

**The Examination of Zakes Mda's The Heart of Redness (2000) within a historical context.**

By

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I hereby declare that all the material incorporated in this mini-dissertation is my own original unaided work except where specific acknowledgement is made by name or in the form of a numbered reference. The work contained herein has not been submitted for a degree at any other university.

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## INTRODUCTION

Later Camagu learns that the patriarch spared no expense to celebrate his daughter's elevation. He slaughtered an ox, two sheep and a number of chickens. Women brewed barrels and barrels of sorghum beer. Xoliswa Ximiya was against the very idea of holding an ostentatious feast in her honour. But the patriarch would not miss the opportunity to show the Believers that it is the Unbelievers who rule the roost in Qolorha-by-Sea (Mda, 2000: 68).

When one looks at the living conditions of the African people in South Africa in general and the Eastern Cape in particular one does not only consider the physical scars on the bodies of the people who ended up suffering, but more significantly one is bound to consider the psychological scars caused by British colonialism, cattle-killing and apartheid and the way in which these scars stay with the people more clearly than the visible scars. Indeed, the legacy of colonialism and apartheid is one of the most gruesome things that every South African (black and white) would like to put behind them. The Eastern Cape is the land of the frontier wars between the Xhosa and the British. It is the land of Fort Hare and Alice, of Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki ('the black army across the seas'). It is the land that shows the scars of prolonged dispossession, displacement and marginalization. It is the land where the used to be close-knit community considered it 'sacrilege to stay away from your fellow man's feast' (2000: 68). In this land when the villagers hear there is a feast at someone's homestead, they go there to enjoy themselves, without any formal invitation.

Sadly, Nongqawuse's prophecy and the folly of belief and British colonialism, had split the Qolorha-by-Sea villagers into Believers and Unbelievers, separating wife from husband, brother from brother (Twin and Twin-Twin). This resulted in a fierce competition between Believers and Unbelievers, hence 'the patriarch would not miss the opportunity to show the Believers that it is the Unbelievers who rule the roost in Qolorha-by-Sea' (2000: 68). The war between the Believers and Unbelievers had developed to such an extent that they do not attend each other's functions, ceremonies or feasts any longer. Ironically, they do attend each other's funerals though.

It is against this background that this thesis undertakes to examine Zakes Mda's novel, The Heart of Redness (2000), within a historical context. The attempt shall be made to demonstrate how Mda, as a novelist, expounds the impact and consequences on the belief system of the amaXhosa nation of

British colonialism. Careful consideration shall be given to how Mda views post-apartheid circumstances in South Africa, and to how he challenges the ANC-led government. How Mda illuminates the discontentment of the black people in the country, less than a decade after the 1994 Democratic Elections, shall be discussed.

The examination of The Heart of Redness (2000), in this study, shall focus mainly on the significant issues raised by the novel, namely, the social issues, socio-political issues, socio-economic issues, religious issues and white portrayal. The effects of Nongqawuse's prophecy (that the dead will rise if the amaXhosa people slaughtered all their cattle and destroyed their crops), of British colonialism and of the apartheid system on the Xhosa nation at the Eastern Cape village of Qolorha, shall form the fundamental basis of my arguments. In the discussion of the significant issues raised by the novel, the study shall endeavour to portray how the consequences of cattle-killing, sincerity of belief, British colonialism and 'civilization', apartheid and oppression manifest themselves in vociferous ways in the new order. With regard to the effects of British 'civilization' upon the Xhosa religion, the thesis shall illuminate how Mda, succinctly, shows how the image of Christianity and God has been distorted and misused in the past through the entanglement of mission and colonialism, a negative attitude towards Xhosa people's culture, and by contributing to the subordination of women in Qolorha village society.

The thesis is divided into three chapters: the cattle-killing, colonialism and oppression; Zakes Mda and apartheid; analysis of The Heart of Redness (2000). The study begins by looking at the issue of the cattle-killing event as initiated by a young prophetess, Nongqawuse, who saw a vision at the sea and strangers who instructed her to tell the Xhosa people to kill their cattle and destroy the crops so that the dead would rise. Nongqawuse's primary purpose for the cattle-killing was to save the Xhosa nation from British Imperialism and to drive the white people back into the sea where they, according to Nongqawuse, originated. The first chapter also interrogates Nongqawuse's prophecy and its influence upon the cattle-killing movement. Having argued that the cattle-killing split the Xhosa nation, and that it attempted to link the historical events with contemporary history and the current conditions in the country, the thesis posits that colonialism and oppression caused suffering among the black people and played a role in the split of the Xhosa people.

The primary objective of the second chapter is to analyse the relationship between the author (Zakes Mda) and apartheid. It explores who is Zakes Mda and situates him within the context of South African history, especially the old apartheid regime that took control of the country in 1948 when

the National Party had won the whites only elections. Chapter two also looks at how the political situation in the country influenced Mda's writing.

In the third and main chapter (textual analysis) the focus is on the main issues raised by The Heart of Redness (2000): social issues, socio-political issues, socio-economic issues, religious issues and white portrayal. This chapter centres on the impact of the British colonialism and 'civilization', cattle-killing and apartheid and the country's governance in the post-apartheid period. Because colonialism and grand-apartheid are the greatest contributors to the social crisis and the social ills in South Africa, the study will attempt to explore their roles and how these impacted in the lives of black people. The chapter deals with the challenges facing the African National Congress (ANC)-led government less than a decade after the country's first democratic elections.

This study, however, aims to examine how Mda exposes the impact of colonialism, sincerity of belief and racial separation policies. Mda's concerns about the 'whirlpool of crime, violence, affirmative action and corruption' (Mda, 2000: 161), black people's frustrations, unemployment and the pace of transformation and land redistribution are outlined.

## CHAPTER ONE

### **THE CATTLE-KILLING : COLONIALISM AND OPPRESSION**

The primary aim of Chapter One is to examine the Xhosa cattle-killing of 1856, and its relation to colonialism and imperialism. The primary intention is to demonstrate the role they play in Zakes Mda's novel, The Heart of Redness (2000).

### **THE CATTLE-KILLING EVENT**

Nongqawuse declared that she had held converse with the spirits of old heroes of the Xhosa tribe, who intimated that they had witnessed with sorrow the ruin of their race through the oppression of the conquerors from overseas; and as they would no longer be silent spectators of the wrongs and insults, it was their intention to come to the rescue and save their progeny from destruction (Dhlomo, 1985: 3).

In the mid-nineteenth century (1856) there befell what could perhaps be the most extraordinary event in all the history of the South African Xhosa nation. After the defeat of the amaXhosa nation by the British forces in the War of Mlanjeni (1850 – 1853), 'the longest, hardest and ugliest war ever fought over one hundred years of bloodshed on the Cape Colony's eastern frontier' (Peires, 1989: 12), the British Governor, Sir Harry Smith who had styled himself the 'Great White Chief of the Xhosas', had taken more of the land of the amaXhosa people. The War of Mlanjeni was provoked and launched by Sir Harry Smith and carried out by the much-hated colonial governor, Sir George Cathcart who finally defeated the amaXhosa nation (Mda, 2000: 70) in the war. Consequently, the amaXhosa people were displaced, and those who lived in the lands that were now under British rule paid allegiance to the British Empire. British soldiers also murdered Nongqawuse's parents during the War of Mlanjeni.

The incensed and frustrated Nongqawuse 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 (Mda, 2000: 86 – 87). Nongqawuse's aim was to avenge the death of her parents, restore the land of her ancestors that was annexed by the British Empire, and fiercely fight the British encroachment into the land of the amaXhosa nation.

Because the amaXhosa nation wanted to see their land as it was before the notorious white conquerors had been cast by the waves onto their land, they complied. Their compliance can also be



attributed to their strong traditional belief system and the sincerity of belief. Some of the amaXhosa people did not comply, causing a split among them. Those who had complied were angered by the ones that did not heed to Nongqawuse's orders. They argued that the dead would not resurrect if they 'did not kill all the cattle living' (2000: 125). They were furious, however, that subsequent to their refusal the white people will not be swept into the sea, but shall continue to rule them and take more land for British settlements. Dhlomo points out that those who refused to obey the order of the spirits would be 'swept off by the frightful whirlwind' (1985: 3).

The cattle-killing movement of the nineteenth century 'killed the nation of the amaXhosa' (Mda, 2000: 66) and caused hatred and animosity among the Xhosa people. The cattle-killing coupled with British Colonialism induced suffering and starvation to the amaXhosa nation and completely destroyed their traditional beliefs, and cultural values and norms. As a result of the cattle-killing episode, thousands of the Xhosa people had died. According to Dhlomo (1985: 4), it was estimated 'that 20 000 men, women and children perished while 150 000 cattle met their death'. For many years the veld was strewn with bones bleaching in the sun.

The subject of Mda's book The Heart of Redness (2000) is the Xhosa cattle-killing of 1856. Mda attempts to highlight the plight of the previously disadvantaged, oppressed people in South Africa as a result of colonialism, imperialism, and apartheid, and their plight in the new political dispensation. The idea to use the cattle-killing event is prompted by the plight and suffering of (African) black people he noticed after the First Democratic Elections (1994). For instance, on a visit to one of his ancestral homes in the Eastern Cape after his return from exile, he discovered an impoverished community. He discovered that many of the men had been retrenched from the mines or neighbouring farms, people were still living in appalling conditions with no development whatsoever. According to a study conducted by University of Transkei, the Transkei (i.e. Eastern Cape), a former apartheid homeland, is the cradle of spreading lung disease among former workers in the gold, coal, diamond and asbestos mining sectors (Morris, 2002:1).

Twin-Twin heard how thousands of his people had died as a result of the cattle-killing movement. He heard of the activities of The Man Who Named Ten Rivers. He saw with his own eyes white settlements spreading over the lands of his people. He was filled with bitterness and his scars went wild.

He and Chief Nxito shook their heads over the disaster that had befallen their people.

‘We have been cheated’, he told Nxito. ‘These people through whose ears the sun shines are spreading like a plague in kwaXhosa.’

‘What can we do? We are a defeated people,’ said the old chief.

‘It must be true that The Man Who Named Ten Rivers planned all this cattle-killing business,’ said Twin-Twin. ‘He is the one who planted these ideas in the mind of Nongqawuse. He wanted the amaXhosa people to defeat themselves. Now he is enjoying the spoils of victory without having lifted a finger.’ ‘What can we do?’ repeated Nxito tiredly. ‘We are a conquered people’. ‘And we helped them to conquer us!’ (Mda, 2000:298 – 299).

In the novel, The Heart of Redness (2000), Mda fictitiously employs and engages the cattle-killing movement/event as perpetrated by a young girl, Nongqawuse (15) who, in 1856, said the dead would arise if the Xhosa people destroyed their cattle and ‘their corn which was contaminated and impure,’ (Peires, 1989:311), in order to highlight the plight, of the Xhosa people in the Cape in the mid-nineteenth century during the height of British colonialism, and to highlight the ripple effects of that today. Mda relates a fictitious version of the cattle-killing event to the current situation in the country less than a decade after the country’s first democratic election (27 April 1994). According to Mda, many (black) people became distraught one hundred-and-fifty years ago owing to the consequences of Nongqawuse’s prophecy while today, in the new political dispensation, the majority of African people are similarly frustrated owing to the ANC-led government’s failure to fulfill some of the grandiose promises it made during an election campaign, hence ‘what can we do’ because either way ‘we are a defeated people’, and ‘we are a conquered people.’ Landlessness, unemployment, poverty, starvation, famine, hunger, high food prices, nepotism – to mention but a few – are the order of the day.

The cattle-killing saga is the core of the novel as it attempts to link the historical event with contemporary history and current conditions of the country. Nongqawuse was against the colonial system and the British (white) rule, hence her perpetration of the cattle-killing saga in order to drive the whites into the sea – from where they came and where they belong. She did not wish her people to be deprived of their land and to ‘wallow in redness together’ (Mda, 2000:301). The scars of history and the suffering of her ancestors under British rule overwhelmed her and ‘all of a sudden her ancestor’s flagellation has become her flagellation. She rebels against these heathen scars’ (2000:301). Governor Sir Harry Smith, in the cause of colonialism, civilization and enlightenment was empowered to lay down whatever laws he liked. Smith ensured that all the land between the

Fish and Keiskamma rivers 'was to be annexed to the Cape Colony and given out to white settlers and the Mfengu' (Peires, 1989:7) and the Xhosa nation was driven to the territory between Keiskamma and the Great Kei rivers where they were ruled directly by the Governor and his appointees under martial law. The land was eventually divided into villages, towns, cities and counties bearing English names, and Smith declared himself the Great Chief of the Xhosa people and the 'Xhosa were his dogs' (1989:6). Furthermore 'chiefs and people were bossed about by alien officials whose decisions they were unable to question' (1989:7). They were 'dogs' cramped and restricted in strange territories, 'while their fertile land across the Keiskamma was occupied and desecrated by the white intruders' (1989:7).

They spend most of their time moaning about past injustices and bleeding for the world that would have been had the folly of belief not seized the nation a century and a half ago and spun it around until it was in a woozy stupor that is felt to this day. They also mourn the sufferings of the Middle Generations. That, however, is only whispered (Mda, 2000:1).

Nongqawuse was seized with knowledge that since her ancestors were colonized by Britain 'beautiful things have become estranged' from their lives and 'it is ages since rivers of salt have run down the gullies of Bhonco's face' (2000:259). Therefore, Nongqawuse intended 'to starve the amaXhosa into rebellion against the British Empire' (2000:181) in order to free them from the bondage of oppression and to regain their freedom and independence. This dictum does not entirely imply that the Cattle-Killing was entirely anti-white. It is worth noting, however, that 'the Cattle-Killing was born partly out of Xhosa frustration at colonial domination and partly out of the hope that the Russians had beaten the English' (Peires, 1989:316). Therefore, as a result of immense frustration the Xhosa people could hardly accommodate 'a continued settler presence' (1989:316) in their own land. Nongqawuse and the amaXhosa populace believed that 'the English, like all other evil things, would be swept away in the great storm, which would precede the resurrection of the dead' (1989:316), so that there would be no suffering, domination of the amaXhosa people by colonizers, and so that there would be peace and harmony – without (British) foreign interference and foreign intervention.

Here, Mda illuminates the degree of (blacks) suffering brought about by British colonialism, and matches, compares and contrasts it with the degree of (blacks) suffering today – in the 'new' democratic South Africa. Mda argues that Black South Africans in particular were hoping that when

the ANC-led government took over in 1994 things would change for the better 'but everyday the sun rose as it had risen in the days of their forefathers' (Mda, 2000:176), some one-hundred-and-fifty years ago and as of today:

They sat like that every day, hoping the sun would turn red, and other suns would emerge from behind the mountains or from the horizon and run amok across the sky and collide and explode and their embers rain on the earth and burn the hardened souls of the Unbelievers. But every day the sun rose as it had risen in the days of their forefathers (2000:176).

The current events, however, remind Mda that the hopes African people envisaged of the new government are dashed, not accomplished and 'they reminded him that prophets could not be relied upon to make sound judgements' (2000:180), and that 'the whole story of the new people and new cattle was a deceit' (2000:239).

Nongqawuse witnessed for herself the horrors perpetrated by Colonel Eyre in the closing stages of the Great War of Mlanjeni (Peires, 1989:310), and the catastrophe of lung sickness was evident to her. Consequently, anger and frustration engulfed her due to what the whites did to her (Xhosa) people and to her directly and/or indirectly: she was possibly orphaned in the battles of the Waterkloof; her uncle Mhlakaza who acted as her guardian had been manipulated by Archdeacon N.J. Merriman, a man who changed his life – a man whom he accompanied on various preaching assignments and expeditions around the Eastern Cape in 1848. This manipulative action is evidenced by his (Mhlakaza) adoption of the English name of Wilhelm Goliath.

