotionally arid. She rues the continuing appeal of indigenous culture to many in her community. When a consortium of developers proposes to transform the village into a tourist paradise, Xoliswa fervently embraces their vision. Though poorly educated, Qukezwa and her father galvanise an effective opposition to this distorted notion of development. (2003: 5)

Ndibe continues that what is more humiliating is the way Qukezwa snatches Camagu, a young man about whom Xoliswa is building improbable dreams of marriage. Talking about Camagu, Ndibe says that

he is the object of desire in the love duel between Qukezwa and Xoliswa. Camagu is a character after his creator's heart. Through all the conflicts, through the ordeal of acceptance and rejection, through the pangs of displacement and alienation, he establishes a poise, reasonableness, and public mindedness that are in short supply in the emergent South Africa. (2003: 6)

For Ndibe, Camagu functions as Mda's incarnation of rebirth. He is the novel's new man, a new voice as well as a new conscience for the village that has become his adoptive home.

Referring to many deaths in contemporary South Africa, Ndibe says that “most of them are senseless, random and blind expressions of gang rage or political violence” (2003: 6). Ndibe ends his analysis saying that

the past cannot be consigned to oblivion or locked in a closet where it must not disturb the present. The novel is set as the nation is on the cusp of opening up its life to all citizens, regardless of their skin colour. (2003: 6)

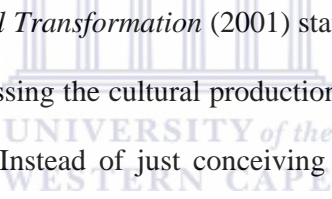
Finally, I agree with Attwell that “*The Heart of Redness* is the most ambitious work of fiction by a black South African writer in well over a decade” (2001: 14). The novel is an important post-apartheid text that explores questions of history, identity and cultural change. I will look at these concerns more carefully in the following chapters.



## Chapter Two

### HYBRIDITY AND CULTURAL CHANGE IN *THE HEART OF REDNESS*

In this chapter I will explore different notions of hybridity and cultural change that constitute a major concern of many post-colonial writers and critics. They describe hybridity in the context of colonial power and the domination of colonised societies. At the same time hybridity concerns matters of cultural interaction, change and transformation. Figures such as Bill Ashcroft, Robert Young and Homi. K. Bhabha are the most prominent analysts of cultural change and hybridity, and their ideas are examined more closely in this chapter as they relate to *The Heart of Redness*.



Bill Ashcroft in *Post-colonial Transformation* (2001) states that “post-colonial studies developed as a way of addressing the cultural production of societies heavily affected by colonisation” (2001: 2). Instead of just conceiving of colonisation as a way of undermining the colonised and reducing them to mere recipients of imposed programmes, colonisation was a much more complex historical and social process. Indeed, it is also important to note that colonisation should not only be looked at negatively. It created schools, Christian missions, and infrastructures in colonised countries, which helped Africans to integrate their cultures into a modern global culture.

According to Ashcroft, cultures change “because they must cope with the demands of everyday life” (2001: 3). In this regard, it is worth noting that cultural change happens in moments when different cultures meet, mix and transform each other. This mixing occasions the loss of originality for each of the mixed cultures to give way to cultural

hybridity. Quoting Jean Jaurès, the leader of the French Socialist Party in 1912, Ashcroft says: “If you look deeply into the matter, there existed (before the French takeover), a Moroccan civilisation capable of the necessary transformation enabling evolution and progress, a civilisation both ancient and modern” (2001: 3), but as Ashcroft argues, colonisation has crippled this Moroccan cultural evolution. Morocco as well as other colonised African countries have been deprived of the opportunity of having their cultures evolve into an African modernity. Ashcroft puts this as follows: “If we think of the case of Morocco magnified many times over, we must see the European colonisation of the world as a catastrophe of enormous proportions” (2001: 3). In so doing, the coloniser did not only subdue the colonised economically, but also imposed on him a way of behaving through his cultural influences. For Ashcroft, post-colonial studies developed as a methodology of analysing various strategies that colonised societies used to dismantle this colonial power (2001: 3). Another point Ashcroft mentions is the way those strategies used by the coloniser were shared by all colonised societies despite their geographical distance and cultural differences.

Ashcroft further mentions that most literary critics used the term post-colonial in the 1970s to discuss various effects of colonisation. In this respect, he states that post-colonialism appeared as a theory dealing with the analysis and description of historical and cultural experiences of colonised peoples. He goes on to state that “the term post-colonialism has expanded to engage issues of cultural diversity, ethnic, racial and cultural difference” (2001: 11). Here, I understand that cultural diversity refers to the way different cultures in the same community cohabit. People in communities must accept this cultural difference to allow cultural cohabit. A striking example is that of South Africa. Being a rainbow nation, a multiracial and

multicultural society, cultures cohabit despite the historical differences exacerbated by the former political leadership. This cohabit allows a cultural interaction, which in return entertains cultural borrowings to make the South African society culturally hybrid.

Paradoxically, Bill Ashcroft does not fully agree that colonial influences might have polluted the supposed original cultures of colonised societies. This appears clearly in his following words:

If we believed that African culture had been ‘polluted’ by its contact with other cultures in the Caribbean, for instance, we might be inclined to advocate the rejection of all polluting influences of imperialism, capitalism and modernity. (2001: 25)

The cultural interaction and change brought about by colonization is thus not necessarily a negative, “polluting” process, but can be regarded as positive, giving rise to new hybrid forms of culture. Kwame Gyekye in his book *Tradition and Modernity* (1997), says that

sociologists and anthropologists depict the notion of the traditional as rural, agrarian, prescientific, resistant to change and innovation, and bound by the perception of its past. In contrast, the modern is characterised as scientific, innovative, future oriented and urbanized. (1997: 217)

Criticising the given definitions, Gyekye proposes a more accurate and complete definition of tradition as follows:

A tradition is any cultural product that was created and pursued by generations and that, having been accepted and preserved, in whole or in part, by successive generations, has been maintained to the present. (1997: 221)

From this point it clearly appears that Gyekye supports the idea of cultural continuity that implies change and dynamism, except that his concept involves cultural conservation for a long time. Like the previous theorists, talking about cultural dynamism and change, he accepts that this is only possible through cultural hybridity, which involves cultural mixing.

Indeed, according to Gyekye, “traditional elements are not necessarily at variance with modern elements” (1997: 218). In this context, Gyekye maintains that modern and traditional fashions are not repulsive, they are not opposites, but instead they should live complementarily and in full interaction. They should be hybridised to avoid perpetual binaries and discordances between themselves. In *The Heart of Redness*, the cultural conflict appears through the differentiation between the Believers and Unbelievers, where both practise their own traditions and rituals: “If Unbelievers have their rituals, there is no reason why we can not have our own too, says Zim” (2000: 191). Here, it appears that the Unbelievers and the Believers, though living in the same Xhosa community, have cultural discordances based on the belief and unbelief in prophecies.

In the following part, I will bring in different interpretations of the notion of hybridity as viewed by different post-colonial analysts and critics and apply them to *The Heart of Redness*. In post-colonial theory and literary analysis, the concept of ‘hybridity’ has become influential. What is meant by this concept?

Robert Young J. C in *Colonial Desire: Hybridity, Theory, Culture and Race* (1995), states that the word ‘hybridity’ has developed from biological and botanical origins.

Young quotes Webster's dictionary use of the term hybridity in 1828, where it refers to "an animal or plant, produced from the mixture of two species" (1995: 6). At this stage, hybridity referred to plant and animal reproduction. Young states that from the 1840s the question of species, and therefore of hybridity, was always placed at the centre of discussions and was consistently and comprehensively treated. Quoting Robert Knox, the Edinburgh anatomist and racial theorist, he states that:

Naturalists have generally admitted that animals of the same species are fertile, reproducing their kind for ever; whilst on the contrary, if an animal be the product of two distinct species, the hybrid, more or less, was sure to perish or to become extinct...The product of such a mixture is not fertile. (1995: 8)

Giving the example of animal hybridity between the mule and the hinny, which are female-male and male-female crosses between horse and ass, he says that the mule and the hinny are infertile because the hybrid result of both species is doomed to disappearance or the offspring of these species will simply be extinct in future. From this animal experience, Knox argued falsely that this proves that different races of men were also different species. In support of this idea, Young quotes Edward Long who elaborated that: "Though unions between white and black evidently produced fertile offspring, such fertility declined through the generations" (1995: 8).

On the other hand, Prichard, an English physician and ethnologist had already used the term 'hybridity' in 1813 with reference to human fertility and reproduction. Prichard denied that humans belong to different species. He was among the first to assign all human races and ethnic groups to a single species. For him, unlike animals and plants, humans belong to the same species. However, the different skin colours commonly called 'races' are results of biological effects. This biological aspect means that the human body contains particular 'genes'. Thus, the marital union of



individuals with different genes can produce persons of different skin colours and with time this process will produce different races. Thus, Knox's argument that human beings belong to different races, which are as different as species, is clearly false.

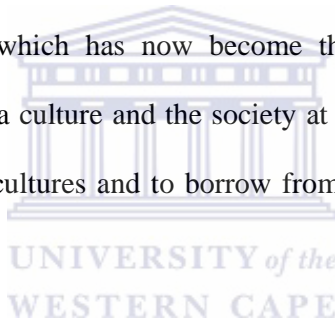
Mda's interest in racial hybridity is particularly evident in *The Madonna of Excelsior* (1995). In this novel, there is a high range of inter-racial sexual relations, which produces racial hybridity. Niki's daughter Popi in the novel is an example of hybridity between a white man and a black woman. However, in *The Heart of Redness* it is cultural hybridity that matters.

While the concept of hybridity has been used to describe racial intermingling (for example when a white-skinned and black-skinned person produce a 'coloured') the idea of race is a controversial one in contemporary theory). In *Race, Writing, and Difference* (1985), Henry Louis Gates states: "Race has become a trope of ultimate, irreducible difference between cultures, linguistic groups, or adherents of specific belief systems" (1985: 5). For him, race shifts from referring to biological aspects of skin colour to characterising people sharing the same beliefs. Gates questions the skin colour criterion of race as follows: "Who has seen a black or red person, a white, yellow, or brown? These terms are arbitrary constructs, not reports or reality" (1985: 6). For him, the use of skin colour as race to differentiate people is inappropriate and unacceptable.

My main concern in the analysis of *The Heart of Redness* will thus not be the concept of racial hybridity, which is problematic scientifically, but rather of cultural hybridity.

The case of John Dalton in *The Heart of Redness* is clearly one example demonstrating cultural hybridity.

If hybridity in postcolonial theory concerns culture rather than race, it is important to understand that this implies a fluid or changing model of culture. Cultures are not static and unchanging, but through mixture, contact and interchange evolve and develop constantly into hybrid forms. This idea, as Young shows, is not new but was already held in the past. Quoting Herbert Spencer, one of the leading Darwinists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Young states that “cultural progress consists in a change from the homogenous to the heterogonous” (1995: 4). For him, heterogeneity requires cultural interchange and diversity, which has now become the self-conscious identity of modern society because for a culture and the society at large to evolve, there is need to be in contact with other cultures and to borrow from them some positive cultural values.



This assertion shows that cultural interchange is also a key way to socialisation of different groups in communities. In this regard, cultural hybridity implies a structure of attraction, where people transform and intermingle their cultural values. According to the German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder, quoted by Young, human progress is a result of cultural mixing and communication through which cultural achievements of one culture are grafted onto another. He gives the example of Europe, arguing that:

No nation in Europe has raised itself to ‘a polished state’ by pulling itself up by its own cultural bootstrap: Europe has taken most of its culture (writing, mathematics, religion, etc.) from the Romans, the Greeks, the Arabs and the Jews. (1995: 41)

Herder thus shows that no culture develops within its own sphere and limitations, but human development and cultural progress in particular, is the result of grafting, diffusion and absorption between cultures. Young supports Herder's view that culture is not trapped in a state of fixity or stasis.

In his book, *Intercultural Communication* (1996), Robert Young (not to be confused with his namesake Robert J.C Young), says that culture changes through a process of interaction during which there happens a kind of criticism of the old culture:

Individuals, perhaps influential ones, took steps to change, to abandoning an old custom, to advancing a new hypothesis of theory about the world, influenced by the new, technological culture of the Europeans. (1996: 52)

This example of Europe opens up the thesis that no culture evolves and progresses by itself. This implies cultural borrowing and exchange (in other words hybridity), leading to cultural transformation and advancement. The process of European led colonisation over the previous 400 years has been a major driver of cultural exchange and the development of hybrid forms of identity. This explains why post-colonial theorists such as Young and Bhabha have been interested in hybridity. It is no surprise then that *The Heart of Redness*, a novel that deals with the impact of Western modernity on the culture of the Xhosa, has many examples of hybridity. This hybridity that Mda's novel contains will be analysed in detail later in this chapter.

Reacting to cultural change and interaction, Robert Young further asks:

How did they get this way? Presumably, they coped with change. They changed their ideas, their 'culture'; they absorbed new ideas from other cultures, and this all happened through a process of interaction during which some sort of critique of the old culture occurred. (1996: 48)

This cultural change from the meeting with other cultures is not haphazard but requires a cautious examination of what is likely to be changed and what has to be integrated. In this instance, Robert Young goes on elaborating that “folding back on itself, culture observes its own differentiation, maps its own inner struggles, its social contradictions, limitations and dissonances”(1996: 47). The implementation of this concept of cultural interaction becomes possible when all people respect cultural differentiation.

The contribution of Homi K. Bhabha in theorising the concept of ‘hybridity’ is much more striking. He states that “hybridity has to be understood as the moment when colonial authority is suppressed giving way to recognition of the colonised’s cultural values and language” (1994: 112). In his idea, there is a kind of interrogating of the authoritative attitude of the coloniser towards the colonised in such a way as to equate the colonial and the colonised cultures. If colonial culture is still considered as superior, cultural hybridity will remain impossible. Bhabha relativises the supremacy of colonial discourses to provide efficient and appropriate tools for the cultural equality that he and most post-colonial writers advocate. This can also be clearly seen in the way he characterises hybridity as:

A problematic of colonial representation... that reverses the effects of colonialist disavowal, so that other ‘denied’ knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority. (1994: 114)

In this characterization, Bhabha shows that hybridity questions the structures of colonisation based on domination, degradation and underestimation of the colonised’s language and culture at large. Bhabha advocates that hybridization is a process of rejecting the one way of looking at colonisation through its authoritative commands to repress native traditions. Bhabha advocates a “moment of challenge and resistance

against a dominant cultural power” (1994: 23). For him, this moment is the one of developing interaction between the indigenous and colonial culture, “which has the effect of depriving the imposed imperialistic culture, not only of the authority that it has for so long imposed politically, often through violence, but even of its own claims to authenticity” (1994: 23).

In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha states that the acceptance of cultural difference and the rejection of the concept of cultural superiority is a way of encouraging cultural hybridities to take place. He puts it as follows:

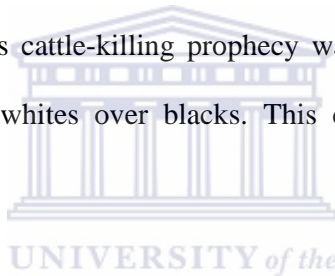
The socio-articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, ongoing negotiation that seeks to authorise cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformations. (1994: 2)

According to Bhabha, this recognition of cultural difference opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity without an assumed or imposed hierarchy. Hybridity becomes then a strategic reversal of colonial domination. For him, social differences should take people “‘beyond’ themselves in order to return, in a spirit of revision and reconstruction” (1994: 3). This notion of going beyond oneself implies a movement from fixed identifications, which are the ways people think they are naturally, towards an integral recognition of the otherness, which entertains cultural and social differences.

How can Bhabha’s notion of hybridity be used to understand *The Heart of Redness*? Let us examine the central event of the novel, namely the cattle-killing, more closely. Nongqawuse’s prophecy in *The Heart of Redness* can be understood in terms of Bhabha’s resistance to colonial authority because, although it was destructive of the wealth of the Xhosa, it was intended to dismantle and eradicate the domination of white

colonialists and imperialists. According to Nongqawuse's prophecy, after all the cattle were slaughtered and crops burned, the sun would not rise and a whirlwind would come and drive the settlers into the sea. Nongqawuse's prophecy was not a purely indigenous resistance to the invader's domination, but was also conceived on the basis of Christian ideologies of the resurrection of the dead. This combination of traditional Xhosa beliefs mixed with elements of Western Christianity makes it a typically hybrid belief.