Nongqawuse said that she had met with a 'new people' from over the sea, who were the ancestors of the living Xhosa. They told her that the dead were preparing to rise again, and wonderful new cattle too, but first the people must kill their cattle and destroy their corn which were contaminated and impure. They should also put away their witchcraft, which was the cause of all their afflictions (Peires, 1989:311).

It is absolutely difficult to prove beyond doubt that Nongqawuse saw any strangers or visions, but on the balance of probabilities 'the strangers seen by Nongqawuse never existed, except in her imagination' (1989:311). It was either her own reflection which she saw in the water as she stared at it or, the strangers were the agents of Sir George Grey or Grey himself in disguise as many Xhosa

people believed. Peires, however, argues that the mysterious strangers were nothing but imaginary friends of Nongqawuse's daydreams, and that the deadly, notorious prophecies originated in the fantasies of two young girls, Nongqawuse (15) and Nombanda (8), who were playing in a bush. 'They saw the horns of cattle emerging from the water, then sinking again, and heard the lowing of cows and the bellowing of bulls' (Mda, 2000:183).

'Don't tell me about The Man Who Named Ten Rivers!' said Twin-Twin. 'Like all the others he is a thief. Just as he stole the land of the people of countries across the seas, he stole the land of the amaXhosa and gave it to the amaMfengu. He stole more of our land to settle more of his people!' (2000:96).

The cattle-killing event is the springboard of the novel. Mda attempts to juxtapose the gruesome suffering endured by (African) people in the hands of British settlers (colonists) since the mid-nineteenth century (colonialism) with the gruesome suffering endured by (African) people since the mid-twentieth century in the hands of the Afrikaners and the policy of racial segregation – Apartheid (1948). The ripple effects and consequences of the above events unequivocally manifest themselves today in the new order (new political dispensation) when people were optimistic as well as confident that 'a black race across the sea, newly resurrected from the dead, is surely coming to save us from the white man. Even the armies of The Man Who Named Ten Rivers cannot stand against it! You saw what happened in Cathcart' (Mda, 2000:95).

Transformation and development in the country, according to the novel, are not moving in accordance with the majority of the (African) people's expectations, and they are losing hope and are engulfed by pessimism, a feeling of helplessness, and loss of confidence in the government of the day. According to the cattle-killing event, Mda is made to believe that hopelessness and lack of confidence in the ANC-led government has divided the (black) people into Believers and Unbelievers. Believers are those who have completely lost hope, those who are convinced that 'the whole country is ruled by greed. Everyone wants to have his or her snout in the trough' (Mda, 2000:319). These believers presume that 'a black race across the sea, newly resurrected from the dead, is surely coming to save us' (2000:95) from the suffering. They are convinced that the new generation, not the middle generation, shall emancipate them. And the Unbelievers are those who believe that change often comes with problems and that the government should be given time as transformation is a slow process. The Unbelievers 'include some of the most influential and far-sighted men' (Peires, 1989:166) and women in the country. These Unbelievers are convinced that

many African people are being misled and that 'children of a person should not fight on these matters. If we talk about things we'll find solutions' (Mda, 2000:94-95). Those who believe that transformation is a process believe that prevailing discontentment among the majority of (black) people is only a storm and:

After the storm would come the rising of the dead and the appearance of the new cattle and the new corn. All kinds of food and clothing and household goods would rise out of the ground. The blind would see, the deaf would hear, the crippled would walk, and the old would become young again. Peace, plenty and goodness would reign on earth. The ultimate goal of the Cattle-Killing movement was 'a happy state of things to all' (Peires, 1989:312).

Peires argues that one cannot divorce the cattle-killing event from the 'colonial situation which was imposed on the Xhosa in 1847 by Sir Harry Smith' (1989:312) and other colonial authorities, such as, George Grey (Governor and High Commissioner), Sir George Cathcart, Colonel William Eyre, Sir James Jackson, Sir William Molesworth, Colonel John Maclean (Chief Commissioner of British Kaffrana), Charles Brownlee (Gaita Commissioner), Walter Currie, Major John Gawler (Magistrate) and from the fact that the 'success of the movement also depended on the common belief in the Christian notion of the resurrection' (1989:313).

By and large, the Believers were confident of the notion of resurrection that they immediately massacred their cattle, even those that they had retained to provide milk and maas for their children. They were absolutely confident that on the great day the sun would rise in the west, the sea would dry up and recede, 'the sky would descend until it might be touched by the head, and then there would be a great earthquake during which the new people and the new cattle would appear' (Peires, 1989:154).

However, one should not lose sight of the fact that the final outcome of either British colonial domination of South Africa and its incorporation of Xhosaland into British South Africa or the notorious, iniquitous cattle-killing event 'would have been very different, even if the individuals named Grey and Nongqawuse had never existed' (Peires, 1989:318). Nevertheless, the 'independent Xhosaland was dead; Nongqawuse and Sir George Grey had irrevocably transformed the Xhosa nation into South African' (1989:321): the oppressed South Africans that were turned into, as the phrase goes, 'useful servants, consumers of our goods, contributors to our revenue,'



(1989:318) turned into subordinates that had lost their land, 'their national, cultural and economic integrity,' (1989:321) religion, culture, tradition, customs and practices. Nonetheless, the story of Nongqawuse and the cattle-killing is perceived by Jordan (1973: 70) as a story that still lives in the emotions and thoughts of the Xhosa people today.

In The Heart of Redness (2000) Mda politely attempts to communicate to the reader, the fact that the great cattle-killing movement remains an open sore in the historical consciousness of most South Africans whilst Peires (1989) maintains that the cattle-killing was a logical and rational response, perhaps even an inevitable response, by a nation driven to desperation by pressures that people today can barely imagine, whereas Dhlomo (1985) argues a rather naïve idea that progress is a good thing, that even the cattle-killing was beneficial since it destroyed tribalism and brought people into a modern age. Press (1990: 43) believes that the cattle-killing, regardless of its gruesome consequences, would enable African people to 'become free from the suffering we have known under the English invaders, through our sacrifice', but now – in the new order – as land reform and transformation in the country are slow African people must find another 'way to win back our land and our freedom' (Press, 1990: 44).

Such, then was the Nongqawuse catastrophe. A large number of people died of hunger and disease, and on that day 'the sun rose as usual. Nothing happened. The sun did not sit, no dead person came back to life, and not one of the things that had been predicted came to pass' (Jordan, 1973: 74-75).

## **COLONIZATION AND OPPRESSION**

In The Heart of Redness (2000) Mda magnificently communicates to the reader the effect and impact of colonialism and oppression on the black South Africans. Mda does so by engaging the intelligent use of 'poetic language enlivened by humor and irony' ('Sunday Times' 2002) to take the reader up close to the notorious history of the country from the arrival of British settlers in the Cape to the black people's experience, through the apartheid years and to the present (new democratic South Africa). He diplomatically manipulates the notorious history of the (Eastern) Cape based specifically on the Nongqawuse's cattle-killing event to expose the 'black South Africans' dilemma of where to position themselves between traditional beliefs and contemporary ambitions' ('Sunday Times' 2002), to show how 'the study of history provides a constant reminder of the complexity of events, of the wide range of variables that exist in any particular situation' (Hallet, 1980: 740). The Heart of Redness (2000), undoubtedly, displays how the infamous history of the amaXhosa in the Eastern Cape (village of Qolorha), where the 'British settlers and the British

Government had deprived them of the most of their best land' (Peires, 1989: 55), forcing them to grow up in the shadow of British colonialism and 'civilization' which they hated and fought against as long as they could, presented conflict and split the community, and how today's black South Africans rural and (some) urban, demand services such as running water and sanitation, electricity, literacy, roads, health and social welfare while conserving their traditional culture, customs and religion.

Evidently, colonialism and oppression, and the situation in the country today provoked Mda to 'tackle history, heritage, exile, conservation, and empowerment' ('Sunday Times': Dispatch, 2001) in The Heart of Redness (2000) where-in the community (black South Africans) are riven by old animosities and coming to grips with its future and its past. He was also provoked to bring out into the open the greatest challenge, which is to reawaken (black) people – the beneficiaries of discriminatory behaviour – from their complacency.

European colonialism, accompanying the so-called discoveries of the sixteenth century, rearranged the world in accordance with a European image in a largely brutal and violent manner. In this process, scant if any respect was paid the rights or dignity of others, and Europeans, as a rule, showed a callous arrogance in declaring their interests supreme. Their relations with the lands and peoples they 'discovered' were predatory, accompanied by wanton destruction of all that stood in their path. Never had so destructive a force unleashed itself on the world (Moleah, 1993: 1).

Moleah's view is backed by Peire's view on colonization as he points out that the Xhosa were militarily defeated and they had 'lost their best land, their best cattle and their best young men. Their economy had become dependent on colonial markets' (1989: 353), their worldview had also become clouded by mission Christianity. As a result of 'black subordination to white domination' (1989: 57) the Xhosas 'national, cultural and economic integrity, long penetrated and undermined by colonial pressure, finally collapsed' (1989: 321). Hallet also maintains that African communities found themselves forced to accept European domination (1980: 618) and points out that they were confronted with the terrible experience of seeing their old-established institutions destroyed and 'their lands taken from them.' Mda (2000: 81) believes that the African communities carry the scars of the past injustices and atrocities, and points out that: 'But he must not betray us by refusing to join us in our grief for the folly of belief that racked our country and is felt even today. He is a carrier of the scars', and that:



They are all wailing now, and mumbling things like people who talk in tongues. But they are not talking in tongues in the way Christians do. They are going into a trance that takes them back to the past. To the world of the ancestors. Not the Otherworld where the ancestors live today. Not the world that lives parallel to our world. But to this world when it still belonged to them (2000: 81).

The scars of colonization, oppression and apartheid – from the times when ‘the Great White Chief was running wild all over the lands of amaXhosa, doing whatever he liked in the name of Queen Victoria of England’, (Mda, 2000: 18) to social claustrophobia of political legislations, to the dehumanizing effects of being a ‘foreigner’ or non-citizen and working in colonial and apartheid South Africa – run deep. However, *The Heart of Redness* (2000), spanning 1848 until the beginning of the twenty-first century and including the lives of fictional people like Camagu, NomaRussia, Sarah, Merriman, NoCellphone, and real people like Nongqawuse, Saartjie Baartman, Sir Harry Smith, Sir George Grey, Mhlakaza, Heitsi, King Sandile, Dr Fitzgerald, is obviously politicized. Mda attempts to highlight the scars of the past and political realities in South Africa.

Twin-Twin suppressed the bitterness in his heart and went with Twin, his father and a group of mounted men to meet the white man who called himself the Great White Chief of the Xhosas, Sir Harry Smith. He watched in humiliation as the Great White Chief commanded the elders and even the chiefs to kiss his staff and his boots. And they did. And so did he (2000: 18).

Europe had been in indirect contact with Sub-Saharan Africa from the fifteenth century following the Portuguese seafaring exploitations. Commercial contacts gradually became dominated by the massive and destructive trade in slaves carried on by the Portuguese, Dutch, French, Hollanders, Germans and others. They pressed heavily on the indigenous people of Southern Africa. Therefore, it is a political reality that ‘Englishmen and Afrikaners were not the only Europeans to press heavily on the indigenous peoples of South Africa’ (Hallet, 1980: 623), to enforce the confiscation of land, discriminatory taxation, and ‘all the means used to drive the natives into the labour market’ (De Kiewiet, 1929: 89), to decide to use the Cape as a penal settlement (Muller, 1969: 157). According to Hallet (1980: 615), in 1652 a new element (the Dutch and the Hollanders) was added to the population of South Africa with the establishment of the first

European settlement – a modest victualing station founded by the Dutch East India Company at the Cape.

Invariably, it is the British settlers, according to Hatch (1967: 103) who brought many new influences: modern education, health services, capital, industrial techniques, scientific knowledge, social customs, political institutions, legal concepts, who also ‘maintained an absolute monopoly of formal political power’ (Thompson, 1990: 111), and who viewed political independence of the Xhosa as the path to redress the economic and social neglect and injustices of the colonial era (Ogot & Ochieng, 1995: 8). Britain still emerged as the dominant colonial power both in terms of territory and population and acquired substantial territorial holdings in Southern Africa. In 1843, the British coastal colony was founded solely as a means of retaining the Afrikaaners in the interior where they had established an Orange Free State and Transvaal Republics. It obtained Lesotho, formerly called Basutoland, in 1868 and in 1903 established a protectorate in Swaziland. These developments coincided with the discovery of diamonds in 1867 and gold in 1886.

Peires believes that it is a political reality that the majority of Xhosa accepted that the catastrophe of Nongqawuse (the cattle-killing event) was irreversible, and that they had taken their places in the schools of Alice and the docks of Port Elizabeth to ‘work out a new destiny inside the belly of the colonial beast’ (1989: 321). According to Wilson & Thompson (1969: 107), the Nguni people discarded their old way of living, that is, that of being herders and cultivators, as well as hunters and gradually became ‘willing to work in return for adequate incentives’ (Peires, 1989: 58). Wilson & Thompson and Peires are of the opinion that the Xhosa people turned to wage-labour only because they had no alternative to destitution due to the fact that the British Government ‘was taking advantage of the defenseless amaXhosa and was grabbing more and more of their land for white settlement’ (Mda, 2000: 296) and that Sir George Grey was ‘taking more and more of the land of the amaXhosa’ (2000: 141) like Governor Sir Harry Smith who:

Like all the others he is a thief. Just as he stole the land of the people of countries across the seas, he stole the land of the amaXhosa and gave it to the amaMfengu. He stole more of our land to settle more of his people! (2000: 96).

Destitution, according to De Kiewit (1942: 85), developed among the Xhosa a genuine belief that service with Europeans was a means of escape from barbarism. This view is shared by Hallett (1980: 623) who points out that the Xhosa people lost all their cattle, their land was expropriated,

their traditional political structure shattered, many of their chiefs executed, many of the survivors deported to other parts of the country, and eventually, substantially abandoned their traditional customs and standards. Many chiefs, according to Mda (2000: 18), lost their status and even ‘Sandile, the king of the amaXhosa-ka-Ngqika, was deposed by the white man who called himself the Great White Chief of the Xhosas, Sir Harry Smith’.

Mda maintains that it is a political reality that, as a result of colonization and oppression, South Africa is still a country made up of two nations: the rich and white; the poor and black. His observation is based on atrocities of the past, on the wealth whites accumulated for centuries at the expense of black people, on the prevalent economic inequalities, on the fact that ‘whites dominated every sector of the capitalist economy and did so with the use of cheap black labour’ (Thompson, 1990: 155).

Murray argues that colonialism, imperialism, civilization and oppression are hard to separate and views them as the ‘most powerful force in the world history over the last four or five centuries, carving up whole continents while oppressing indigenous peoples and obliterating entire civilizations’ (1999: 73).

According to Murray this force has vandalized and debased (local) cultures, traditions and sustainable lifestyles. Hallet (1980: 622) views this force as always inhumane, and ultimately amounts to an encroachment on the rights of the original inhabitants in favour of the intruders. Peires concurs with this view and maintains that the primary objective of this force (colonialism and oppression) in the (Eastern) Cape was to destroy the political and economic independence of the Xhosa, to bring them under British law and administration, ‘to make their land and labour available to the white settlers, and to reshape their religious and cultural institutions on European and Christian models’ (Peires, 1989: 313).

These authors, supported by Moleah (1993: 103), believe that European invasion of South Africa, which began with settlement at the Cape in 1652, was but ‘another chapter in European colonial invasion and plunder’, and that all colonialism, according to Moleah (1993: 121) ‘have racist predicate’. Moleah’s argument is backed by Grütter (1981: 59) who vividly points out that segregation was essential if white civilization was to be maintained in South Africa, and if the Whites were to retain their right to determine their own fate. For segregation to succeed, land had to be invaded and annexed. Moleah (1993: 447) believes that the most devastating effect of

colonization in South Africa was the dispossession of land, and that the loss of the land by indigenous people was the ultimate act of dispossession. Moleah argues that loss of the land by the Xhosa was and is an act of 'alienation in a profound and total sense' whilst Grütter (1981: 24) maintains that the Xhosa and the Pondo in the South were the tribes that bore the brunt of the contact between white and black.