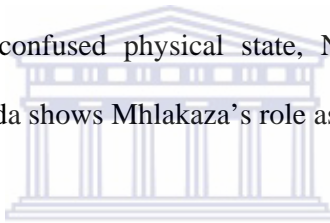
The Xhosa cattle-killing proves its usefulness and meaning because it was primarily oriented towards a political liberation from oppression of the Xhosa by white settlers in the 1850s. It was a reaction to a perpetual land dispossession by whites, reducing the natives to insignificant beings who deserved no honour, no respect and were condemned to subjugation. Nongqawuse's cattle-killing prophecy was mainly aimed at contesting dominant representations of whites over blacks. This can be seen in *The Heart of Redness* as follows:



Nongqawuse had also pronounced 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. Who would not want to see the world as it was before the cursed conquerors, who were capable of killing even the son of their own god, had been cast by the waves onto the lands of the amaXhosa? (2000: 86-87)

The belief in the resurrection of the dead involves a powerful and strange intermingling of African tradition and Western Christianity, which strengthens the notion of hybridity that is predominant in Mda's narrative. The cattle-killing in the 1850s was not a bizarre Xhosa cultural practice, but a hybrid cultural formation that came into being in the context of colonial domination. It combined Xhosa beliefs while at the same time embracing Western Christian ideologies. The resurrection of the dead that Nongqawuse prophesied is typically a Western Christian idea she learned from her uncle Mhlakaza blended with the traditional Xhosa beliefs. In this

regard, her prophecy meets Bhabha's idea of cultural change when he says that: "Cultural hybridities emerge in moments of historical transformation" (1994: 2). Here, it is important to mention that the hybrid nature and conception of the cattle-killing is based on the role of Mhlakaza in inducing his niece to prophesy. He became a converted Christian at the colonial mission, where he learned about the resurrection of the dead. Considering that he was well known in Qolorha as having converted to Christianity, he could not gain the sympathy of the Qolorha villagers because he was treated as a coward for his alliance with the white man at the Christian missions. The only successful way to create his theology based on the combination of traditional beliefs and Christian ideologies was through his niece Nongqawuse. Considering her age, her embarrassed and confused physical state, Nongqawuse could not have initiated such a prophecy. Mda shows Mhlakaza's role as follows:



Don't you see, all the words she utters are really Mhlakaza's medium. She is Mhlakaza's medium. She had vaguely heard of the teachings of Nxele about the resurrection...and the Christian version of it, as her uncle had been a Christian at some stage. She therefore decided to concoct her own theology. (2000: 283)

From the quotation, it appears clearly that Nongqawuse prophecy was a hybrid concoction. Mhlakaza was inspired by western Christian ideologies and interpreted and incorporated them into African traditional beliefs. This point makes Nongqawuse's prophecy a form of hybridity. Indeed, Nongqawuse's uncle, Mhlakaza was himself a hybrid as he combined two different ideologies to create his own orthodoxy. He had also learned the white man's language to convey the white Christian gospel. Mda shows this as follows:

When Mhlakaza was Wilhelm Goliath; he used to give the people a lot of pleasure....He could recite the creed, all Ten Commandments in their proper

order, and the Lord's Prayer. He spoke the language of the Dutch people too, as if he was one of them. (2000: 52)

Here, Mhlakaza's hybrid status appears in his alliance with white missionaries, learning their language, taking Dutch names and preaching the gospel, but then using this knowledge to challenge white rule. Like Camagu's disillusionment with the Western style, Mhlakaza was disappointed by his life at the mission in Grahamstown, where he had been underestimated and marginalised by Merriman, the missionary. He had been discriminated against by the latter's family leading him to disbelieve in the white man's god. He left the mission for his motherland and would not allow his countrymen to call him Wilhelm Goliath, his former white names. Mhlakaza took another course by creating his own hybrid theology. This appears in *The Heart of Redness* as follows:



[W]hen Merriman stopped walking and was confined to the church in Grahamstown, Mhlakaza's days as a gospel man came to an end. At first the holy man engaged him to teach isiXhosa at a school, and built him a hut in his garden. But he was not a happy man at the holy man's household. Merriman and his wife treated him like a servant, whereas on the road he had been a gospel man in his own right. He felt that Merriman's wife didn't like him. She called him a dreamy sort of fellow. And this convinced him that his enthusiasm for the gospel was not seriously taken by Merriman's family. So he left and came to live next to his sister's homestead near the Gxarha River. (2000: 58)

From Mhlakaza's disappointment, it is clear that his inducement of Nongqawuse to prophesy was not only calculated to liberate his people from oppression, but was also a personal revenge for the shame he was made to feel at the Christian mission.

Indeed, it is also worth noting that as Nongqawuse prophesies the overthrow of white colonial rule and cleanses the land for the arrival of new people and new wealth she becomes similar to Jesus Christ who preached the overthrow of evil practices in



preparation for a new order. Mda makes this link between Nongqawuse's prophecies and Christianity explicit in *The Heart of Redness* as follows:

I urge you; my countrymen...change from your evil ways, for they are the ways of the devil. Do away with ububomvu or ubuqaba, your hidden practices, your superstitions...and become amaGqobhoka...civilised ones, those who have converted to the path that was laid for us by Christ. (2000: 53)

Through this combination of African traditional beliefs and Western ideologies, Goliath is similar to Ntsikana, a Xhosa poet, whose poetry used Xhosa beliefs to convey Christian ideologies. Landeg White and Tim Cousins in *Literature and Society in South Africa* (1984) argue that:

Ntsikana's theology is in 'the Great hymn' and it is said to be 'unimpeachable'. But despite its seemingly Christian content it is far more African than it looks. The meaning of the words can be changed so as to have Christian connotations, but the sound of the words and the way they are used carry with them the authority of past tradition and this authority is carried over to the meaning. (1984: 31)

Ntsikana's theology, like Nongqawuse's prophecy combining both African beliefs and Western ideologies, supports the idea that hybridity not only concerns the repudiation of colonial power, but also the fusion of many distinct cultures. This fusion becomes the key to cultural transformation and evolution. In another context, the hybridity of tradition and Christianity appears in the concept of the cattle-killing event as a way of meeting ancestral requirements through sacrifice. Mda shows this in the following words:

A good ancestor is one who can be an emissary between the people of the world and the great Qamata. A good ancestor comes between his feuding descendants whenever they sacrifice a beast to him, and brings peace among them. (2000: 147)

This belief in sacrifice to the dead shows that Xhosa people, like all Africans, believe that the death of elders is not an end of life or a mere disappearance to the invisible world, but represents a powerful transcendence or an experience of being transported out of one place to another. This can also be interpreted as the origin of the belief in resurrection that Christian theology embodies and advocates. *The Holy Bible* shows the resurrection of the dead as follows:

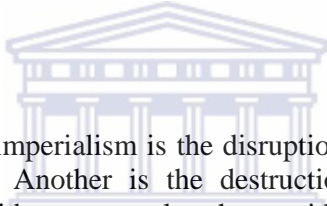
For since it was through man that death came into the world, it is also through a Man that the resurrection of the dead has come. For just as because of the union of nature in Adam all people die, so also by virtue of their union of nature shall all in Christ be made alive. (I Corinthians 1: 21-22)

Regarding this sacrificial connotation of the cattle-killing, Landeng and Cousins argue: “The interaction between the living and the dead typically involved a ritual killing, cattle being the customary sacrificial animal” (1984: 27). In this context, Mda shows that in Xhosa tradition, death implies life continuity and David Chidester supports this idea as follows: “Although elders might have passed through biological death, they were not dead” (1989: 15). From this point of view, the Xhosa cattle-killing becomes a way of maintaining direct connections with the ancestors in order to receive their blessings in return as compensation once they are resurrected. This sacrificial aspect is similar to the Christian concept of always being in direct contact with God for future rewards.