It is argued that much of what the colonizers and cartographers created in South Africa was deliberate, like erasing African names that existed before 1840 and replacing them with English and/or Afrikaans ones. According to Peires (1987: 7) for instance, British Kaffraria (like the rest of the country) 'was to be surveyed and divided into towns and counties bearing English names', hence the following towns and cities: 'Egoli – the African name for Johannesburg' (Hallet, 1980: 643), eThekwinini – Durban (named after Sir Benjamin D'urban); uMnambithi – Ladysmith (named after the wife of Sir Harry Smith); uMgungundlovu – Pietermaritzburg (named after Piet Ritief and Gert Maritz); uMgungundlovana – Greytown (named after Sir George Grey); Umtshezi – Estcourt; Kwa-Dukuza – Stanger; Georcedale; George; Grahamstown; Harrismith (named after Sir Harry Smith); Queenstown; East London; Stellenbosch; Port Shepstone; Port Elizabeth, and many more. It is evident that before 1850 there had been a lot of Zulu, Xhosa and Sotho area names. By the 1860's (at the height of colonization and oppression) these area names were significantly erased and replaced by English and/or Afrikaans ones – a direct reflection of colonial domination, and of the conquest and power structures of the time that mapped and changed the face of the country.

Mda (2000: 95) believes that the British government, in the guise of civilization, 'had to take their land in return for civilization. Civilization is not cheap'. Sir George Grey, according to Mda, believed that 'land is a small price to pay for a gift that will last you a lifetime.... The gift of British civilization', (2000: 141), the gift given to 'people who have been rendered powerless by starvation', (2000: 238) and whose 'hunger belts tightly tied around their stomachs' (2000: 294). Mda maintains that the British settlers were achieving this goal sooner than they had expected and 'thanks to the cattle-killing movement' (2000: 296).

We are given to understand that The Heart of Redness (2000) makes it abundantly clear that colonialism and oppression created a country (South Africa) of irreconcilable poverty and wealth, employment and unemployment, literate and illiterate, developed and under-developed, rural and urban, advantaged and disadvantaged, haves and have-nots, superior and inferior, rich and poor. It is a microcosm of wealth and poverty. Mda:

Does not believe in grieving. He has long accepted that what has happened has happened. It is cast in cold iron that does not entertain rust. His forebears bore the pain with stoicism. They lived with it until they passed on to the world of the ancestors, (2000: 1)

Mda believes that this demonstrates and expresses the deep scars of centuries of oppression, colonial and apartheid exploitation and decades of political and economic mismanagement, armed conflicts, harassment, famine, hunger, starvation, displacement, suffering, anger, anguish, political intolerance, disease and natural disasters. He is, according to the novel, of the opinion that this country is nowhere near achieving its goals, and thus cautions us of 'still receiving protection from the colonial government' (Mda, 2000: 295), instead of becoming self-reliant. He outlines the events of the past when 'the Boers continued to desert the colony' (De Kiewiet, 1942: 71), and when, according to Gordimer (1984: 121), the Boers were rural people and the uitlanders ran commerce, and the present, when the Afrikaaners governed an industrialized state and had become entrepreneurs, stockbrokers, beer millionaires – all the synonyms for traders. The novel alerts us of the South African 'ideas that the white community could not live without African labor' (Hatch, 1967: 103), and that blacks did the manual work in the white household and the mining stope, the arable field, and the factory floor (Thompson, 1990: 155).

Consider as I conclude this section the fact that colonialism is when a country uses its power to take over a weaker one: 'thinking about, settling on, controlling land that you do not possess, that is distant, that is lived on and owned by others' (Said, 1992: 5). I have used colonialism in this chapter, particularly, as referring specifically to a situation in which a country (Britain) gained control over a country (South Africa) that is separated from it, often but not always, by sea. Britain had a typical colonial empire in that it controlled colonies scattered all around the world. For colonialism to succeed, the colonizer uses its power and control to dominate the colonized, and to introduce, provide its civilization, economy, religion, education, culture, language, and political system, administrative experience. One cannot divorce colonialism from civilization and from oppression, since colonialism creates the following oppressive situation: colonizer and colonized, superior and inferior, domination and subordination, master and servant, civilized and barbaric. However, Britain and the Afrikaaners applied oppression in South Africa because they understood that oppression emphasized the pervasive nature of inequality and ensured that it is woven throughout social institutions and embedded within individual consciousness. Whites gained

privilege as a dominant group so that they could benefit from access to social power and privilege not equally available to people of colour.

According to the novel, black people have been the victims, the primary victims in their country of birth, of every form of abuse, invalidation, oppression, domination, discrimination, manipulation and exploitation as a result of colonialism, and 'civilization'.

'The white man does not know our law', said Twin-Twin vehemently. 'He does not respect our law. He will apply the law of the British people. This is a way of introducing his laws among our people. As for the colonial money, The Man who Named Ten Rivers is buying our chiefs. When they are paid by him, they will owe their loyalty to him, and not to the amaXhosa people, and not to our laws and customs and tradition!' (Mda, 2000: 154).

There is no doubt that each one of us (black and white) 'has been directly or indirectly hurt by this particular oppression' (Lipsky, 1987: 1), that this situation has installed 'chronic distress patterns upon us as a people and as individuals' (1987: 3), and that it had 'gradually undermined and destroyed Xhosa laws and customs' (Mda, 2000: 154). It is important to realize that these authors are saying that colonization and oppression are in fact riddled with stereotypes, prejudices and fantasies, to the extent that the power and control combination reveal a 'reflection' of the truth of the colonizer – Britain.

As a colonized, oppressed, dispossessed, disgruntled young girl, Nongqawuse was convinced (as far as she was concerned) that 'the physical presence of the colonizer can be removed' (Ahluwalia & Nursery-Bray, 1997: 27) although the mental presence is harder to dislodge. Like many black South Africans, (past and present) Nongqawuse seemed to have understood the wrong intentions and gruesome, misleading efforts of the colonizer, namely:

The effort consciously sought by colonialism was to drive into the natives' heads the idea that if the settlers were to leave, they would at once fall back into barbarism, degradation and bestiality (Fanon, 1967: 169).

These intentions and efforts, undoubtedly, resulted in the creation of a dependency mentality that distorted black peoples' consciousness making them the dominated subjects of Britain.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **ZAKES MDA AND APARTHEID**

This chapter discusses Mda's biography, places him within the historical context based primarily on the apartheid era namely, the Nationalist Party governance (1948 – 1994), to show how the political circumstances and political conditions in the country (during this period) had a significant influence and a stern impact upon his writing. It is my desire to commence this chapter by looking into Mda's biography, political background, a concise background of the text – The Heart of Redness (2000) – and finally discuss the National Party's apartheid system from 1948 up until the new democratic order in the Republic of South Africa.

An author of twelve books, four of them novels, a playwright, an academic, theatre practitioner, theorist and novelist, a butcher, a painter and a beekeeper – Zanemvula Kizito Gatyeni Mda (better known as Zakes Mda) – is quoted as saying 'I am in the God business when I write novels' (in Naidoo, 1997: 250). Born in Sterkspruit in the district of Herschel, located in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa, on 6 October 1948, Mda has studied and worked in South Africa, Lesotho, the United Kingdom (UK) and United States of America (USA). He went into exile in Lesotho in 1963 when he was fifteen (15). He returned to the country in 1994 after 'my thirty years' absence from South Africa'. Married with four children, he now lives in Weltevreden Park, Johannesburg, (South Africa) and devotes his time to writing.

Coincidentally, 1948, the year in which he was born, is the year in which the National Party took control of the government in South Africa, 'applied apartheid in a plethora of laws and executive actions' (Thompson, 1990: 190), and designed apartheid to ensure that the interest of Afrikaans-speaking voters 'remained dominant in a parliament representing a white minority' (Readers Digest, 1995: 367).

He is the eldest of four children, three boys and a girl, born to Ashby Peter Solomzi – a teacher who became a lawyer, a member of the A.N.C. Youth League, a political writer – and Rose Nompumelelo Mda – a nurse at a clinic in Dobsonville where they lived. His father's political activities in the A.N.C. Youth League, and later in the PAC, according to Naidoo (1998: 80), led to direct altercation and confrontation with the security police and a period of imprisonment in 1963. After securing bail he escaped to Lesotho, 'despite South Africa's most efficient and well-equipped

military force, and the very competent Bureau for State Security – mockingly called Boss’ (Winks *et al*, 1992: 923). The young Zakes Mda was consequently being subjected to regular state security police’s harassment, and bombarded with questions ‘about his father and people who visited his home’ (Naidoo, 1998: 80). Zakes Mda’s altercations with the security police, the suffering of African people, his family’s political background, his exposure to ANC Youth League activities at the young age, the opportunity to spend time with leading ANC activists Walter and Albertina Sisulu, a brief stay with Nelson Mandela at the Mandela residence in Soweto in the early fifties, his father’s interest in political activities and writing, ‘exerted a strong influence on the political consciousness of the young Zakes Mda’ (Naidoo, 1998: 77) and inspired him to write. These experiences helped him to feel for the African people (the generation of anti-apartheid campaigners, the exiles, the political prisoners, the landless and homeless, the colonized and oppressed) and their political struggle. Mda (in Naidoo, 1997:247) admits that there are also many other things that influenced him to write: he comes from a family of readers, his father was a teacher who became a lawyer, he was reading all the time, and writing as well (political writings).

More so, Mda is endowed with immense commitment to African people’s liberation. Jones & Jones (1996: 121), in support of this view, point out that ‘to the African ethos of communality is added commitment’. They maintain that commitment, as is evidenced in Mda’s writings, emanates from a positive but pained state of mind – ‘suffering, sacrifice, selflessness, determination to defy misery and triumph over travails’ – and is concomitant with resistance, is made more significant and meaningful by plagues prevalent in South Africa during colonization and apartheid, such as, ‘racism, repression, oppression, exploitation, determination to destroy the helpless, innocent victim’ (1996: 121). One understands that Mda’s works demonstrate the philosophy that African literature continues to be intensely political and seems destined to remain so for some time. The complex, complicated and diverse South African situation (more than any other place in the world today) ‘demands of the African nothing short of commitment’.

However, Mda is a black South African writer whose plays, poems, stories and novels (especially Ways of Dying (1995) and The Heart of Redness) are acclaimed worldwide, not only for the exceptional quality of his style of writing but also for his depth of feeling and political insight. He has proved himself to be one of South Africa’s most talented, ambitious and critical, black writer. He has, undoubtedly, earned himself a place among the few South African novelists who really matter.



He had, consequently, developed a social conviction that he had to expound. The best option available in order to fulfill this ambition was through writing. Consequently 'he started with poems and short stories' (Naidoo, 1997: 247) which he wrote in Xhosa and were later published in magazines such as, 'Staffrider', 'The Voice' and 'Odumo' (Naidoo 1998: 80). He made awesome contributions to Anthologies that include poems published in 'Soho Square' (1992), 'Summer Fires' (1983) and 'New South African Writing' (1977). Mda published Bits of Debris – a volume of his poems – in 1986. In 1963 – at the height of apartheid – he wrote a short story, Igqira lase Mvubase, that was published in a youth magazine called 'Wamba'.

When he joined his father in exile in Lesotho he gradually lost touch with isiXhosa and turned to English as a medium – a world language of all the languages today, a language that is still confined to specialized status (Said, 1990: 2). Said, however, perceives English as either the language of the ruler (colonizer), and of tiny minorities (1990: 3), which to me implies that it is a language of ruler and administrator. Therefore, one can argue that Mda's eloquent and 'critical use of the language might permit a decolonising of the mind' (1990: 4) to enable the Africans to be, if need be, critical of any injustices cast upon them either by (former) oppressors or (so-called) liberators. Consider that in rural areas at the time 'third class government-aided schools were established' (Muller, 1969: 179), that education in those schools had to be secular from the outset and 'teaching was through the medium of English', and that a thoroughly Anglicised education policy had been introduced (Grutter, 1981: 47).

Mda clearly points out that 'the ruder languages shall disappear, and the tongue of England alone shall be heard all around' (2000: 237). His whole emphasis seems to be that writing in English would enable him to easily reach and penetrate the minds of both the colonizer (oppressor) and the colonized (oppressed) and succinctly get his message across. One could say, with a certain measure of truth, that Mda was bound to succeed because in the nineteenth century, according to Hallet (1980: 651), the English rulers of the Cape introduced a number of regulations to ensure the predominance of their own language. Knowledge of English was made compulsory for the civil service, and English became the sole language of the law courts, of parliament, and of government schools, which made English to enjoy a position of dominance. Mda exploited and also manipulated this situation to accomplish his ambitions, desires and dreams. He used it to his own advantage.

Naidoo (1998: 81), believes that Mda turned his attention to writing more seriously in English when he was completing his Junior Certificate (JC). Mda, by his own admission, believes that it is now:

generally accepted that English is the kind of language that we could use, for effective communication among different people all over the world. We cannot wish it away, whether we like it or not. It is the language we need to communicate with the rest of the world (in Naidoo, 1997: 259).

In this regard, Mda, (the writer of the Black Consciousness era) sought to use English 'to cut across ethnic division and to express black unity and resistance against apartheid' (Naidoo, 1998: 92) in order to foster dialogue within the oppressed (black) masses and to attempt to create a forum for the constructive self-criticism.

One can also argue that Mda chose to write in English because he seemed to understand the fact that in 1822, according to Keppel-Jones (1972: 79), six schoolmasters were brought from Scotland to open, in the main towns, cities and villages, 'schools of a more advanced kind than had yet been seen in the colony'. In these schools, as well, the medium of instruction was English, which was apparently made the sole official language of the colony. English language was used by colonizers as a tool for power, control and domination in the colony as it was 'heard in consistory, presbytery and synod' (1972: 79), and African people used it as both a technical language and a 'foreign language with various implicit connections to the larger English-speaking world' (Readers Digest, 1995: 151). However, Said (1990: 3) argues that English as a language cannot be divorced from the colonial process, although 'no emphasis at all was placed on the relationship between English and the colonial process that brought the language and its literature' to the (black) South African population – the population whose 'antique laws and customs will moulder into oblivion' because 'this cattle-killing nonsense augurs the dawn of a new era' (Mda, 2000: 237). For these reasons, Mda was certain that the people he had targeted would be able to consume his literature. He usurped the opportunity and manipulated it to his own advantage. Nevertheless, Mda, according to Naidoo (1997: 259), is not ignorant of the fact that novels are only read by the elite. He, however, uses different types of communications for different people. He prefers to use any form of communication which his target group has access to, such as, television and radio programmes, and his medium of instruction (more often than not) in these programmes (ironically) is English as 'English has an important role to play as a means of communication' (1997: 259). Jones & Jones's concerns about the use of English in African literature (especially novels) is worth considering:

Now, the use of English as the basic vehicle of communication in these plays could constitute, as it often does in African literature, a matter of debate, especially given the fact that the vast majority of Africans, who would be expected to be the immediate audience, do not use English as a first language. The language issue is, however, not as controversial in theatre as it is in other genres; for, there is a theatrical language beyond words, that is made of motion and movement and mime, of rhythm and action, of music, song and dance and, more than in any other forum, theatre provides myriad possibilities of communication (1996: 123).

The point that one attempts to highlight is that the language issue is controversial particularly in the novel.

In the mid-sixties, Mda decided to begin to write plays in English. The following are some of his plays: Zhaigos, A Hectic Weekend, The Dying Screams of the Moon, The Nun's Romantic Story, We shall sing for the Fatherland (1973) – ‘won the Amstel Merit Award in the first Amstel Playwright of the year competition’ (Naidoo, 1998: 84), The Hill (1978) – also won and received the Amstel Playwright of the Year Award, The Road (1982) – won the 1984 Christina Crawford Award of the American Theatre Association, When People Play People (1993), Danke Auntie, And the girls in their Sunday dresses.