Indeed, this hybrid combination of African traditional beliefs and Christian orthodoxy involves Ashcroft’s notion of the ‘transcultural’, which is a way culture changes through the contact with another culture. He points out that: “It is impossible to talk sensibly about culture without invoking this concept of transculturation, of a contact-

zone between cultures” (2001: 24). It becomes clear that the contact of two cultures or ideologies produces a hybrid culture or ideology. In this respect, the intermingling of Xhosa beliefs and Christian beliefs as shown in *The Heart of Redness* is typically hybrid, with the cattle-killing event being at the same time an act of political resistance against colonial hegemony, as well as an expression of the cultural changes within Xhosa society.

Mda can also be understood as a post-colonial writer who uses historical events to expose the wrongdoings of imperialism and colonialism in his country. Stuart Fowler in *The Oppression and Liberation of Modern Africa* (1995) supports this idea as follows:



One consequence of imperialism is the disruption of African social life on an unprecedented scale. Another is the destruction of an economic base of African society that did not occur elsewhere, with Black South Africans left as economic dependents on the fringe of white society. (1995: 92)

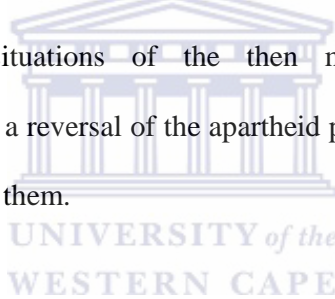
In this way, the Xhosa catastrophe in the 1850s might be understood in the context of the British settlers’ strategy through Governor Grey, to subjugate and rule the Xhosa. Indeed, the politics of the colonist inscribes itself into the ‘divide and rule’ policy, which characterized most of the politics of imperialism in Africa. The cattle-killing event is attributed to white settlers through Governor Grey (The Man Who Named Ten Rivers). This appears in *The Heart of Redness* as follows:

People murmured among themselves that there were rumours among some Unbelievers that in fact The Man Who Named Ten Rivers was responsible for the cattle-killing movement, so as to break the might of the amaXhosa and subjugate even those lands across the Kei River that the British had failed to conquer. (2000: 142)

Mda shows how land appropriation by settlers undermined the Xhosa, disrupting and weakening their social order. To gain the Xhosa’s submission to their established

socio-political rule, the settlers weakened their economy based on cattle and agriculture through land dispossession. However, the oppression of the black majority does not only appear in the context of black-white conflict during the colonial era, but is still perpetuated in the post-apartheid system.

In the same context, the similar situation of Bhabha's notion of contesting colonial authority that requires rejection of assumed colonial superiority appears in *The Heart of Redness* through the black economic empowerment programme that Mda describes. After a long period of apartheid which undermined black people economically, black empowerment programme becomes a political and economic way of rebuking the dominant influences of apartheid in the new South Africa, intending to ameliorate the political and economic situations of the then marginalized people. Black empowerment becomes then a reversal of the apartheid policy of impoverishing black South Africans to easily rule them.



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In the following part of the chapter, I will show that the hybridity of resistance to colonial domination in *The Heart of Redness* is articulated through some of its characters. Characters such as Camagu and Dalton have already been referred to briefly, but it is necessary to look at their representations in the text more closely.

Camagu, the main character in the novel, stayed in the United States of America for many years. He grew up and was educated up to doctoral level in that country, but has not become a clone of the West. Despite his Western identity, he is still attached to African traditional beliefs. Camagu regrets his loss of cultural identity due to his long

stay in a foreign land (America), where he lost his original identity that he wants to regain. He needs to rediscover his cultural roots. This revaluation happens through the way he relativises the knowledge he acquired in America. He finds it insufficient for his integration into African society. He realises that the current changes can help people to raise traditional culture by wearing Xhosa costumes, which is one way of rediscovering their identity. This happens when he wants to participate in traditional festivities, as a way of being in close contact with the Africanness that he lost long ago. It appears in *The Heart of Redness* as follows:

Camagu is filled with a searing longing for an imagined blissfulness of his youth. He has vague memories of his home village, up in the mountains in the distant inland parts of the country. He remembers the fruit trees and the graves of long departed relatives. (2000: 65)

Camagu, the main character in *The Heart of Redness*, is largely autobiographical. Zakes Mda himself grew up in the USA and attained a doctorate there. This means that through his main character, Mda described his own stance and attitudes to the new South Africa. This aspect appears clearly in Mda's interview with Julie Wark, where he states the following:

Camagu's experiences are based on mine. It was a choice that I made as a writer. I could easily be one of the 'Aristocrats of the revolution'. I have the pedigree. I could have been a millionaire like all those black economic empowerment millionaires. But for me, that would be something like being in prison. I want to be free. Part of my freedom is that I don't owe anybody anything. I am not beholden to anybody. I got no favours from anyone. I am able to be critical when I feel like it. (n.d.: on line)

Mda claims the pedigree to become one of the 'Aristocrats of the revolution' because his father was among the initiators of the African National Congress (ANC). For that reason, he could have gained an important position in the new government, but he did

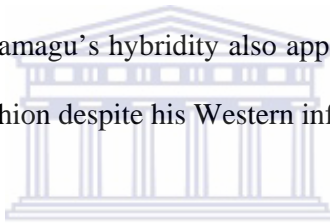
not like it because he wanted to be free. In cultural terms, Mda shows that Camagu represents him when he confirms that he belongs to the AmaMpondomise clan that is the clan of his character and whose totem is a mole snake (majola). He clearly voices this in his interview with Julia Wark as follows:

The totem of my clan is the brown mole snake, which is what it is called in English. The majola in our language. Well, this is a common house snake. It is a real snake, but it isn't venomous. It lives on rats and mice and things like that. It is believed that when a child from that clan is born, or maybe afterwards, at some stage it will be visited by the majola. We never kill that snake. (n.d: on line)

Through Camagu, Mda also addresses the issue of cultural conservation and preservation. Camagu wants to establish a cooperative society, which will produce “traditional Xhosa costumes and accessories such as beaded pipes and shoulder bags to be marketed in Johannesburg” (2000: 185). It is common knowledge that clothing is part of culture. For Mda, traditional culture, represented here by Xhosa costumes and beaded pipes, should not be rejected but has to remain alive because it maintains people's identity and cultural originality. This cultural preservation inscribes itself into Bhabha's hybrid process of rejecting colonial stereotypes that view African tradition as barbaric, heathen and doomed to abandonment in favour of Western fashion considered as synonymous with progress and advancement. Camagu's initiative of selling beaded pipes and Xhosa costumes in Johannesburg, a city completely Europeanised, is a way of proving the necessity of keeping traditional culture alive, but integrating it into a modern, capitalist economy in such a way that it benefits native people. From this point of view, tradition should be kept vibrant even in modernised societies because it represents people's original identity. Indeed, these beaded pipes and Xhosa costumes, which will be sold to white tourists, will also make

them hybrid because while bearing European culture, they will appear publicly like Xhosa people through the clothes they wear.

The fact that Dalton has to teach Camagu how to negotiate lobola at Zim's place is another example of the hybridity of cultures. This appears in the following exchange: "Let's take it before they change their mind, Camagu whispers to Dalton. They can't change their minds. It is the custom to negotiate...to try to bring them down, Dalton whispers back" (2000: 279). Here, we see that Dalton, a white man, has to teach Camagu, who is a born Xhosa, about the intricacies of Xhosa culture, in this case the matter of lobola-negotiating. Mda here clearly shows that culture is not a matter of race but rather of identity. Camagu's hybridity also appears when he decides to learn and appreciate traditional fashion despite his Western influence:



He is pleased to see that there are some people here who still wear Xhosa costume.... It is sad, he thinks, that when nations of the world wear their costumes with pride, the Xhosa people despise theirs. (2000: 61)

Indeed, Camagu's disillusionment with the civilised values of the West is prefigured when he discovers that white people keep heads of dead people in museums: "He was shocked to discover that there were five dried-out heads of the so-called Bushmen stored in boxes in some backroom of the museum" (2000: 193). Camagu's shock is caused by the fact that keeping human dead human bodies and specifically black ones is a way of undermining the black race. In African culture, dead people deserve respect and it is inhumane to exhibit their bodies to spectators.