Zakes Mda, according to the ‘Sunday Times’ (2002), is an award-winning and internationally acclaimed black South African playwright, novelist, painter and academic. Mda has made a significant contribution to the development of dramatic art through his writing, teaching and productions, and towards numerous books and journals. He has also published a volume of poetry and several anthologies of plays, and is the first person to graduate from the University of Cape Town with a doctorate in drama (1989). His PhD thesis titled, ‘The Utilization of Theatre as a Medium for Development Communication: An Examination of the Lesotho Experience’, which he pursued with the University of Cape Town, was later published as When People Play People in 1993 (Naidoo, 1998: 85). The PhD degree was, however, awarded to him in 1989, and consequently, by his own admission, Mda had significant confidence to write novels. Mda (in Naidoo, 1998: 86), initially thought that he needed particular special skills to write a novel, but after ‘I wrote my PhD thesis of more than four hundred pages, a process which I found difficult and painful’, Mda realized that he could write sustained prose. Mda insists that ‘for the past twenty years or so I have always wanted to write a novel’ (Naidoo, 1997: 250). This resulted in him

writing the following novels: She Plays with the Darkness (1995) – winner of the Sanlam Literary Prize, Ways of Dying (1995) – winner of the 1996 CNA Award and of the M-Net Book Prize in 1997, Melville 67 (1998), The Heart of Redness (2000) – winner of the ‘Sunday Times’ Fiction Award, 2001 and of the 2001 Commonwealth Writers Prize for Fiction (Africa) and The Madonna of Excelsior (2002). According to ‘Sunday Times’ (2002), The Whale Caller (set in Hermanus – Western Cape), Ululants (set in Lesotho) and Rickshaw (set in Durban) are in the pipeline. His outstanding work in writing of novel has won him many accolades, and as a novelist and playwright, he has received every major South African prize for his work. Mda maintains that he would continue ‘writing novels’ (Naidoo, 1997: 257) because he:

had great fun writing my novels. More fun than I ever had even when I was writing my plays. Writing some of those plays was quite an agony. I wrote many of those plays in a matter of two or three weeks, or even less time than that (1997: 254).

According to Naidoo (1997), Mda does not see himself as a playwright anymore, but sees himself as a novelist who will be creating different types of works, novels mainly, and will write a play only when he is commissioned to do so.

The Heart of Redness (2000) reflects Mda’s interest, in recent years after his return to South Africa in 1994, in prose-writing rather than plays. The influence of African culture and tradition on his novel cannot be over-emphasized. As a novelist Mda is a late bloomer, solely due to the fact that he has spent his time writing for the stage as has been indicated earlier.

‘Sunday Times’ (2002) describes The Heart of Redness (2000) as ‘a startling novel by the leading writer of the new South Africa’, and summarizes it as follows:

In Mda’s richly suggestive novel, a Westernized African, Camagu, becomes embroiled in a village dispute that has its roots in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The war between the amaXhosa and the British in South Africa (known to Westerners as the Zulu wars) was interrupted by a strange, messianic interlude in which the amaXhosa followed the self-destructive commands of the prophet Nongqawuse and were split between followers of Nongqawuse (Believers) and their opponents (Unbelievers). In the village of Qolorha-by-Sea in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Believers still flourish. They put the onus for the distressing failure of Nongqawuse’s visions on the Unbelievers’

unbelief. The chief Believer is Zim; his rival, the chief Unbeliever, is Bhonco. The white store-owner, Dalton, whose ancestor killed Zim and Bhonco's forefather, Xikixa, is on the Believers' side in the village's current controversy over whether or not to allow a casino in the village. The Believers oppose the changes they foresee coming to the village's traditions. The Unbelievers want economic development. Camagu originally comes to Qolorha looking for a woman whose memory haunts him. He ends up being associated with the cold, beautiful Xoliswa Ximiya, Bhonco's daughter, whose scorn for tradition eventually drives her from the village. Secretly, however, Camagu lusts for Qukezwa, the squat but sexy daughter of Zim.

According to the 'Sunday Times' (2002), the villagers of Qolorha-by-Sea were split between those who welcome 'progress' and those who fear it when a 'black empowerment' company wanted to develop a tourist heaven with casinos and theme parks. Mda manipulates the conflict to weave in the infamous, iniquitous history of this place 'where the savage white conquerors' (the colonizers) came with so-called civilization and the young prophetess (Nongqawuse) instructed the Xhosa nation to resist by destroying their cattle and crops. Consequently, the Xhosa people (villagers) were split into Believers and Unbelievers. Mda, after constant visits to the village of Qolorha, observes the ripple effect of Nongqawuse's prophecy, and also observed that the villagers want development: 'electricity, running water, literacy and also want to conserve their Xhosa culture and natural beauty of their place' ('Sunday Times', 2002). The novel is described by The Seattle Skanner (in 'Sunday Times' 2002) as 'a novel of tremendous scope and deep human feeling, of passion and reconciliation', whilst Janet Maslin, New York Times (in 'Sunday Times', 2002) perceives it as '(an) inspired synthesis of history, myth and satire about this emblematic seaside village, and about post-apartheid South Africa by extension'.

It is interesting to note the following striking historical facts about the novel: it was published six years into the new political dispensation; a decade after the former President De Klerk 'ended many of the segregated practices and early in 1990 declared before parliament that full racial equality was his goal' (Winks *et al*, 1992: 923), lifted the restrictions on the previously banned ANC, PAC, SACP, AZAPO and other liberation movements, announced the repeal of all apartheid legislation, and released Nelson Mandela (11 February 1990) to a cheering world (Readers Digest, 1995: 442), and a decade after the release of political prisoners – Rivonia Trialist in particular – and the return of political exiles, patriots and freedom fighters. In this regard the praise for The Heart of Redness (2000) by Sowetan (in 'Sunday Times' 2001) is worth considering: 'The book captures and reflects

the heartbeats of all black people in the country. Heartbeats of yesterday, today and tomorrow'. The following extract confirms this view.

It is the same with the company that wants to turn Qolorha into a holiday haven. Only a chosen few will benefit: the party and trade union bosses who are directors. They live in their mansions in Johannesburg and have nothing to do with the village. The villagers will actually lose more than they will gain from the few jobs that will be created. Very little of the money that is made here will circulate in the village (Mda, 2000: 274-275).

When Mda returned to South Africa in 1994 he developed a 'strong commitment to social development' (Naidoo, 1998: 87). All his novels demonstrate his concern with the social development and education of the underdeveloped, disadvantaged, underprivileged and destitute. Mda (in Naidoo, 1998: 88) points out clearly that he has noted huge disparities and discrepancies in the distribution of wealth between urban and rural areas in the 'new' democratic South Africa. These disparities and discrepancies are similar to those of apartheid era which, while in exile, he had 'read about in the 'Sunday Times', 'City Press' (Naidoo, 1997: 252), and 'Mail and Guardian'. These awakened the reminiscence of the past injustices of colonialism and apartheid. South Africa was devastated by colonization and apartheid, and some of the current problems are a direct legacy thereof. The novel reflects that Mda does not equate post-apartheid with 'post-struggle' (Naidoo, 1998: 96) because, for Mda, the putting into place of a black (ANC-led) government does not suggest the automatic, instantaneous and spontaneous end of the people's struggles. It does not mean the end to the writers' role as the watchdog and 'voice of the people' (1998: 96), although the role of South African (black) writers in the late nineties have gradually become complicated, due to the complexity of the country's diverse society.

Nonetheless, Mda, has not ceased to be the voice of the people, to be critical of the government of the day, to be truly South African because, by his own admission, Mda has a 'story to tell and I tell my story' (in Naidoo, 1997: 257). In this regard, Mda asserts vividly that:

But the fact is I will still be writing, I will be creating different types of works, novels mainly, and perhaps even the occasional play. I don't see myself a playwright anymore, I see myself a novelist. ... With novels, for the first time, I find that I am actually enjoying what I am writing (in Naidoo, 1997: 257).

Mda in The Heart of Redness (2000), is digging out the past that is best forgotten, but does not follow many preceding South African black writers by decrying the evils of colonialism and of apartheid or the injustices in relationships between blacks and whites. He seems to be interested in the problems and limitations of black society in the 'new' South Africa or post-apartheid South Africa, as well as its strengths and convictions. Consider that before the abolition of apartheid in February 1990 Mda was forced to use his imagination in order to recreate the situation as he remembered it, or as he thought it would be (Naidoo, 1997: 251) because he was in exile and far away from the situation itself. That works to his advantage even today when apartheid is gone.

Mda's latest novel, The Heart of Redness (2000), is the evidence of this claim, as the novel is a triumph of imagination. It is described by critics, according to 'Sunday Times' (2001), as a 'magical realist text of great beauty, humour and pathos'. It is a complex novel that weaves the fascinating past (history) that reflects the mid-nineteenth century prophecies of a young, foolish girl called Nongqawuse who 'once lied that she saw miracles' (Mda, 2000: 67), and strangers in the Eastern Cape village of Qolorha at the height of British colonization; and the portrayal of contemporary life of (black) people in South Africa and their attachment to place. The novel looks at black South African's dilemma of where to position themselves between traditional beliefs and contemporary ambitions.

The novel portrays how Mda has developed his own process of filtering and refining his ideas. This is evidenced by his ability to use the novel to examine, the country's situation then and now, and to 'exploit' the cattle-killing event as merely a platform from which his story springs in order to intrigue and captivate his reader. Since his return to the country in 1994, Mda himself has been intrigued by the (social and political) developments and phenomena in South Africa. The complexity of the novel demonstrates the complexity of the country's diversity. There is a vast amount of mystery involved and there is something relatively (very) real about it. It is also a novel about spirituality, belief, faith, history (past and present) and politics.

Mda raises thoughts about what would happen after liberation, and that liberation have put 'petty-bourgeois rulers firmly in command' (Said, 1990: 6). The novel illuminates key issues and challenges facing the ANC-led government. It produces an elegant history of the Xhosa people in the middle of the nineteenth century during British colonization of the Cape, to the middle of the twentieth century when the National Party won the elections, took control of the country, and

introduced iniquitous apartheid policy, to the new Democratic South Africa. It demonstrates the changes that have taken place in the country, hence:

he tells the villagers how lucky they are to be living in a new and democratic South Africa where the key word is transparency. In the bad old days such projects would be done without consulting them at all (Mda, 2000: 230).

It is interesting to note that the events in the novel give one some idea of the complex time shifts in the book, reflect some of the more innovative aspects of Mda's book, for example, the complete absence of Indian, and Coloured South Africans. Except for John Dalton's wife, the novel also reflects the almost complete absence of white women. Details of textual analysis and examination are found in the subsequent chapter.

Interestingly, the text, through the character of Camagu, asserts clearly that Mda:

Was only a toddler when he left with his parents to settle in the township of Orlando East, in the city of Johannesburg. There it was a different life, devoid of the song of the amagquyazana. And there he grew up until the political upheavals of the 1960s sent him into exile in his late teens. So many things in Qolorha bring back long-forgotten images. He is glad to find himself in the middle of these festivities (Mda, 2000: 65).

Discrimination and segregation have a long history in South Africa. Even before the introduction of apartheid, there was a system of segregation in place which gave white people a privileged and protected position. For instance, after 1936, all adult whites had the right to vote. In contrast, only coloured males in the Cape had the right to vote, and no Africans had the vote. This discrimination and segregation based on race became even stronger in 1948 when the National Party was voted into power by a mainly white electorate. Invariably, from 1948 to 1990 South Africans lived under the Afrikaner system of apartheid which simple means 'separateness'. Apartheid was 'designed to ensure that the interests of Afrikaans-speaking voters remained dominant in a parliament representing a white minority' (Readers Digest, 1995: 367). It enabled white South Africans to dominate people of colour: depriving them of land, education, career opportunities, freedom, self-respect, self-reliance, self-esteem and pride.



The apartheid regime implanted dogmatic views of African people to the white minority: views that propagated European superiority, and 'the web of racism, cultural stereotypes, political imperialism, dehumanizing ideology' (Said, 1978: 27). Apartheid, argues Said, is not 'an inert fact of nature' (1978: 4), it is not merely there. It is a man-made concept: just as cultural, historical, religious and geographical entities – regions, boundaries, frontiers, east, west, north, south, areas, continents, countries. Apartheid in 1948 changed the face of South African history. After the Second World War, most of the countries around the world had started recognizing the rights of people to independence and equality. However, the Afrikaner Nationalist government went in the opposite direction by introducing the system of apartheid, and using extra-ordinary oppressive methods to enforce it and to stay in power. According to Vigne, even 'the Cape principle of equal rights and opportunities regardless of race,' (1997: 3) colour or creed had fallen away, and the system enforced removal of blacks from the white body politic. It is in this regard that Mda, according to Naidoo (1998: 84), in his play The Road (1982), like in The Heart of Redness (2000), interrogates the nature of racism, political oppression and economic exploitation in South Africa. As a post-colonial, post-apartheid black South African writer, Mda 'attempts to function as the voices of the black disenfranchised' (Naidoo, 1998: 89) to reflect on the evils of the past and present. Farisani seems to concur with this assertion as he points out clearly that 'the legacy of apartheid is one of the ugliest and most unfortunate things that every South African who can be counted amongst the true revolutionaries would like to put behind us' (in Mbete *et al*, 2001: 3), whilst Ahluwalia *et al* (1997: 27) believe that the apartheid regime subjected the African people to the infamous authority and grotesque military force of an alien power.

The Heart of Redness (2000) demonstrates that knowledge of the 'history helps us trace the patterns that constitute oppression over time, and enables us to see the long-standing grievances of different groups in our society' (Adams *et al*, 1997:6), and enables us to comprehend the manifestation of oppression in our country and the manifestation of distress patterns, 'some form of rigid, destructive or ineffective feeling,' (Lipsky, 1982: 2) in the victim.

The essence of apartheid policy was that the different racial groups which make up the population of the Republic (then the Union) of South Africa could be kept separate as far as possible. The NP introduced a series of new laws that together made up the system of apartheid (a much stronger form of racial segregation). Every South African was now officially classified as belonging to a particular racial group. The regime ensured that 'whites', for example, 'gain privilege as a

dominant group' (Adams *et al*, 1997: 5) so that they can benefit from access to social power and privilege not equally available to people of colour.

Black people have been the victims, the primary victims in the country, of 'every form of abuse, invalidation, oppression, and exploitation' (1997: 3) as a result of racism that has been systematically initiated, encouraged and powerfully enforced by Malan's National Party Government after winning the 1948 election. Through the system of apartheid the Afrikaners were encouraged to see themselves as God's elect, as a 'chosen people', as a 'nation entrusted with the divine mission of preserving their beloved homeland' (Hallet, 1980: 651), and they 'thanked God for the National Party which introduced and preserved that very system for forty-six years' (Mda, 2000: 161).

Apartheid meant the complete segregation or separation of all races under white domination. The 1950s saw 'a plethora of laws and executive actions' (Thompson, 1990: 190) which included rigid and increasingly sophisticated controls over all black South Africans, and the division of urban areas into zones where 'members of one specified race alone could live and work' (1990: 194). It is during this time, according to Readers Digest (1995: 367), that the National Party introduced a battery of legislation to prop up its policy, which aimed to regulate every aspect of private, social and economic life.

The 1960s saw a turning point in liberation politics as the liberation movements turned from 'non-violent protests and civil disobedience to armed insurgency' (Readers Digest, 1995: 368) when they were banned and the political prisoners, such as, the Rivonia Eight - Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Ahmed Kathrada, Dennis Goldberg, Raymond Mhlaba, Elias Motsoaledi, Andrew Mlangeni - were imprisoned.

The 1970s marked the rise of Black Consciousness that led to the articulation of a black voice that attempted to free the black people from the bondage of oppression. It is, according to Naidoo, during this period when Mda significantly emerged as a writer, and 'two years after the Soweto uprising on 16 June 1976, that Mda won the Merit Award of the South African Playwrights Society - the first of many awards' (Naidoo, 1998: 92).