It is important to mention that Camagu's journey from Johannesburg to Qolorha was motivated by his search for identity because he considers his scientific and Western

knowledge as insufficient for a complete integration in the new South African society of the post-apartheid period. Camagu's disenchantment at his inability to find a job, his lack of integration into post-colonial South Africa, the numerous deaths, which have dogged the country and his engagement in shameful social acts such as sexual intercourses with rural women like his maid in Johannesburg are all symptoms of his frustrations and his dissatisfaction with his identity as a returned exile who is not yet rooted in his own country. He cannot yet form a satisfactory, meaningful sexual intercourse because he has not yet formed a meaningful relationship with his own country. *The Heart of Redness* shows his engagement in shameful acts as follows:

His unquenchable desire for the flesh is well known. A shame he has to live with. Flesh. Any flesh. He has done things with his maid, a frumpy country woman who has come to the city of gold to pick up a few pennies by cleaning up after disenchanted bachelors that he would be ashamed to tell any one. Yet he did these things with the humble servant again and again. (2000: 30)

Camagu wants to start a new life based on rediscovering his African identity through his obsession with the makoti and primarily with NomaRussia whom he briefly encountered, singing angelically at a wake in Hillbrow. Blindly he decided to follow her to Qolorha, abruptly changing his journey to the airport towards a new exile in America. Later, in Qolorha, his positive choice of Qukezwa, rejecting Xoliswa Ximiya, an educated and Western fashion-oriented woman, proves this hypothesis. At the same time this is a repudiation or relativisation of Western identity and knowledge, which becomes of little importance for his integration into the African life.

John Dalton is also culturally, and in particular linguistically, a hybrid because of his white skin and his Xhosa cultural knowledge. Mda puts it in the following way:



“Dalton is a white man of English stock. His skin is white like the skins of those who caused the sufferings of the Middle Generations. But his heart is an umXhosa heart” (2000: 6-7). Dalton’s hybridity resides in the fact that he has been fully involved in Xhosa customs since his childhood despite his father’s unwillingness. He was also a vocal critic of his fellow white men who spend their time glorifying their colonial authority over the natives. He drastically changed from white behaviour to embrace Xhosa cultural practices:

In his youth, against his father’s wishes, he went to the initiation school and was circumcised in accordance with the customs of the amaXhosa people. He therefore knows the secret of the mountain. He is a man. Often he laughs at the sneering snobbishness of his fellow English-speaking South Africans. He says they have a deep-seated fear and resentment of everything African, and are apt to glorify their blood-soaked colonial history. (2000: 7)

In this respect, circumcision in African culture and Xhosa tradition particularly, is a proof of cultural integration and confirmation of a man’s maturity, which confirms Dalton’s hybrid status. Here, Mda presents Dalton as the model of a new type of post-colonial white South African, who has chosen an African identity above his European cultural ancestry.

However, Dalton, to the Unbelievers, appears contradictory: he is white, but rejects Western modernity and progress. They cannot understand his hybridity. Mda shows this as follows:

What is sad is that he has now been joined by John Dalton, the white trader. Are whites not the bearers of civilisation and progress? Then why is Dalton standing with the unenlightened villagers to oppose such an important development that will bring jobs, streetlights and other forms of modernisation to this village? (2000: 75)

Being a contemporary South African novel, it is important to mention that the divisions between the Believers and Unbelievers reveal Mda's way of advocating the eradication of division and hatred generated by the apartheid system. The bitter South African past should be forgotten, giving way to a harmonious South Africa, where there is no division based on skin colour. This is clearly sustained by Mda's statement through his influential and hybrid character, John Dalton, white-skinned but Xhosa-hearted:

'What now with weapons?' asks Dalton. 'Because I'm going to fight!' answers the angry elder. 'Oh, no! Not the war of the Believers and Unbelievers again. Will you people ever stop your silly wars of the past?' (2000: 162)

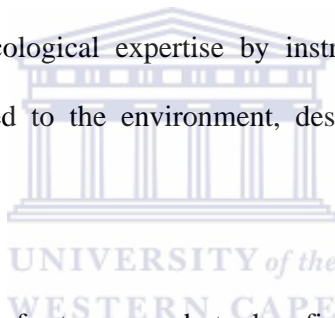
Here, John Dalton advocates reconciliation and forgiveness. Like other characters in *The Heart of Redness*, John Dalton is Mda's way of showing that it is the ripe time for South Africans to reunify and reconstruct their country. Regarding the reconciliation aspect, Zakes Mda in his interview with Julie Wark says that

for South Africa to survive and prosper, reconciliation is absolutely essential. True reconciliation will only happen when all South Africans will be able to confront what happened yesterday without bitterness. For all the survivors of the past, it is important that they do not forget because they owe that past to future generations so that what happened to them might never happen again. It must not be repeated by those who oppressed and most importantly, the survivors must never assume the new role of oppressors as revenge. (n.d.: on line)

But this reconstruction of a new South Africa can also take destructive forms, for example with the construction of the gambling city. The character of Qukezwa, daughter of Zim, the Believer, is interesting in this regard. She has, like other characters in *The Heart of Redness*, a hybrid identity. In this instance, Qukezwa shows her resistance to the transformation of Qolorha into a Westernized city by focusing on the cultural and ecological damage that economic modernisation will

cause to the land. She predicts the consequences of the casino and the gambling city, which will range from land dispossession of Qolorha villagers to their economic impoverishment. Her argument focuses on the fact that once the gambling city is set up, Qolorha inhabitants will lose the benefits of their traditional life because most of the land will be owned by the casino and gambling city initiators. She is fully involved in environmental protection and her vision is powerfully oriented to the future.

We therefore see that Qukezwa opposes the casino not from a traditional, conservative perspective, but a progressive, scientifically informed stance. For example, she shows her ecological expertise by instructing educated people like Camagu about issues related to the environment, despite her low education. She instructs them as follows:



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. If the umga can be cut without permission because it spreads like wild fire, so should the wattle....Most of the elders nod their agreement....One mutters his wonder at the source of Qukezwa's wisdom when she is but a slip of a girl. (2000: 249)

Qukezwa is therefore a hybrid, a modern, progressive woman, but rooted in her culture. Qukezwa's resistance to the casino is also a way of overthrowing neo-colonization in the new South Africa. This is part of her contribution to overthrow neo-colonial power that is similar to Nongqawuse's resistance to colonial authority and subjugation in the 1850s. Although both Qukezwa and Nongqawuse have similarly opposed the colonial mastery, they drastically differ on the ways of getting their views implemented. Qukezwa used convincing arguments to get the people of

Qolorha on her side against the casino, while Nongqawuse preferred the cattle-killing system, which was destructive.

Qukezwa Zim, one of Mda's main characters, can thus be understood as the modern version of Nongqawuse. She was confirmed a virgin by grandmothers despite her pregnancy. Mda puts it in this way:

Of course the village is divided on the matter of the child, as the grandmothers long since proclaimed that she had not known a man in the biblical sense. And no one can question their expertise in these matters. (2000:250)

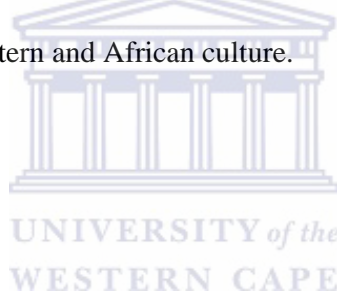
Qukezwa's confirmed virginity is a hybrid conception, which equates to the Christian conception of the Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus Christ. Even after Qukezwa gave birth, she named her son Heitsi, in honour of the Khoikhoi prophet Heitsi Eibib whose efforts to liberate his people are similar to those of the Christian Moses to liberate the people of Israel. This can be seen in *The Heart of Redness* as follows:

Heitsi Eibib prayed, 'Oh, Tsiqwa! Father of fathers. Open yourself that I may pass through, and close yourself afterwards.'  
As soon as he had uttered these words the Great River opened, and his people crossed. But when the enemies tried to pass through the opening, when they were right in the middle, the Great River closed upon them, and they all perished in its waters. (2000: 24)

This attribution of Christian miracles to Africans adds weight to the hybrid notions upon which *The Heart of Redness* is built. Unlike Qukezwa, Xoliswa Ximiya is oriented towards Western modernity, rejecting tradition in all its forms and inviting all villagers to go beyond cultural confinements that she considers as barbaric and uncivilised habits. Mda puts this as follows:

[For] Xoliswa Ximiya, isiXhosa costume is an embarrassment ... because she thinks it is high time her parents change from ubuqaba -- backwardness and heathenism. They must become amagqobhoka -- enlightened ones -- like her. She has bought her parents dresses and suits in the latest European styles. (2000: 48)

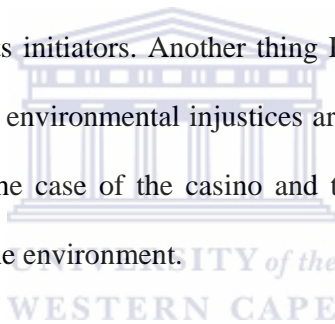
Through all these characters, Mda wants to persuade us that modernity (present) and tradition (past) are not repulsive or opposites. Therefore, he advocates a merging of both aspects: a hybridity of modernity and tradition. But I do agree with Gyekye in his statement that “hybridity may not always be collaborative and dialogical but might also be profoundly antagonistic, conflictual and even incommensurable” (1994: 2). This conflictual hybridity can be seen in Xoliswa Ximiya, but in Mda’s main character Camagu, we have an example of a modern African identity which has successfully hybridized Western and African culture.