In the 1980s the country became ungovernable due to political intolerance and upheavals, the mass mobilization of the oppressed people, and the putting in place of the Tri-Cameral Parliament (in

1983). The ANC intensified its struggle and military activities whilst the international community exerted pressure on the government. It became increasingly evident that the tide of resistance could not be held in check indefinitely. The 1980's was a time of security police and banning orders, detentions, state of emergency and disappearances. It was a time when the apartheid regime was giving a last, desperate kick before laying down and dying.

In 1989, P.W. Botha – beset by political problems and unwell – stepped down and was succeeded by a reformist F.W. De Klerk who had ‘committed himself to phasing out white domination’ (Winks *et al*, 1992: 923).

In his first speech (02 February 1990), after assuming the National Party leadership, the then State President F.W. De Klerk called for a non-racist South Africa and for negotiations concerning the country's future. He lifted the ban on the ANC, released Nelson Mandela. According to the Readers Digest (1995: 442), talks began on shaping a new future for South Africa. After lengthy negotiations they finally arrived at a deal for a post-apartheid government. This brought the iniquitous apartheid system to an end and opened the way for the drafting of a new constitution for the non-racial country, based on the principle of ‘one person – one vote’. De Klerk advocated the entrenchment of basic human rights.

On 27 April 1994 South Africa experienced its first universal Democratic General Elections. On 09 May 1994, the ANC took up the majority of seats in parliament, ending its 82-year struggle against racial segregation – apartheid, minority rule, oppression, racism, and white domination (1995: 442). On 10 May 1994 Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as the first democratically elected president of the Republic of South Africa.

Reference will be made, time and again, to the apartheid era in chapter three when the text is analyzed.

However, Mda's novel The Heart of Redness (2000) is located in the Eastern Cape but the narrative shifts between cattle-killing events of the amaXhosa and Nongqawuse in the 1850s and today's continuing feud between Believers and Unbelievers. Mda diplomatically and earnestly subverts the portrayal of Nongqawuse's cattle-killing as ‘foolish’ and unnecessary, whilst he tactfully plays with very serious colonial and post-colonial, apartheid and post-apartheid construction of (national) identity and (country's) history. The novel ingeniously derides shibboleths of post-apartheid South

Africa, apartheid era, racist South Africa, and British Colonialism of the nineteenth century. It also portrays the policies of the democratic South Africa as being adverse to the blacks (the poor).

## CHAPTER THREE

### ANALYSIS OF THE HEART OF REDNESS (2000)

There are so many important issues raised by the novel that I shall limit myself to social issues, socio-political issues, socio-economic issues, religious issues and white portrayal. One would imagine that with the dismantling of apartheid in the 1990s the South African black writers would probably lack suitable subjects and disappear into oblivion. With the demise of apartheid many black writers perhaps found that they were no longer equal to the task of functioning as writers. As Mda points out: 'now the author is dead, and the author was apartheid' (in Naidoo, 1997: 252). With Mda, however, the contrary is correct.

The inception of democracy in 1994, invoked upon Mda the vigorous novelistic material which inspired him to focus 'on black oppression and exploitation of other black people' (Lloyd, 2001: 34), to focus on the scars of colonialism, to focus on the ills of apartheid, and to be critical of the democratically-elected black government, the country's governance and the suffering of the poor African people. Mda comments:

Bhongo adopts a new tactic and becomes very pitiful.

'Ever since Nongqawuse things were never right,' he laments. 'Until now. They are becoming right a bit now, although not for me. They are becoming right for others. Me .. no .. I am still waiting for my nkamnkam.

'This is my seventh year waiting. My wife came here as a child ... she is many years younger than me. But she now gets nkamnkam. I am very very old, but the government refuses to give me my pension' (Mda, 2000: 9).

The novel significantly argues that the poor black people – rural and villagers in particular – are worse off after the 1994 General Elections, a supposed non-racial democracy, than they were by the end of the apartheid era. The poorest of the population have become victims of a new form of oppression. They are entrapped in a state of systematic exclusion and neglect by the democratically elected government. Mda argues that there is a lack of the greatest determination and the greatest speed to alleviate poverty, redistribute wealth and improve the social welfare, and that the poorest half of the population have got poorer in the post-liberation period. Accordingly, the extract emphasizes the view that The Heart of Redness (2000) serves as an intricate plot, providing the

opportunity to explore weighty subjects and themes, such as, religious beliefs, 'civilization', the impact of Nongqawuse's cattle-killing saga, colonialism, the apartheid system, socialization, social power, stereotypes, racial prejudices, traditionalism and modernism, and many more. The novel is about so many other themes and layers, nevertheless, my focus will be on the issues mentioned above. The novel has meaning, suspense, emotion, humanity, humor and irony, and challenges the country's political situation and governance (past and present). It demonstrates local, provincial and national interests and significance which translate to pivotal national and universal messages and to how the international community perceives South Africa as the chair of the African Union (AU), proponent of African Renaissance and a prominent member of the Southern African Development Community (SADEC).

Mda skillfully slams British Colonialism (through Nongqawuse's cattle-killing prophecy), slams apartheid, and slams particularly the ruling party (ANC) for abandoning the poor and perpetuating inequality and exploitation in post-apartheid South Africa. He humorously takes his reader on a riveting analysis of one hundred-and-fifty years of displacement, oppression, discrimination, inequality and exploitation by successive British colonial and Afrikaner racial regimes, to demonstrate that the advent of a non-racial, non-sexist democracy has not only failed to bring equality and development but has deepened the divisions between haves and have-nots, rich and poor, rural and urban, educated and uneducated, employed and unemployed. He comments:

He wonders how the old ones manage to be so relentless in their rhythmic movement. And some of them are going to work in the morning. They'll be standing up all day, eking out a meager living as maids, washerwomen and street vendors. Fortunately he is not going to work. Not tomorrow. Not ever in this country. Four years have passed, and Camagu is still not employed in what he was trained for (Mda, 2000: 33).

The novel could be perceived as Mda's endeavor to make South Africans (black and white) realize how far they have come and, in retrospect, assertively challenge (without aggression or confrontation) the maturity of South Africa's relatively young democracy and its leadership. It might even be used as a tool to help South Africans to rise above the past differences and work together at building a united nation. The Heart of Redness (2000) is not intended to destabilize the country: the country whose history is unique because of the political compromise (evidenced in the 1990s) that rescued South Africans from mutual, unprecedented destruction. Mda places South

Africa's democracy under scrutiny. That is similar to Said's assertion when he acknowledges that 'a post-colonial, and anti-imperial writer uses the novel to express ideas, values, emotions formerly suppressed, ignored or denigrated by, and of course in, well known metropolitan centers' (Said, 1990: 1).

The novel presents a fascinating array of characters from all walks of life: urban and rural; rich and poor; colonizer and colonized; educated and uneducated; primitive and modern; Believers and Unbelievers; Christians and heathens; traditionalist and modernists. The characters are encountered while struggling with choices when the right thing to do and the best thing to do are worlds apart. Consider the following extract:

It cannot happen,' answered Mhlakaza. 'The instructions are firm on that matter. The present animals are contaminated. So are the present crops. The Strangers made it clear that the new ones will not come unless we do as we are told. The new people, our ancestors, will not rise from the dead until we have cleansed the earth by destroying all our cattle and all our crops both in the fields and in the granaries.'

'The instructions are clear,' said the king. 'But my herds are too many. I shall only ask that I be given three months to destroy them all' (Mda, 2000: 89).

The book's strength, however, is in the dialogue and the way in which Mda tackles 'history, heritage, exile, conservation, and empowerment of a community riven by old animosities and coming to grips with its future and its past' ('Natal Witness' in 'Sunday Times', 2001). Naidoo (1998: 75) is of the opinion that Mda, as he has pointed out on numerous occasions, 'interacts with his characters.' Mda, by his own acknowledgement, asserts that:

I find that I am actually enjoying what I am writing. The writing of plays on the other hand becomes quite a chore and I am relieved when it is all over. But when I write novels, the process of writing itself is such great fun that when I am finished I find that I miss the characters with whom I have been interacting (in Naidoo, 1997: 257).

Although Mda had taken the trouble and had gone through the motions of changing names of some places and some people (using fictitious names) the identities of some people like Camagu, the

protagonist, are patently obvious to (many) readers. Camagu, like Mda, 'has learning that surpasses even that of our daughter. He has come after many years across the seas' (Mda, 2000: 187). Mda's attempts to disguise the identities of some significant actors or characters has been unsuccessful as there are inferences, which arise from the perceptions and interpretations of the author's history and the political conditions in South Africa between the nineteenth century and twenty-first century (as elaborated in the previous chapters), and specific circumstances which serve as indicators that display vividly, who the writer refers to. However, he has succeeded in fulfilling ethical requirements by thinly disguising some identities and some places.

## **SOCIAL ISSUES**

By delving into the complexities of a society that still suffers from the effects of colonialism, apartheid and post-apartheid liberation Mda is able to create a new and revealing fictional reality. This study is absolutely necessary because most black South African writers have for too long focused their themes exclusively on the evils of apartheid and have seen its eradication as the final solution to the problems of the black people in the country.

As Camagu drives his Toyota Corolla on the gravel road he concludes that a generous artist painted the village of Qolorha-by-Sea, using splashes of lush colour. It is a canvas where blue and green dominate. It is the blue of the skies and the distant hills, of the ocean and the rivers that flow into it. The green is of the meadows and the valleys, the tall grass and the usundu palms.

He is pleased to see that there are some people here who still wear isiXhosa costume. They are few, though. Most of the men and women he passes on the road don't dress any differently from people of the city (Mda, 2000: 61).

Mda begins his story with an examination of life and circumstances in the Eastern Cape village of Qolorha, where Camagu (the protagonist) grew up, before going to America. As Camagu drives on the gravel road through the valleys he is filled with a searing longing for an imagined blissfulness of his youth since he has vague memories of his home village. Camagu (Son of Cesane), like Mda, 'was only a toddler when he left with his parents to settle in the township of Orlando East, in the city of Johannesburg' (Mda, 2000: 65). He grew up here until the political upheavals of the 1960s sent him into exile in his late teens. The appalling conditions (lack of development) in the village of Qolorha bring back long-forgotten memories and images. He is nevertheless happy to find himself in the middle of these festivities. Unlike the pastoral haven described by many South



African black and white writers, Mda's village life is very harsh as a result of British encroachment upon the land of Xhosa people, and Nongqawuse's prophecies. While there are the old couples, such as Nopetticoat and Bhonco, walking side-by-side from a feast, there is much squabbling and competition between the Believers and Unbelievers, Christians and heathens, civilized and uncivilized. Camagu discovers that Bhonco and Nopetticoat's only child Xoliswa Ximiya, has been promoted at work to be the principal of Qolorha-by-Sea Secondary School.

Camagu notices the picturesque huts, rondavels, voguish hexagons, herd-boys and cattle-kraals, tool shed, fowl-run, beautiful houses painted pink, powder blue, yellow and white. Tourists often come to enjoy the serenity of this place, to admire birds on plants, on the green valleys or to go to the valley of Nongqawuse to see where the miracles happened. The tourists book in at the Blue Flamingo Hotel and leave their children in the care of part-time village nannies while they walk or ride all over the valley, or swim in the rough sea that smashes gigantic waves against the rocks, creating mountains of snow-white surf.

The Believers and Unbelievers are in competition over everything. One example of the manifestation of the competition occurred when the Ximiyas (of the family of Unbelievers) purchased a pink dining table with four chairs. Since no one else in the Eastern Cape village of Qolorha had a dining table those days, the family became the talk of the village community. Therefore, Zim (of the family of Believers) had to burst the Ximiya bubble by buying exactly the same dining table, but with six chairs. That immensely annoyed the son of Ximiya and his supporters. Since that day the war between the two families (Believers and Unbelievers) has become a public one. The war of the Believers and Unbelievers has gone to the extent that they do not attend each other's feasts, even though that was considered sacrilege by the society to stay away from your fellow man's feast. Interestingly, they do attend each other's funerals. The war between the Believers and Unbelievers has its roots in the orders given by the prophetess Nongqawuse in the mid-nineteenth century. The orders were that the amaXhosa should destroy all their herds and destroy their crops. Those who heeded the prophetess' instruction were called the Believers and those who refused were classified as the Unbelievers. The Unbelievers, however, regarded the prophetess as a 'liar who had been bought by white people to destroy the black race' (Mda, 2000: 69). Consider the contradictory perceptions between the Unbeliever's view of Nongqawuse's prophecy, and Nongqawuse and her prophecy. Nongqawuse's primary ambition was to avenge the death of her parents who were murdered by British soldiers during the War of Mlanjeni, 'a war that had initially been provoked and launched by Sir Harry Smith' (Mda, 2000: 70), and commanded by

George Cathcart – the much-hated British colonial governor who finally defeated the amaXhosa. Consequently, the Xhosa nation lost their land, culture, religion and heritage. She wanted to avenge the decapitated patriarch, Xikixa – the father of Twin and Twin-Twin - whose head was cut off and put in a pot of boiling water by the British soldiers during The Great War of Mlanjeni which Xikixa led. She wanted to destroy, exterminate the white conquerors – ‘they must all be destroyed’ (Mda, 2000: 60). She wanted to drive the British off the land of the Xhosa nation that they had encroached, invaded, and annexed. She was hoping that the dead (the new people), including her own parents and Xikixa, would rise if the Xhosas destroyed everything:

Destroy everything. The new people who will arise from the dead will come with new cattle, horses, goats, sheep, dogs, fowl and any other animals that the people may want. But the new animals of the new people cannot mix with your polluted ones. So destroy them. Destroy everything. Destroy the corn in your fields and in your granaries (Mda, 2000: 60).

The Believers were regarded by the Unbelievers as ‘those who have not seen the light and who still smear themselves with red ochre’ (Mda, 2000: 61) - the uncivilized who still wore the traditional isiXhosa attire. Ironically, the Unbelievers – the ‘civilized’ ones – condescendingly use the clothes (which they despised) of the ‘uncivilized’ Believers and wear them as curiosities during cultural occasions, such as, weddings, and celebrations.

Unlike Mda’s other novels, namely, She Plays with the Darkness (1995), based on Mda’s own life, in the character of Radisane, during his years as an articled clerk, and Ways of Dying (1995), a transitional novel that deals with the period before the elections of 1994, The Heart of Redness (2000) is a historical novel based on a fifteen-year-old girl called Nongqawuse who, in the Eastern Cape village of Qolorha, split the amaXhosa people into Believers (followers of Nongqawuse) and Unbelievers (their opponents) one hundred-and-fifty years ago. It was the same with many Xhosa families who were being split apart. The Believers put the blame and onus for the distressing failure of Nongqawuse’s visions on the Unbelievers’ unbelief. Nongqawuse prophesied that the dead would arise if the Xhosa nation destroyed all their cattle and crops. The Believers on the one hand were those who believed that the dead would rise – the traditionalists who held on to their culture, religion, belief system, believed in witchcraft and the spirit of the dead. They followed the self-destructive commands of the prophetess Nongqawuse. The Unbelievers, on the other hand, were those who were ‘civilized’, who did not believe the ancestors would rise – the modernists who

were indoctrinated, converted by British 'civilization' and culture to Christianity. There were also those Unbelievers who were 'civilized' but practiced traditional culture, customs, and rituals. The Unbelievers neither killed their cattle nor destroyed their crops. They condemned Nongqawuse for 'misleading' the Xhosa nation into believing that the dead would rise and causing them to suffer and endure starvation. The prophecy divided brother from brother, wife from husband, and the consequences were gruesome, and devastating.

The feud between Believers and Unbelievers still simmers in the village of Qolorha, as the villagers take opposing sides on every issue. For instance, when plans were mooted to build a vast casino with theme parks, hotels, water-sports and a huge tourist resort in the village, they once again battled over their future, and faced the loss of their heritage. Consider the following extract:

He is passionate about development. His wrath is directed at the Believers who are bent on opposing everything that is meant to improve the lives of the people of Qolorha.

'They want us to remain in our wildness!' says the elder. 'to remain red all our lives! To stay in the darkness of redness!'

The Unbelievers are moving forward with the times. That is why they support the casino and the water-sports paradise that the developers want to build. The Unbelievers stand for civilization (Mda, 2000: 79).

The Believers fear progress and oppose the changes they foresee coming to the village's traditions, whilst the Unbelievers favour economic development, and welcome 'progress'. Mda, in the character of Camagu, wonders why the Believers are so bent on opposing development that seems to be of benefit to everyone in the Easter Cape village of Qolorha.

The British colonizers exploited the present conflict by further dividing the Xhosa people in order to 'steal' their land. They spread Western civilization, introduced schools and ensured that their language (as discussed in the previous chapter) became the medium of communication. The British colonizers used their prowess to dominate the indigenous people. They introduced their economy, religion, education, culture, 'civilization' and language, hence, English-colonial doubts about cultural identity are projected and blamed upon the English language itself. Consequently, the kings of the Xhosas lost their supremacy. This further fermented a feud between the British people and the Xhosas, and among the Xhosa nation itself, hence the Believers and Unbelievers. Then, as

now, the villagers of Qolorha were split. Mda, however, exploits the present conflict and weaves in the iniquitous history of the village of Qolorha, where the savage British colonizers (white conquerors) arrived with 'civilization'. Nongqawuse, the young Xhosa prophetess, told the people to resist British encroachment upon the land of the Xhosa nation and to resist British invasion by destroying their cattle and crops. Mda seems to be sympathetic to the Believers, who wanted to preserve their Xhosa tradition, custom, culture, belief system and natural beauty of the village. Even though the Believers feared 'progress', Mda, through the character of Camagu, maintains that:

electricity must come to the village...but not because of the gambling city ... The Government must bring electricity here because the village needs it. It is the policy of the government now to electrify even the most remote villages (Mda, 2000: 275-276).

In The Heart of Redness (2000), Mda as 'an explorer of existence,' constantly shifts between contemporary life and the mid-nineteenth century when the amaXhosa nation was split into Believers and Unbelievers. The novel takes the reader to the mid-nineteenth century in the Eastern Cape village of Qolorha, to the fascinating romance of the teenage prophetess – Nongqawuse and other girls, such as, Nonkosi (the prophetess of the Mpongo River) – who led the chiefs, men and women of the village in a patriarchal society. The novel does not deal with the misconceptions of Nongqawuse's prophecy. As a matter of fact the white conquerors and their counterparts – the Unbelievers – perceived Nongqawuse's visions and cattle-killing as 'foolish', or perhaps as success of colonization, whilst the Believers perceived it as unprecedented ways of setting them free from the bondage and chains of British 'civilization' and white conquerors' colonialism. Indeed, there exists many views of Nongqawuse's prophecy and its devastating consequences. In spite of these perceptions, the novel focuses on the dilemma of black people in South Africa of where to position themselves between traditional culture, beliefs and contemporary desires, ambitions, and looks at the two overlapping stories of the prophecies of Nongqawuse in the mid-nineteenth century and the consequences, the effects of that today, and how it impacts on the lives of black South Africans. It weaves this fascinating history, depicts faith of the people, and manoeuvres between the contemporary characters' worlds and their nineteenth-century ancestors.

The ripple effects, the impact of Nongqawuse's prophecy on the Xhosa people themselves is difficult to express in words as, according to Peires (1989: 321) their national, cultural and economic integrity, that was long penetrated and undermined by colonial pressure, finally

collapsed. The Xhosa nation, reluctantly, accepted that the catastrophe of Nongqawuse was irreversible, and they took up the continuing struggle for liberation. As the novel is based on history, Mda had to travel to the Eastern Cape village of Qolorha to do a lot of research about the life of the people, conditions under which they live, the ripple effects of Nongqawuse, the young prophetess who brought the message from the ancestors to the Xhosa nation that:

‘the Strangers said I must tell the nation that all cattle now living must be slaughtered. They have been reared by contaminated hands because there are people who deal in witchcraft. The fields must not be cultivated, but great new grain pits must be dug, new houses must be built, and great strong cattle kraals must be erected. Cut out new milk sacks and weave many doors from buka roots. The Strangers say that the whole community of the dead will arise. When the time is ripe they will arise from the dead, and new cattle will fill the kraals. The people must leave their witchcraft, for soon they will be examined by diviners (Mda, 2000: 60).

Nongqawuse’s prophecy caused the division among the Xhosa nation enabling the British government, under Sir Harry Smith, to bring independent ‘native’ tribes under British protection and white guardianship in order to ‘civilize and detribalize them’ (Muller, 1969: 168). Similarly, Sir George Grey aimed at detribalizing, educating and befriending them (1969: 169). Consequently, according to Moleah (1993: 65), the society that was well arranged with ‘specified duties and obligations sanctioned by the whole society,’ lost its unity, culture, religion, belief system, heritage, identity and land. But, Peires (1989: 321) believes that the amount of land effectively at the Xhosa nation’s disposal was greatly curtailed by Grey’s policy of concentrating them into villages. Sir George Grey manipulated the feuding Xhosa people – Believers and Unbelievers – by spreading British ‘civilization’ (1989: 53) to aggravate the already volatile situation to further divide the Xhosa nation. Grey applied the divide and rule system in order to achieve his objectives.

Perhaps, most importantly, the division among the village of Qolorha’s community shapes the story to its own end. As Mda is the ultimate writer of the novel, it would seem that he is providing a narrative, largely based on historical fact (past and present), that he has managed to shape and modify in order to convey his own thematic concerns. This is visible, particularly in the dialogue of the Governor of the Cape Colony, Sir George Grey, as cited by Mda in The Heart of Redness (2000), word for word from his diaries. It would appear that the division among the once close-knit

village of Qolorha community, as a result of British invasion, and encroachment into the land of the Xhosa nation and Nongqawuse's cattle-killing saga, demonstrates that unity can occur only in relatively small groups of people (Believers and Unbelievers), and even in these groups a sense of oneness is breaking down. It is worth noting that the division between believers and unbelievers, argues Peires, was not therefore a simple reaction to the crisis of the prophecies, but a reflection of the 'deeper communal tensions generated by the breakup of Xhosa society under colonial pressure' (1989: 316). Consider that, in spite of these divisions and petty quarrels between Believers and Unbelievers, the (neutral) villagers:

want to see development happening. They want clean water. They want health delivery services. They see Bhonco and Zim and their small bands of followers as clowns who are holding desperately to the quarrels of the past. But the whole thing frustrates developments (Mda, 2000: 133).

The situation was exacerbated after the prophets set the date of resurrection - the full moon of June 1856. The Believers waited in anticipation, but the day came and went like any other day. Miracles and wonders did not occur at the Gxarha nor anywhere else in the land of the amaGcaleka and throughout kwa-Xhosa. Consequently, some Believers began to unbelieve and kings were infuriated as the ancestors had failed to arise. They did not venture out of the mouths of the rivers. This caused further divisions among both the Believers and Unbelievers as people defected from one camp to another. Some villagers were hoping that 'perhaps now the madness will come to an end in the land and families will come together' (Mda, 2000: 268) again after all the pain inflicted on them by the scourge of belief.

Accordingly, Mda raises a remarkable point and a significant argument in the following assertion:

'What I am saying is that it is wrong to dismiss those who believed in Nongqawuse as foolish', says Camagu. 'Her prophecies arose out of the spiritual and material anguish of the amaXhosa nation' (2000: 283).

It cannot be overemphasized that the colonizer considered 'itself superior to earlier societies or 'more primitive' contemporary ones' (Moleah, 1993: 25). The colonizer dispossessed the Xhosas of their land, humanity, religion and culture. There is no doubt that the amaXhosa people have been harmed by the injustices and inhumanities of colonization. Consequently, African people – united

by their common experience of colonialism, oppression, exploitation, dehumanization – were able to organize and mobilize themselves to resist (rightly or wrongly) the British atrocity, popular racism, oppression and exploitation. Consider that for the reader of the story a considerable problem may arise because, as the narrator knows the story (s)he can easily alternate between the present and the past without any loss of continuity. Although there are complex time shifts in the book Mda, however, places events in a direct historical context, subtly supplies indirect clues and this helps to understand their significance in the story. It is important to consider that Mda's village life was harsh as he clearly points out in the opening chapter that the villagers spent:

most of their time moaning about past injustices and bleeding for the world that would have been had the folly of belief not seized the nation a century and a half ago and spun it around until it was in a woozy stupor that is felt to this day. They also mourn the suffering of the Middle Generations (Mda, 2000:1).

The extract quoted above endorses the claim that there was immense tension among the Xhosa nation resulting from colonization, Nongqawuse's cattle-killing prophecy, strong belief system, and culture. The extract demonstrates that Mda, as a writer, has moved from the dominating theme of colonialism and apartheid into closer examination of humanity, African religion and culture in a free society. Importantly, African religion, according to Moleah (1993: 66), is firmly rooted in the African social structure and as such it is not individual but communal. Moleah emphasizes that to be human is to belong to the whole community, and to do so involves participating in the beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals of that community. It is in this regard that the community of Qolorha village participated in the slaughtering of their cattle and the destruction of the crops hoping that the dead would rise to emancipate them. They suffered immensely, due to their belief and commitment. The Xhosa nation, according to Oliver & Atmore (1978:154), also suffered a great blow through the loss of sovereignty, as the colonial government exploited the conflict among the villagers to steal their land, and 'progressively established the effectiveness of their overrule.' The Nongqawuse cattle-killing event had broken the economic independence of the Xhosa, hunger and poverty drove them in large numbers into the colony to earn a livelihood as labourers (Jordan, 1973: 77). They also lost their political and military power, and encouraged their sons to go and work in the industrial centers.

The textual tensions between Believers and Unbelievers, the colonizers and the amaXhosa (the colonized) 'reflect a South Africa experiencing the pain and joys of new order' (Naidoo, 1998: 99).

Accordingly, the novel displays a very strong feature of Mda's concern with issues that affect black people who politically, are socially and economically deprived and disadvantaged, and issues of transformation that affect the country. Note that:

Twin-Twin's weals opened up and became wounds. After many months the wounds healed and became scars. But occasionally they itched and reminded him of his flagellation. At the time he did not know that his progeny were destined to carry the burden of the scars (Mda 2000: 17).

In this regard characters are forced to engage with history owing to the fact that the story and events in the story occurred within a particular, distinguishable historical context, and the suffering, the 'fate of some of those characters was tied in with the political situation' (Naidoo, 1997: 258) in the Cape in the past and in the present. These two periods (past and present) merge and the characters move swiftly in time and space from one period to the next (1997: 260). This situation enables the characters of the present time, like Camagu, to engage, liaise, and interact with characters of the mid-nineteenth century, such as, Bhonco, John Dalton, Qukezwa, Zim, NomaRussia, Xoliswa Ximiya, and villagers. Mda comments:

But Camagu, for the first time after many years, is a very fulfilled man. Although he has not said it in so many words, he regards Qolorha as his home now, and it is reasonable for Dalton to suspect he will not be thinking of going to America or even back to Johannesburg in the near future. He often says this is the most beautiful place in the world (2000: 159).

Protagonist Camagu, a Westernized African, the returned exile (like Zakes Mda), originally comes to the rural village of Qolorha looking for a woman (NomaRussia) whose memory haunts him but ends up being associated with the cold, beautiful Xoliswa Ximiya, daughter of Bhonco (the chief Unbeliever), and stays on. He secretly lusts for Qukezwa, the squat but sexy daughter of Zim (the chief Believer: Bhonco's major rival), and eventually becomes embroiled in a village dispute that has its roots in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Urbane Camagu's search for love and connection takes the reader (whom Mda does not racialise) up close to the black experience, past and present in South Africa and enables the reader to, by strength of imagination, realize a strange, messianic interlude in which the amaXhosa people heeded and pursued the self-destructive commands of the young, teenage prophetess Nongqawuse and were split between her followers (Believers) and their opponents



(Unbelievers). Camagu noticed the rigid adversariality inherent in the ongoing feud and conflict between Believers and Unbelievers when a 'black empowerment' company wants to develop a tourist heaven with casinos and theme parks. Accordingly, the one-and-a-half century old feud between those who welcome 'progress' and those who fear it plays itself out when plans are mooted to build a vast casino and tourist resort in the village of Qolorha-by-Sea. Zim, the chief Believer, and his group oppose the changes and the plans to establish a casino and tourist resort in the village while his rival Bhonco, the chief Unbeliever, and his group want economic development.

Disillusioned by the problems of South Africa's new democracy, Camagu eventually becomes embroiled in the village politics which is magnificently communicated to the reader through the deployment of humour and irony. He is drawn into the villagers' heritage and their future, and also drawn into a grotesque love triangle. The novel's humour and irony derive from Camagu's conviction that he can escape the binarism of tradition versus modernity, from the black South African's dilemma of where to position themselves between traditional beliefs and post-liberation ambitions, and from the heartbeats of all black people in the country.

Camagu noticed the failed prophecy, that is, once the amaXhosa nation killed their cattle and burnt their crops the spirits of their ancestors would rise and drive the occupying English into the ocean, split the amaXhosa nation into Believers and Unbelievers. Mda states:

In order to stay clean he eschewed the company of other human beings, and spent his time immersed to the neck in a pool on the Keiskamma River. There he lived on the eggs of ants and on water-grass (2000: 14).

The implications of this statement underline the ways in which, in both content and form, the villagers regarded water. Invariably water, especially the river or sea, has a significant meaning and value to the amaXhosa nation. Interestingly, it was the customs of the Thembu people in the Eastern Cape to place their dead in the river. The bodies were cast into the river with the words 'mthathe Bawo' (take them, Father) since they believed that the dead were taken to 'the Otherworld where the ancestors lived' (Mda, 2000: 86). It is for this reason, among others, that the Believers, Nongqawuse and her followers, went to the river and awaited the rise of the dead and to see for themselves 'the wonders that everyone was talking about' (2002: 87) in the village. They were looking forward to the good news that the new cattle would come with the new people from the river, the Otherworld, that the spirits would rise from the dead and drive all the white people (the

oppressors) into the sea. It is worth considering that throughout the novel water is associated with the spirit, Nongqawuse's cattle-killing and related accompanying events. Nongqawuse and her followers were keen 'to see the world as it was before the cursed white conquerors' (2002: 87) had been cast by the waves onto the land of the amaXhosa people.

It comes as no surprise, then, that the amaXhosa's great prophet:

Nxele used to talk of the great day that was coming, when the dead would arise and witches would be cast into damnation in the belly of the earth. But his career was stopped short by the British, who locked him up on Robben Island. Before he surrendered he promised that he would come back again. Alas, he drowned trying to escape from the island (Mda, 2000: 15).

Ironically, the Unbelievers, because they favoured 'progress', could be perceived as a group of Xhosa people that believed that the people from the Otherworld (those in prison – the Rivonia Trialists in Robben Island and political prisoners – or in exile – Oliver Tambo, Jacob Zuma, Thabo Mbeki, Chris Hani and many others who left the country in the height of apartheid) would come back again ('arise' from the 'dead') and emancipate the amaXhosa nation from oppression instilled upon them by the British conquerors and the apartheid regime.

In this regard, the following statement by Twin (the Believer) to the Unbelievers when he realized that the future of amaXhosa nation was at stake is worth noting:

You cannot stop the people from believing in their own salvation!' shouted Twin. 'A black race across the sea, newly resurrected from the dead, is surely coming to save us from the white man. Even the armies of The Man Who Named Ten Rivers cannot stand against it! You saw what happened to Cathcart!' (Mda, 2000: 95).