## Chapter Three

### ***THE HEART OF REDNESS AS A CRITIQUE OF POST-COLONIAL SOUTH AFRICA.***

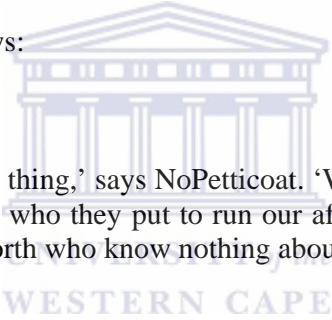
In this chapter I will analyse the way Mda's focus in *The Heart of Redness* is also critically concerned with aspects of the new and modern South Africa. The new South Africa is called democratic but, through Mda's main character Camagu, it is revealed as nepotistic and favouring injustices. The corruption which enriches the few government officials is similar to the planned casino that will exploit the grassroots masses while empowering its initiators. Another thing I will also elaborate on is the way political corruption and environmental injustices are connected. This connection is particularly apparent in the case of the casino and the gambling city, which are presented as destructive of the environment.



First and foremost, it is worth noting that in *The Heart of Redness*, Mda is a vocal critic of the post-apartheid government through the main character Camagu. For Mda, post-apartheid government advocates black economic empowerment but it does not put this into practice. This appears in *The Heart of Redness* as follows: “At these meetings with political big shots, he never forgets to remind them that all the black empowerment groups in Johannesburg and other big cities empower only the chosen few” (2000: 274). The novel is therefore, significantly, not set in Johannesburg, the centre of economic power in South Africa, but in a remote rural impoverished area of the Eastern Cape. There, *The Heart of Redness* shows how two contesting economic and political visions of a new South Africa come into conflict: on the one hand there

is a capitalist, exploitative process of modernisation that would only further marginalise and disempower the villagers, and on the other hands there is Camagu's and Qukezwa's vision of an inclusive, grassroots-driven, environmentally friendly development.

Through Camagu, Mda reveals the dissatisfaction of the black South African majority. Blacks were politically, economically and socially discriminated against and marginalised by the apartheid regime. They fought for freedom, expecting a radical change but now they realise that their efforts to achieve freedom were futile because they still have no voice in the new government. The novel shows the extent of dashed expectations clearly as follows:



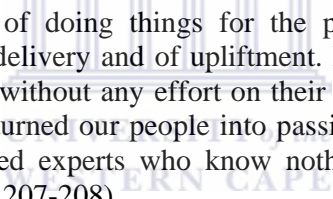
'It is like this election thing,' says NoPetticoat. 'We thought things were going to be better. But look who they put to run our affairs: people we don't know. People from Butterworth who know nothing about our life here.' (2000: 189)

This shows how people are desperate because they do not experience the changes they fought for. They expected a better life after their long struggles but the reality is that they still feel economically marginalised. Moreover, the new South Africa does not efficiently collaborate with people. It does not consult them about their needs, but it imposes its programs to them, which sometimes do not fit with those needs. For Mda, the grassroots population should be contacted on issues related to their socio-economic empowerment instead of being reduced to mere recipients of imposed plans. This is noticeable in Camagu's saying that "perhaps the first step would have been to discuss the matter with the villagers, to find out what their priorities are. They should be part of the process" (2000: 207). In this respect, Mda wants to show us that it is necessary for the government to enquire about people's priorities by involving

them in the general management of public affairs. In other words, people should be active participants rather than passive receivers of imposed programmes. Talking about the kind of development needed in his interview with Julia Wark, Mda says that

the engagement with modernity should be done on different terms. Terms that will take into account the interests of the people, where the local people will have an active participation in development. (n.d: on line)

Mda goes on criticising the type of democracy that politicians always talk about. For him, South Africans should not receive passively orders from above, but must play a role and participate actively in the country's decision-making process. He puts it as follows:



'That is the danger of doing things for the people,' adds Camagu. 'The government talks of delivery and of upliftment. Now people expect things to be delivered to them without any effort on their part. The notions of delivery and upliftment have turned our people into passive recipients of programmes conceived by so-called experts who know nothing about the lives of rural communities.' (2000: 207-208)

In this regard, Mda shows that the poor black majority is still economically oppressed. Through this criticism, Mda becomes a voice for black rural and marginalised South Africans, speaking on their behalf and urging them to a new struggle for their economic rights. He shows this through his intellectual characters, Xoliswa Ximiya and Camagu. The former is certain to get a job in a government department because of her influential friends while the latter missed any job despite his advanced knowledge in communications, simply because he had no one to lobby for him:

Many of my schoolmates are high up in the ruling party. They will lobby for me, says Xoliswa Ximiya...you don't network; Camagu remembers a fellow exile who is now a big man in the government telling him. 'You don't lobby'.



'I will not allow anyone to lobby for me to get a job. Are we not all South Africans who should be allowed to serve our country on merit?' (2000: 35,260)

For Mda, corruption and nepotism in the new South Africa has become a routine, which characterises the leaders. Social injustice has also dogged the country through the government employment system. Indeed, when it comes to job competition, the selection criteria do not value personal skills, experience or competence but depend unfairly on high connections with government officials:

He had not known that jobs were advertised only as formality, to meet the requirements of the law. When a job was advertised there was already someone earmarked for it. (2000: 35)

These injustices are accompanied by the selfishness of the state's top officials. For Mda, the country has become the property of individuals working for self-empowerment to the detriment of the masses rotting in misery. Camagu puts it as follows: "The whole country is ruled by greed. Everyone wants to have his or her snout in the trough." (2000: 319).

In line with the economic impoverishment that black people of South Africa undergo despite their political liberation, Mda shows how the current banking system does not respect the political context of black empowerment to help black South Africans overcome their poverty: "they have tried to get loans from banks, but to no avail. The banks want security" (2000: 2006).

The knowledge that Camagu gained from Qukezwa makes him question the government's plans to make Qolorha a gambling city that would not only grab the land to the detriment of villagers, but also would only empower the trade union bosses

and directors. In order to make the environment of Qolorha profitable to the local population, Camagu suggests the following alternative initiative:

The villagers must come together and using the natural material that is found in the village, they must build a backpacker's hostel in Qolorha. There are many tourists who like to visit unspoilt places for the sole purpose of admiring the beauty of nature and watching birds without killing them....Many people would come for the seafood, especially if it is cooked in the unique manner of the people of Qolorha. (2000: 275)

Here, the management of Qolorha natural riches by villagers will empower them and bring a type of development which is sustainable because they will be working for themselves, using natural material that their land possesses. In this respect, the environmental management by local people becomes a way of combating the greediness and self-empowerment of the gambling city advocates. For Camagu, when the villagers come together and make Qolorha a holiday place, this will give travellers and foreigners the opportunity to experience African life. The money from this business will empower the villagers because they will not be working for anyone but for themselves. At the same time Qolorha will conserve its natural beauty and riches rather than being exploited by the gambling city initiators. Indeed, Camagu even suggests the use of environmentally-friendly solar energy that might help to electrify Qolorha without appealing to government projects, such as the casino. Mda puts it as follows: "We can even create our own electricity! From the sun! There is plenty of sunshine here! We can harness the sun to light our hostel and our houses! We can even cook and warm our water with the sun" (2000: 276). This is another way of using the local natural riches of the Qolorha environment.