Mda's whole emphasis, according to the extract, seems to be that the black people were prepared to die for their liberation and nothing could stop them. The 'black race across the sea', to my mind, is the black army – the political prisoners, and the Rivonia Eight: Nelson Mandela, Govan Mbeki, Raymond Mhlaba, Walter Sisulu, Dennis Goldberg, Andrew Mlangeni, Elias Motsoaledi, Ahmed Kathrada who were never thought would be released from Robben Island – that 'resurrected from the dead' meaning released from Robben Island to change the (political) history of South Africa.

The black army from Robben Island, according to Mda, was led by Nelson Mandela, 'but was leading a black army across the seas that would come and crush the British' (Mda, 2000: 94), that is, to crush and dismantle apartheid.

The novel, however, has a series of scenes where people are told of the rising of the dead – the ancestors and the return of Christ. Like the ancestors, Christ brings days of joy, bread, peace, harmony and relief. The thinking here is the 'resurrection' of the dead heroes of the struggle who were eliminated by the apartheid regime and its agents. The perceived 'resurrection' of leaders in the novel is to be seen in the (same) light as that these heroes did not die or go into exile or languish in jails in vain. Mda considers that the 'challenge is for the living not to believe that the dead would really return, for the living to derive courage from the heroes and move ahead with the struggle' (Jones & Jones, 1996: 128) for humanity, commitment and social justice for the heroes were jailed, tortured and murdered.

It is important to note, however, that what is at issue in Mda's view is that after the dismantling of apartheid political prisoners were released, the liberation movements unbanned, and the exiles returned and ironically, then, as now, the community was split, dividing wife from husband, son from father, brother from brother, and the questions remain. However, Camagu, like many returnees, had trouble finding their place in the new system as they were not familiar 'with South Africa and its problems' (Mda, 2000: 32) but were disillusioned by the problems of the post-liberation period. They were, Mda argues, gradually losing their enthusiasm for this new democratic society as blackness was no guarantee of employment especially if the black man has been in prison or in exile for many years, or is a former member of Umkhonto Wesizwe (MK) – ANC's military wing – or a former member of Azanian Peoples Liberation Army (AZAPO) – PAC's military wing and cannot do the freedom dance of *toyi-toyi* that the youth used to dance when people were fighting for liberation. Unfortunately, they never learnt the freedom dance, which became fashionable at political rallies, as they were already in exile or in prison when it was invented. Mda, however, maintains that one of the contributing factors to unemployment and to the problems of the country was that the corporate world did not want qualified blacks. Mda is of the opinion that: 'they preferred the inexperienced ones who were only too happy to be placed in some glass affirmative-action office where they were displayed as paragons of empowerment' (2000: 33).

It is absolutely astounding that no one in the corporate world cared if the affirmative action employees ever got to grips with their duties and responsibilities or not. It was to the advantage of

the old guards who clung into power if they failed, as their failure safeguarded the old guard's position and status in the new democratic South Africa.

With regard to the problems of the new political order, Mda raises a thought-provoking question: 'How familiar are our rulers, presidents, ministers and law makers – who have either been in prison or in exile for thirty years – with South Africa and its problems?' (2000: 32). This question convinces one to believe that further divisions among the black people in the post-apartheid era were fermented. Like Believers and Unbelievers, the society was split into two groups: those who were for many years in exile and in prison, and those who remained in the country and suffered the atrocities of apartheid. Those who were either in prison or in exile form the bulk of the leadership and the leadership is imposed from above on the people who remained in the country during the struggle for liberation and who are the majority in the population. After the democratic elections black people thought that at last they were inclined to run their own affairs, but the ruling party (ANC) had different ideas. The ruling party imposed its own people who were nominated by the party heavyweights from the party's headquarters miles away from people's area. People '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' (Mda, 2000: 189).

Accordingly, Mda discovered that just about everywhere one turns today, complaints about about this new South Africa which almost eight years after our founding democratic elections in 1994, continues to fascinate the international community. The complaints, both legitimate and not-so-legitimate, obviously differ according to who raises them. The complaints among some in the black majority have to do with the pace of social and economic change in the country at local, provincial and national levels – which is generally regarded as relatively slower. Mda believes that the black majority in the new political order expect the ANC-led government to move with some speed to improve the lot of the still impoverished black masses – the majority of whom live in conditions not much better than those in which they found themselves before freedom dawned less than a decade ago. Mda has this to say to express the people's frustrations and helplessness:

Sometimes a foolish weaverbird chooses a very weak branch on which to build its nest. As the nest grows bigger it gets heavier. The branch breaks and the nest falls. Whenever that happens Zim becomes very distressed. The bird's labour of many days has been wasted (2000: 42).

Mda maintains that people are disappointed with the ANC-led government. Not many of the ruling party election promises are coming true. The above statement is merely a mirror of society. It is the reflection of what the African people feel at a given time. Black people, like birds, as a result of unemployment and poverty, build shacks and slums almost everywhere they find a vacant piece of land – river-banks, hills, valleys, mountains – where there is no running water and sanitation, no health-care service, no infrastructure. Moleah shares this view by stating that Africans in South Africa lived in settlements which differed in ‘arrangement and concentration to either constitute individual homesteads, villages or towns’ (1993: 61), for example, the Phillipi, Nelson Mandela in Eastern Cape, Langa, Joe Slovo, Kreifontein, Mooitrap in Cape Town, Alexandra in Johannesburg, George Koge in Eastern Johannesburg, Mshenguville in Pretoria, Msawawa in Randburg, Cato Manor, Cato Crest, Bhambayi, Inanda in Durban. Such settlements, according to Peires, emanate from the fact that the amount of land effectively at the ‘disposal of the African people was greatly curtailed by Grey’s policy of concentrating them into villages’ (1989: 321) where they endure the constant pain of harassment and hunger and where people live below the poverty threshold.

Accordingly, as more and more amaXhosa returned home from the spell of forced labour in the colony, these tiny allocations undoubtedly became increasingly unable to sustain and support them. Eventually, the whole of the Eastern Cape and other parts of the country, Mda believes, degenerated into a vast rural and urban slums and informal settlements. As a result, the amaXhosa who continued to ‘occupy their homesteads suddenly discovered that they were squatters on their own land’ (Mda, 2000: 296). Consider for example, the statement in Ways of Dying (1995) that demonstrates what happens when the government delays to give people houses:

The people decided that they were going to move en masse, and unilaterally take this land on the outskirts of the city, and build their shacks there. This was Toloki’s opportunity to get himself a house. He joined the settlers, and allocated himself a small plot where he constructed his shack.

That was the shack that he decorated with newspapers and magazines (Mda, 1995: 121).

Invariably, it is due to these gruesome conditions that children born in slums, shacks and squatter camps, then, and as now became unconsciously politicized. According to Mda, children from informal settlements and from the rural village of Qolorha come to school malnourished, tired and with poor concentration. These children are inclined to devote themselves to the liberation of their

people. This is a reality which they could deal with in a myriad of ways. They simply find themselves doing so and could not do otherwise because:

To be an African in South Africa means that one is politicized from the moment of one's birth, whether one acknowledges it or not. An African child is born in an African Only hospital, taken home in an African Only bus, lives in an African Only area and attends an African Only school, if he attends school at all (Mandela, 1994: 89).

The extract, according to Thompson (1990: 197), reminds one that from 1948 on, 'Whites Only' notices appeared in every conceivable place, and a range of 'laws and regulations confirmed or imposed segregation for taxis, ambulances, hearses, buses, trains, elevators, benches, lavatories, parks', residences, hospitals as well as schools and universities. Evidently, the extract quoted above provides an incisive view of Mda's concerns and clearly demonstrates that the majority of Africans in the new political order are unemployed, even those that are employed cannot afford medical aids, private hospitals and clinics, (luxurious) cars, or to live in affluent areas, and cannot afford to send their children to private or semi-private schools, but rely entirely on government institutions all because 'we are slaves in our own country. We are tenants on our own soil' (Mandela, 1994: 28), and are strangers in their land of birth.

Ironically, Mda believes that African people have no control over their own destiny in the land of their birth in the post-liberation era as they have no strength, no power, and still have no land where they could prosper and multiply as they still live in shacks, 'filling in the emptiness of their lives with alcohol' (Hodge, 1995: 191), for all black South Africans are still a conquered people. Jordan (1973: 79) on the other end argues that in as much as the National Party is to blame for informal settlements, shacks and slums, Nongqawuse also 'created the homeless squatters.'

Mda maintains that this day and age, like in the 1930s, Africans live in poverty, congestion and chaos. They are, according to Readers Digest (1995: 354), blighted by ill-health and starvation, they suffered appalling mortality rate among infants and 'lived in heavily over-populated and grossly neglected areas', and they 'have been rendered powerless by starvation' (Mda, 2000: 238) and look like people risen from the grave (2000: 294). He comments:

Their sunken eyes showed a little glimmer of life. Their cracked skin looked like land that had been thoroughly punished by drought. Their skin clung desperately to their bones. Twin and Qukezwa knew that they would be very fortunate if they themselves were not eventually counted among the roadside dead (2000: 294).

Mda believes that even though 'the masses were hungry, but they lived on faith' (2000: 241). He has been watching with interest since 1994 how South Africa tackled the problems of housing, services and redistribution of land. Ironically, when the ANC came into government in 1994, one of their main objectives was to improve access to health services for all the people – build health facilities that were closer and relevant to the people. They also had to upgrade the many facilities that had suffered years of neglect under the apartheid government. The ANC-led government in 1994 promised to build one million houses a year through the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) which failed. Similarly, as history repeats itself, in Johannesburg during the Second World-War, the construction of houses for Africans had grounded almost to a halt, with only 750 units being built in 1941 and 1942 (Readers Digest, 1995: 354). The novel, however, displays that people today still live in slums and shacks and suffer from various diseases and blazes.

The living conditions in the slums are appalling and the spread of disease in these poverty-stricken areas is attributable to inadequacy of healthcare facilities, poverty, poor nutrition and overcrowded living conditions. Ironically, the situation has been complicated by the spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic whose treatment by the ANC-led government is surrounded by confusion and controversy. According to Peires, the mining industry had contributed directly to the spread of diseases in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape in particular. Unquestioningly, labour in the South African gold and diamond mines is 'arduous, unhealthy, and dangerous. The heat is intense' (Thompson, 1990: 168).

The British conquerors and Afrikaners created appalling living conditions in the mines in Johannesburg and Kimberly (hostels, compounds, barracks) that encouraged the spread of infections. Consequently, the miners who became ill were repatriated to their rural (Qolorha) homes where there is poor health care, lack of post-employment health service, poverty and famine, lack of running water and sanitation, and dusty roads. Therefore, repatriation of those who became (terminally) ill (pneumoconiosis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, silicosis, asbestosis, tuberculosis) contributed to rural impoverishment and already suffering Qolorha-by--Sea villagers of the Eastern Cape. The Heart of Redness (2000) shows that there are still areas in the country that

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have no occupational health facilities, that South Africa had never an equitable health care system and was historically racially discriminatory, and that there is a dire need for an accessible, equitable and affordable health care system in rural areas in particular. Mda believes that it defies logic for the government to concentrate its resources in well resourced (urban) areas whereas these resources could be better used in less resourced (rural) areas. The novel attributes the lack of delivery to the direct result of corrupt politicians failing to pass on resources to the people. Mda (in Naidoo, 1998: 88) points out in his preface *When People Play People* (1993a) that he has noted wide discrepancies in the distribution of wealth between urban and rural areas and 'between the center and the periphery in both urban and rural areas' (1993a: ix). He is of the opinion that restructuring and redeployment of these resources is irreversible. Mda is of the opinion that poverty alleviation programmes will need to be vigorously rolled out and benefit the most deserving of rural communities. Self-help projects need to be encouraged, small scale business ventures supported, every South African of working age gainfully employed, people properly housed and to have equal access to all municipal services such as good, affordable health care and educational facilities. Service delivery to the previously disadvantaged people, Mda believes, should be expedited, and provision of free basic services be extended to all in need.

Hospitals in the Eastern Cape are suffering a severe staff shortage, and patients have to travel many kilometers to the nearest clinic or hospital, and wait over two hours to see the doctor as many doctors and nurses refuse to come to rural areas or abscond from rural clinics or hospitals where they are mostly working under harsh conditions and, like embattled, frustrated scientists, teachers, pharmacists, social workers, speech therapists, paramedics, psychiatrists, emigrate to England, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, America, Australia, New Zealand. For instance, Camagu who was hoping that maybe things would come right and in a year or two, doors would open (Mda, 2000: 37), was frustrated by 'the strike at the school where he was teaching', crushing all his hopes that things would come right. Instead, skills are continuing to drain prompting the decline in the country's revenue and faltering of service delivery. Like many other embattled professionals in this country, Camagu is not happy about the present situation and had 'resigned from the school. His suitcase is packed and tomorrow he is flying away' (Mda, 2000: 38).

This constitutes a brain-drain in the country as is clearly revealed in the conversation between John Dalton (the white store owner whose ancestor killed Zim and Bhonco's forefather, Xikixa, and is on the Believer's side in the villager's current controversy over whether or not to allow a casino in the village), prospective white emigrants from Australia and New Zealand, and cottage owners:



'You are the only one who will remain in this mess, John,' says a cottage owner who sees himself as a prospective emigrant down the line. 'Everyone is leaving'  
'Not everyone, says Dalton, not bothering to hide his irritation. 'The Afrikaners are not leaving' (Mda, 2000: 160).

John Dalton accuses them of failing to face the reality of the post-apartheid era and a black-dominated government. He indicts them for threatening to emigrate whenever there is a problem in this country. Notwithstanding Dalton's indictment, his friends are adamant that they cannot stay and watch while South Africa is being 'sucked into a whirlpool of crime, violence, affirmative action and corruption' (Mda, 2000: 161). Dalton is one of those who watch in frustration and despair as their embattled friends and families emigrate. He is, however, positive about South Africa, but, like many suspecting South Africans, needs reassurance from time to time. He believes that there is a lot wrong with South Africa today, but people should put things into perspective. Mda's emphasis in the above extract seems to be that in 1994 a new democratic state was created based on the values of human dignity, non-racialism, non-sexism and universal adult suffrage. These values called for a paradigm shift in the behaviours and attitudes of all South Africans (black and white) who had for centuries seen themselves as unequal. Many South Africans, especially those who had been historically advantaged had to make a choice: wither to be part of the problem or part of the solution. Some who did not want to be part of the solution packed their bags for 'greener' pastures in countries abroad. John Dalton comments:

'Your homelands are in Australia and New Zealand. That is why you emigrate in droves to those countries where you can spend a blissful life without blacks... with people of your culture and your language... just like the Orania Afrikaners. Whenever there is any problem in this country you threaten to leave. You are only here for what you can get out of this country. You think you can hold us all to ransom' (Mda 2000: 160-161).

The view expressed in this statement is that there are still those who do not see themselves as South Africans and as such whose spirit is not rooted in the values and culture of being South Africans, and do not want to succumb to change and subscribe to transformation of the post-apartheid era.

Dalton, according to the extract, believes that, in as much as people are unhappy with the pace of progress in the country, in Sub-Saharan Africa South Africa is still the best, but it is not good enough. He believes that all decent South Africans want peace, and that 'it is possible for us to live together in harmony' (Mda, 2000: 143).

Implicitly, according to Mda, the level of crime in the country - rape, murder, car-hijackings, cash-in-transit heists - has reached alarming heights. The government seems to be unsympathetic to the helpless victims and more sympathetic to perpetrators in respect of the perpetrators rights entrenched in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa: Act 108 of 1996. There seems to be contradictions in terms of the rights of victims and perpetrators. The police on the other end are unable to take any action against the perpetrators who rob, rape, murder, defenseless community members.

In Ways of Dying (1995), for instance, Toloki in one village, found the whole community in mourning as:

In a moment of mass rage, the villagers had set upon a group of ten men, beat them up, stabbed them with knives, hurled them into a shack, and set it alight. Then they had danced around the burning shack, singing and chanting about their victory over these thugs, who had been terrorizing the community for a long time. It seemed these bandits, who were roasted in a funeral pyre, had thrived on raping maidens, and robbing and murdering defenseless community members (Mda, 1995: 66).