\* \* \*

As we have seen in the preceding section, Mda's critique of post-apartheid politics is connected to matters of the environment. Political corruption and environmental destruction, as seen in the example of the casino, are interlinked. Similarly, participatory or grassroots democracy and sustainable development are also connected. Indeed, Mda's political critique of apartheid in South Africa is also an environmental critique.

According to Michael Redclift in his book *Sustainable Development* (1987), sustainable development cares about the environment. People's life depends upon the environment. Destroying it is equivalent to destroying human life. In a broader sense, the Brundtland report on the environment chaired by the then Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland in 1987 defined the concept of sustainable development. According to the report, a sustainable development is the kind of development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It is based on essential needs of the poor and emphasizes the fact that the use of resources and the environment does not damage prospects for use by future generations. This environmental concern also stresses the preservation and protection of diverse ecosystems such as soil, plants, animals, insects, etc. It is also concerned with the management, the development and protection of natural and physical resources, which enable people and communities to be provided with social, economic and cultural well-being. The report goes on to say that developmental sustainability is ecologically sound, economically viable, socially just and culturally appropriate.

In this respect, the gambling city and the casino advocated by the Unbelievers in *The Heart of Redness* might not bring sustainable development in Qolorha because instead of benefiting the local people, the casino will exploit the few resources they have. The gambling city will benefit only few rich people from Johannesburg and elsewhere who will be able to build casinos and hotels for their personal empowerment. Going to casinos will furthermore impoverish the villagers because they will use the little money they possess in order to gamble but, in the process losing even the little money they have. Mda puts it in this way:

Instead of creating jobs, the casino will take all the little money that there is in the village. I have been to casinos in other parts of the country and in Lesotho. During the day you find all sorts of ordinary poor people, mostly women, gambling their money away, hoping to hit that elusive jackpot....The men themselves will gamble their fortunes away when they are on leave. (2000: 134)

In this instance, the casino is a more exploitative than an empowering developmental initiative. Camagu and John Dalton stand vigorously against it and made arrangements to stop it. This stoppage is seen in *The Heart of Redness* as follows:

I'm afraid there won't be any gambling city, my friend. Dalton hands him a piece of paper. It is a court order forbidding any surveying of the place. It is accompanied by a letter from the government department of arts, culture, and heritage declaring the place a national heritage site. (2000: 311)

The idea conceived by Camagu and John Dalton to stop the gambling city initiative and instead, make Qolorha a national heritage site is much more profitable in the long term. Tourists will be coming to visit the place of miracles. At the same time people will remain on their land, using it in accordance with their usual needs while the gambling city would grab the land for the benefit of the few. People will lose even the

few jobs they have such as those at the Blue Flamingo hotel. This is seen in the conversation between Camagu and Qukezwa Zim as follows:

‘Are you aware that if your gambling complex happens here I will have to pay to swim in the lagoon? ... This whole sea will belong to tourists and their boats and their water sports. Those women will no longer harvest the sea for their own food and to sell at the Blue Flamingo. Water sports will take over our sea!’ (2000: 117-118)

The introduction of the casino in Qolorha that has been fortunately stopped by Camagu and John Dalton would even have prevented the villagers from getting jobs at the Blue Flamingo hotel.

Mda also shows that the past should not be consigned into oblivion. This is shown by the initiative of Camagu and Dalton to make Qolorha a national heritage site. This idea is opposed to the proposed casino by the Unbelievers as a way of keeping the past vibrant in the present. In this regard, the catastrophic event generated by Nongqawuse’s prophecy is reversed to become for Camagu and Dalton a redemptive event because Qolorha will become a tourist site and through this activity, the villagers will be economically empowered. This appears in *The Heart of Redness* as follows:

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 happened here. On that basis, this can be declared a national heritage site. (2000: 233)

Here, John Dalton and Camagu attribute great importance to the catastrophic event of 1856-1857. They want the Xhosa history to remain alive in the present. Sometimes Camagu and Dalton argue about whether to build a backpacker’s hostel for the former

and a cultural village for the latter. For Dalton, the cultural village should reinvent the cultural past of the Xhosa for tourist purposes while Camagu's opinion is to display the real and present life of the Xhosa. This binary opposition appears in *The Heart of Redness* as follows:

The bulk of what tourists see is the past...a 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....I am just saying I have a problem with your plans. 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? (2000: 285-286)

As we saw earlier, Mda has a sceptical stance towards cultural villages (Wark interview), and his character Camagu also stands for an accurate representation of Africans in their daily life, while Dalton wants to revive a type of African life which is remote and outdated. In this regard, in his interview with Julie Wark, Mda states that "I do not advocate going back to that past and this is the reason why I ridicule the whole notion of cultural villages that are big tourist attractions in South Africa" (n. d.: on line). According to the novelist, these villages show African culture and how Africans live, whereas in fact no African in South Africa lives like that today.

From Mda's opinion, it becomes clear that he does not advocate a return to the past, but shows that the past illuminates the present. In this context, it is clear that in sustaining the memory of the cattle-killing, Mda also makes the equivalent point that the catastrophe of apartheid should also not be forgotten.

Moreover, tourists can not only be attracted by things like casinos and other Western entertainments, but they can also be attracted by the natural beauty that the

environment offers. This appears through the conversation between Xoliswa Ximiya, Camagu and other Qolorha high school teachers:

I think it is important to conserve nature....Our forests....Our Rivers....what about jobs? What about tourists? We can still get tourists. Different types of tourists. Those who want to photograph our birds. (2000: 109)

Similarly, the negative impact of the holiday cottages, which would only be profitable for a few people, is described as follows:

The landscape has changed already. The Unbelievers say it is a good thing, though, because the cottage owners give employment to the local men who wash their cars and to local women who work as maids. None of the men get jobs as gardeners. (2000: 76)

In their entire struggle against the invasion of the casino and particularly environmental transformation and deterioration, Qukezwa Zim, Camagu and John Dalton aim at protecting villagers of Qolorha from being dispossessed of their land, which constitutes their ancestral heritage. This is comparable to the 1850s cattle-killing, which primarily intended to overthrow the white settler's hegemony. In 1856, Nongqawuse aimed at liberating the Xhosa from foreign invasion by white settlers while in 2000, Qukezwa Zim, Camagu and Dalton resist the exploitative development of the casino. Their prime objective is to prevent invasion, exploitation and domination of city people over villagers. Julia Martin, in her thesis, supports this idea as follows: "Modernity is destroying the planet. In its older and still dominant form, environmentalism as conservation ethics has been a significant element in the colonial and apartheid policy" (1999: 22).

From this point of view, Martin expresses the need for environmental protection supporting Mda's call for land preservation. In his interview with Julie Wark, Mda shows this by saying that his character Camagu

always speaks out against the kind of rural development that destroys the flora and fauna and the whole natural heritage of the people and replaces it with American-style of the casino and timeshare houses in which the local populations have no stake. (n.d.: on line)

The casino will not only destroy this natural beauty of the Qolorha environment but also deprive people of their natural riches. Camagu shows this after getting environmental lessons from Qukezwa as follows:

'You talk of all these rides and all these wonderful things,' he says, 'but for whose benefit are they? What will these villagers who are sitting here get from all these things? These things will be enjoyed only by rich people who will come here and pollute our rivers and oceans.' (2000: 231)

Camagu and Dalton's initiative to create local tourism and Qolorha-by-Sea is a way to keep the land unspoiled and preserve its riches and beauty. Wendy Woodward in her article *Postcolonial ecologies and the gaze of animals: Reading some contemporary Southern African Narratives* (2003), supports this as follows:

Camagu and Dalton's ideas for local tourism emphasize the natural riches and beauties of Qolorha, in direct contradiction to the developments envisaged by the Unbelievers, which will exploit and destroy the environment without any thought of future sustainability. (2003: 295)

Mda also addresses environmental issues through his characters. Qukezwa and Camagu's sexual relations in Nongqawuse's valley also strengthen the environmental importance that Qukezwa praises. Here, it is worth noting that Camagu's choice to marry Qukezwa is a way of being in contact with Qolorha's natural, cultural and



environmental beauty that she embodies, advocates and protects. Qukezwa brings her lover Camagu closer to the environment by teaching him how to exploit the natural resources of Qolorha. Camagu's integration into his new society depends on his complete involvement in the villagers' daily environmental activities. This is clearly stated in *The Heart of Redness* as follows:

Qukezwa taught him how to walk into the sea, sometimes with the water rising up to his chest, how to use his hands to feel the rocks at the bottom, and how to use an ulugxa to dislodge imbhatya from the rocks....Camagu learnt fast, for there was no guarantee that Qukezwa's good mood would still be there the next morning. (2000: 159)

It is worth stressing that the way Qukezwa was determined to bring Camagu into direct contact with the Qolorha environment, strengthening his attraction to the village. Their marriage union was a result of this intimate contact.

In addition, when Qukezwa urged people to bring her father Zim to the valley of Nongqawuse in his dying state, this reveals the power of restoring life that the environment has. This can be seen when

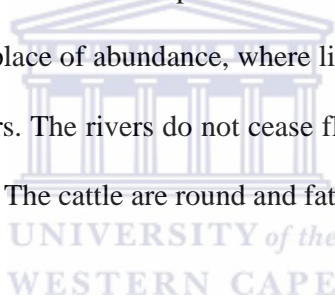
Qukezwa arranges that they put his father on Gxagxa, his favourite horse, and lead him to intlambo-ka-Nongqawuse -- Nongqawuse's valley.... Qukezwa hopes this will help to jog his spiritual memory back to the world of the living. (2000: 288)

In the quotation, the environment becomes a purifying agent; it restores life and needs protection and preservation. Indeed, the sea in Qolorha is presented as a source of life. Its water is a remedy for a range of diseases that affect human lives. This is clearly apparent in *The Heart of Redness* as follows: "And they brought us bottles of sea water. She knows that we inland people love to drink the sea because it cures all sorts

of diseases” (2000: 34). The sea is proved to embody curative abilities that villagers benefit from. Regarding this curative aspect, it is important to note that Nongqawuse had told the Xhosa about plants in Qolorha, which could make young women pregnant and prevent miscarriages. This is another way of preserving the environment. Jeff Peires puts it as follows:

The buka roots, with which Nongqawuse bade the Believers weave their new doors, were normally administered to young women to make them pregnant and prevent miscarriages. (1989: 157)

This shows that everything in the environment has an important role to play in human life. Moreover, Qolorha is described as a paradise of exceptional and incomparable fertility. It is portrayed as a place of abundance, where life speaks itself. “Qolorha-by-Sea is a place rich in wonders. The rivers do not cease flowing, even when the rest of the country knells a drought. The cattle are round and fat” (2000: 6).



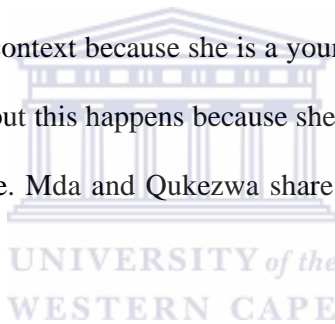
Indeed, the sea is also a food supplier, which provides villagers with different types of food such as imbhatyiza and imbhatya for sale and for their own consumption. Qolorha is naturally beautiful and fertile and should not be polluted by the industrial society.

Wendy Woodward expresses Qukezwa’s attachment to the natural beauty of Qolorha as follows:

Qukezwa, whom Camagu thinks of as a ‘wild woman’, seems almost the incarnation of Quxu/Qukezwa, her Khoikhoi ancestor, in her indigenous knowledge of resident plants and animals. (2003: 295)

In this instance, Camagu prefers Qukezwa to Xoliswa Ximiya because the former will be his inspiration as far as rural life and integration is concerned. Qukezwa represents the original and unspoiled beauty of the land through her traditional way of life, although she also rejects traditional patriarchal authority.

Despite her lowly educational level, Qukezwa has a powerful prophetic vision about environmental protection. This vision provides her with wisdom and strength to convince educated people like Camagu and the elders on matters regarding land preservation. Chopping down foreign trees and poisonous plants, she aimed at restoring the original beauty of the land. Like Nongqawuse, her convincing power is not common in the African context because she is a young girl who should not have a word in elders' assemblies, but this happens because she is anxious to protect the land and the environment at large. Mda and Qukezwa share the following environmental insights:

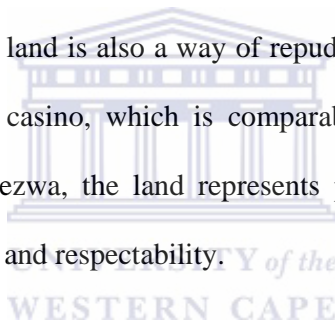


These flowers that you like so much will eventually become berries. Each berry is prospective plants that will kill the plants of my forefathers...The trees that I destroyed are as harmful as the inkberry. They are the lantana and wattle trees. They come from other countries...from Central America, from Australia...to suffocate our trees. They are dangerous trees that need to be destroyed. (2000: 102,248)

Here, Mda presents Qukezwa as embodying traditional knowledge, yet also as a modern, liberated woman. One can argue that Mda uses Qukezwa as a model for a new African modernity rooted in the land and the past. Qukezwa strikingly demonstrates her knowledge of indigenous plants that proves her strong attachment to the land and its protection. Her vision of nature is a repudiation of any environmentally destructive agent such as the casino and other invasive and dangerous forces such as wattle trees. Her evidence that land preservation and

protection is a matter of necessity is believed by the elders: “most of the elders nod their agreement. Some express it in grunts and mumbles. One mutters his wonder at the source of Qukezwa’s wisdom when she is but a slip of a girl” (2000: 249).

It is important to mention that Qukezwa’s vision is projected further into the future. For her, once modernity in the form of the casino is embraced to transform the land, it will no longer belong to and benefit the villagers but only a few beneficiaries. Frantz Fanon expresses a similar idea when he states that “for a colonised people, the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: The land will bring them bread and, above all, dignity” (1968: 44). It is worth mentioning that Qukezwa’s protection of the land is also a way of repudiating the dominant authority of those who advocate the casino, which is comparable to Bhabha’s rejection of colonial authority. For Qukezwa, the land represents power; it gives strength and provides people with dignity and respectability.



In all these respects, Mda advocates that modernity should not entail complete destruction of the natural, but a more sustainable transformation that is beneficial to all the inhabitants. *The Heart of Redness* in this regard serves as a post-colonial text which attempts to construct a better South African future.

## CONCLUSION

A topic related to African traditional values and Western modernity is complex. Zakes Mda in his novel, *The Heart of Redness*, has tried to demonstrate how both aspects can merge and integrate into a hybrid state as most post-colonial analysts and critics have shown it. As I have argued in my dissertation, African tradition and Western modernity should not be regarded as distinct or completely opposed. They can be understood as interactive and complementary, if they are intermingled to generate a new, cohesive, and progressive hybrid culture.

My dissertation has focused on a number of themes contained in *The Heart of Redness*. First and foremost, I elaborated on the main points that the novel displays, ranging from historical, political, and environmental aspects. For Mda, hybridity does not mean a total overthrow of African traditional or modern culture, but rather it involves a cautious analysis of what to reject and maintain from the African tradition and what to adopt and reject from Western modernity in a bid to allow the development of a new order. All this is evident in Mda's positive view of cultural hybridity through characters such as Camagu, John Dalton, and Qukezwa.

I have shown how, being a novel rooted in history, Mda's *The Heart of Redness* is also a critique of the post-colonial South Africa. Despite his analysis of the historical cattle-killing movement of 1850s, Mda is more concerned with aspects of the new South Africa, called democratic but threatened by undemocratic and nepotistic practices. Mda's novel also shows a type of alternative modernisation aimed at empowering the grassroots community and firmly rooted in an African context.

Finally, Mda shows that a progressive and modern democratic state cannot be founded on the deterioration and destruction of the environment. Indeed, *The Heart of Redness* owes its existence to the environmental beauty of the Eastern Cape Province.

Mda states this in his interview with Julia Wark in the following words:

The Eastern Cape is a very rich province insofar as its culture is concerned. I like to go there just to listen to the music of the people and to see their wonderful dances. It is the setting of some of my novels, and that is because of its beauty. A novel like *The Heart of Redness* would never exist if the place were not so beautiful. (n.d: online)



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