Such action is attributed to the failure of police to apprehend prompting the community to take the law into their own hands. The villagers 'had become prosecutors, judges and executioners' (1995: 66). Mda is of the opinion that some emotions are grossly primal and defy any logic, reason and political positioning. This becomes evident when, for instance, a woman is being attacked, assaulted, hassled and raped by a man. It is when the perpetrator (attacker) starts to flee that the community's anger and frustration with crime surfaces and the pursuit of the attacker is prompted and the chase ensues. The community anger spills into violence and the street justice and/or vigilantism takes its course. The attacker gets beaten and (perhaps) killed or has his penis gruesomely removed.

Notwithstanding the frustrations of the community as a result of crime, rape and rape of babies and young children in particular, and the increase in acts of barbaric criminality, people are united in their sense of helpless frustration and united in doing something to curb crime. People are united in questioning the country's criminal justice system and in questioning those entrusted with peoples' personal security. Sadly, people who take the law into their own hands as a result of helpless frustration about the high crime rate, Mda argues, have neither the skills nor right to decide innocence or guilt, have neither the skills nor the right to mete out punishment. People seek swift retribution.

However, all around the country, people are doing something to fight against crime because the government of the day, Mda believes, seems not to be doing enough to fight against crime: community policing forums, neighbourhood watches, farm watches, vigilantes – in order to channel anger and frustration into a more lawful helpfulness.

'Disgusted, Camagu decides to go back into exile' (Lloyd, 2001: 37) when he arrived in Johannesburg and tried to find employment, but only to learn that 'he did not qualify for any important position because he was not a member of the Aristocrats of the Revolution' which was an exclusive club whose members were the ruling elites, their families and close friends. Camagu was embattled when he came to understand the full implication of life in the new democratic society and even frustrated to experience that:

the jobs he had been applying for had all gone to people whose only qualification was that they were sons and daughters of the Aristocrats of the Revolution (Mda 2000: 36).

The above extract gives Mda an opportunity to show the level of nepotism, corruption, greed and self-interest in the post-apartheid government. According to Mda, people in power pursue their self-interest above the general interests of all the people of South Africa. Mda argues that it is ironic that the ANC that has fought through all its history to uproot the evil system of colonialism and to crush the system of racial segregation and racism respectively, is in the dilemma of rife nepotism, corruption and greed. All that is visible in this new democracy, according to Jones & Jones (1996: 127) is that sham solidarity of the government's 'paying lip-service, setting up public funds that go into private pockets'. Some ANC-government officials embezzle money for their

self-aggrandisement while the starving majority are patiently waiting for miracles to happen. Camagu's thoughts as he drives to Qolorha from hospital to visit Dalton are significant:

The whole country is ruled by greed. Everyone wants to have his or her snout in the trough. Sooner or later the powers that be may decide, in the name of the people,...And of course the powers that be or their proxies – in the form of wives, sons, daughters and cousins – shall be given equity (Mda, 2000: 319).

Mda views this as a serious dilemma for the ANC because, while the people on the ground are told to tighten their belts and tolerate the fluctuating currency, heavy taxation, inflation and many other social ills, the government officials of the ANC are enjoying the privileges of power with their affirmative action and black empowerment cronies. Corruption and nepotism are rife in this country. Children of the Aristocrats of the Revolution attend private and overseas schools while the Minister of Education is floundering in the struggle to tackle the problems of the continued gutter education.

Nevertheless, the perception that all politicians are devious and always want to serve their personal interest is mendacious. Some politicians put people's interests above theirs and believe that their primary goal is to add value into other people's lives.

Mda maintains that the problems in this country are very serious, more so than what appears on the surface. The historically disadvantaged people in the country have become very pitiful. According to the annual Quality of Life Survey, only 35% of the city's population is 'satisfied' with their lives. The needs of vulnerable groups ranged from housing, health services, improved infrastructure, educational facilities and safety and security. However, Mda wonders what strategies are being used to bring stability in the country and how Pretoria will bridge the gap between the poor and the rich. Mda believes that the post-apartheid government has not managed to bridge the gap between the poor and the rich as the minority are still rich while the black majority are very poor. According to The Heart of Redness (2000), Mda has been watching with interest since 1994 how South Africa tackled the problems of racism and the redistribution of wealth. Consequently, the culture and feeling of despair, hopelessness, powerlessness and mistrust are deeply entrenched in the minds of many people in the village due to depressive social situations. In this regard the following comment by Bhonco, as quoted at the beginning of the chapter, is worth noting:

‘Ever since Nongqawuse things were never right,’ he laments. ‘Until now. They are becoming right a bit now, although not for me. They are becoming right for others. Me ... no ... I am still waiting for my knamnkam.

‘This is my seventh year waiting. My wife came here as a child.. she is many years younger than me. But she now gets nkamnkam. I am very, very old, but the government refuses to give me my pension’ (Mda, 2000: 9).

Whilst the government officials enjoy elite privileges, the elders of the country endure hardship. Many old people in this country, like Bhonco, do not get a pension and even though they have applied they have to wait for years to get their pension. The pension grant is so meager that Bhonco and his wife NoPetticoat, who is many years younger than him but gets a pension, throughout the months have to buy groceries on credit at the Daltons’ store. Mda’s following comment demonstrates the severity of the situation among the black people, especially pensioners, in the new political dispensation:

Now Dalton adds up the debt, deducts it from the amount of the cheque, and gives the balance to the pensioner. For those who have been careless during the month there will be no money. The whole pension cheque will be swallowed up by their ityala. The next month the vicious cycle of debt will continue (Mda, 2000: 49).

However, the embattled and frustrated Camagu begins to understand that the only people who benefit, who are empowered ‘are the fat-cat Aristocrats of the Revolution and their white backers’ (Lloyd, 2001: 37). Camagu realizes that the villagers have been turned into passive recipients of programmes by the Aristocrats of Revolution who came from Pretoria to uplift them without involving them in decision-making, but rather make decisions for them. Mda subtly demonstrates that even in the new political order there are instances where the government officials, like in the case of Dalton and the water project, single-handedly raise funds and construct the project without discussing the matter with the end-users. This is a strategy that was employed by the apartheid regime in order to reinforce ‘a dependency mentality’ (Mda, 2000: 208) in the minds of the oppressed, and to deny people the right to shape their destiny. Things were done for the people.

The novel demonstrates that in the new democratic system, regarding the government’s delivery and upliftment programmes, people should be ‘active participants in the conception of the project, in raising funds for it, in constructing it’ (2000: 207). The result will be that the project becomes

theirs, and will eventually look after it. Mda believes that the danger of doing things for the people instead of doing things with them results in people expecting things to be delivered to them without any efforts on their part. Mda points out that when decisions are made for the people without even trying to involve them in decision-making people will see the project as the government's. People shall refuse to pay for the services and say:

Why don't you ask those people who gave you the money to maintain these taps? How do they think they will be maintained if they do not come to maintain them? (Mda, 2000: 205).

For instance, the people of Qolorha-by-Sea refused to pay for the water. Dalton's water committee, that he had hand-picked to look after the project, closed all the communal taps. The villagers were incensed. Mda's concerns are echoed in Mbongeni Ngema's play *Asinamali* (literally meaning 'we have no money'). *Asinamali* was part of a defiance campaign that urged the community of Lamontville not to pay for municipal services provided by the then apartheid government. Similarly, Ngema's play is about the community of Lamontville who refused to pay for services claiming that they do not have the money (*asinamali*). Their refusal could be traced to the apartheid regime's tendency of imposing things to the black people. Subsequently, the culture of non-payment, rent-protests and boycott became a national problem as the frustration and anger 'was not only the problem of Lamontville township (Jones & Jones, 1996: 125) but it became the whole of South Africa's problem. Similarly, the villagers' anger was not only the problem of Qolorha. It became the problem of the whole of South Africa, hence the government's introduction of Masakhane (let us build one another) – a strategy designed by the ANC-led government to encourage the culture of payment for services and to discourage a 'dependency mentality'. The Masakhane strategy encouraged community participation and community commitment as stated by Jones & Jones (1996: 121) that 'to the African ethos of communality is added commitment'.

In the novel Mda exposes certain traditional values and beliefs which 'help to ameliorate the present' (Lloyd, 2001: 34) and he explores the contrasts between the present Westernized urban black person, the rural areas where traditional beliefs are being contested and the past where 'traditional beliefs were still dominant but challenged by the British imperialism and Nongqawuse's cattle killing episode.

Mda engages Camagu, the westernized villager from exile, and educated Xoliswa Ximiya (the daughter of Bhonco) whose scorn for tradition eventually drives her from the village, to examine the black South Africans (both rural and urban) dilemma of where to position themselves between traditional beliefs and contemporary desires, to look at the current ambivalence and the position of faithful depiction of people.

‘Xoliswa Ximiya is not capable of saying what I have just said. She talks of civilization, by which she means what she imagines to be western civilization. I am interested in the culture of the amaXhosa as they live it today, not yesterday. The amaXhosa people are not a museum piece. Like all cultures their culture is dynamic’ (Mda, 2000: 286).

Mda’s engagement of Camagu and Xoliswa Ximiya emanates from the fact that in the ‘new’ South Africa the divides between rural and urban, and traditional and modern is highly conspicuous as two groups – the urbanized or modernized and the rural or traditional (primitive) come into sharper focus in the novel. The novel expounds the fact that after the amaXhosa nation was defeated at the War of Mlanjeni (1850 – 1853) – ‘the longest, hardest and ugliest war ever fought’ (Peires, 1989: 12) – and conquered by the British they were expected to conform to the British Emperor’s order. Consequently some of the amaXhosa people became to learn extensively towards British ‘civilisation’ and imperialism while most people ‘remained orientated towards the precolonial religious tradition’ (Peires, 1989: 170) and vigorously clung to cultural, traditional practices, activities and rituals, hence the Believers and Unbelievers.

In his encounters with the villagers Camagu gradually discovers the prevalent controversy between Believers and Unbelievers, ‘headed by Zim and Bhonco, respectively’ (Lloyd, 2001: 35). He discovered that the Xhosa nation was split into two groups – the Believers who believed strongly in the power of the ancestors, killed their cattle and destroyed their crops with the hope that through the prowess of their ancestors, the dead will rise, and the Unbelievers who did not kill their cattle as they did not believe in ancestors and Nongqawuse’s prophecy. Camagu discovered that many Believers were also guilty of only partial obedience to the cattle-killing command. They slaughtered some of the cattle hoping that these would suffice, but held others back just in case (Peires, 1989: 315).

Camagu realized that:

Believers are sincere in their belief. In this whole matter of Nongqawuse I see the sincerity

of belief, John. It is the same sincerity of belief that has been seen throughout history and continues to be seen today where those who believe actually see miracles. The same sincerity of belief that causes thousands to commit mass suicide by drinking poison in Jonestown, Guyana, because the world is coming to an end ... or that leads men, women and children to die willingly in flames with their prophet, David Koresh, in Waco, Texas (Mda, 2000: 282).

The point that is outlined here is that sincerity of belief and belief system can drive people into doing things that can harm them or even have devastating consequences. Similarly, it is the same sincerity of belief that caused suffering and starvation among the villagers of Qolorha. Moleah (1993: 68) argues that according to African culture and belief system 'there is a bond and a tie between the living and those who have passed on'. As a result of British imperialism influence some amaXhosa people have since forsaken their cultural beliefs and the 'religious traditions of their forefathers that they align themselves with the British' (Lloyd, 2001: 35) and others hold on to both traditional cultural belief (ancestral worshiping) and the modern way of life. Related to this, the British conquerors had made it a point that the indigenous people of the Eastern Cape were prohibited to 'congregate together and practice their old uncivilized habits' (Mda, 2000: 156). The twentieth century saw the Afrikaners and British joining forces to deprive the indigenous people of their tradition, culture, customs in the guise of 'civilization'. Nevertheless, Camagu for instance was overjoyed when he was visited by a totem snake – majola - and rediscovered his lost Xhosa identify. The men of the amaGcaleka clan were astounded as they:

did not expect a man with such great education, a man who has lived in the lands of the white people for thirty years, to have such respect for the customs of his people. He is indeed a man worthy of their respect (Mda, 2000: 112 – 113).

The visit by the brown mole snake, the totem of his amaMpondomise clan, help Camagu to forge a link 'with the spiritual heritage of his own people' (Lloyd, 2001: 37), and reunites him with his cultural heritage and with the spirituality of his amaMpondomise people, and eventually entered the 'magical realm of his ancestor's faith'. Westernized Camagu believes strongly in the totem snake, (even though he does not align himself with the Believers) and respects his customs. Enlightened



Xoliswa Ximiya on the other hand perceives Camagu's conduct as barbaric, superstitious and old-fashioned. She considers him a barbarian because he believes in majola, in the same way that his 'uncivilized' ancestors believed in him. Xoliswa Ximiya did not expect an educated man like Camagu to cling to superstitions. The enlightened Xoliswa Ximiya expected Camagu to join the modern world; the world of British imperialism and 'civilization', the world that despises primitiveness, the world that condemns the power of the dead (ancestors); not the world of Nongqawuse whom 'everyone seems to be ashamed of' (Mda, 2000: 173). Xoliswa Ximiya regards Nongqawuse as an embarrassment that was only taken seriously by the family of Believers and their few followers that were 'proud of her heritage' (2000: 173). However, Nongqawuse's prophecy, cattle-killing, the amaXhosa people's belief system and British colonialism had devastating consequences on the lives of the amaXhosa nation in the Eastern Cape. Many of the aboriginal people were dying, 'many dead bodies were lying on the road' (Mda, 2000: 294), and those who were not dead yet looked like people risen from the grave and 'their skin clung desperately to their bones'

There is something else of great interest that Mda expounds in the novel with regard to the influence of 'civilization' upon African people, something which once again emphasizes his awareness of social and historical change. Bhonco and NoPetticoat arrive at Vulindlela Trading store to collect her pension grant. Bhonco wears his usual brown over-alls, gumboots and skull cap, and loose strands of beads hang around his neck. These are out of place since they are normally worn when one is dressed in isiXhosa attire. NoPetticoat is wearing her red-ochred isikhakha dress and her neck is weighed with beadwork of many kinds. On her head she wears a big turban decorated with beads. Bhonco and NoPetticoat's dress code reflects the black South African's dilemma of where to position themselves between traditional beliefs and way of life, and modern way of life and contemporary ambitions. Traditionally, clothing, according to De Kiewiet (1975: 113), was of both cow-hide and the pelts of wild animals, and the Xhosa women in the late eighteenth century favoured buck-skin for caps – skirts and shields were of cow-hide, and some cloaks also. De Kiewiet points out that leopard-skin cloaks were the insignia of chiefs, and 'other differences in status, as between married and unmarried women, young and mature men'.

Interestingly, Sandile, 'the king of the amaXhosa-ka-Ngqika' (Mda, 2000: 18) who was deposed by Sir Harry Smith after the war of Mlanjeni, and some other traditionalist remnants, like those of today, 'clung on grimly to what remained of the old precolonial way of life' (Peires, 1989: 321) even though they gradually became irrelevant not only to the colonial authorities, but to the

majority of amaXhosa population immersed in a world of 'civilization'. On the whole, the younger generation, like Xoliswa Ximiya, looked on these habits as old-fashioned and uninteresting. They liked to see themselves as sophisticated – and this meant that they looked down on the traditions and customs of their culture, heritage, 'along with some of the values associated with it' (Kuzwayo, 1990: 26).

With regard to black people's ambivalence, Mda makes the following comment:

To the amahomba, clothes are an art form. They talk. They say something about the wearer. But to highly civilized people like Xoliswa Ximiya, isiXhosa costume is an embarrassment. She hates to see her mother looking so beautiful, because she thinks that it is high time her parents changed 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 (Mda, 2000: 47 – 48).

It is intriguing, according to Mda, that while nations wear their own costumes with great pride, the amaXhosa people (Africans) despise their own traditional outfit. Mda argues that black people of South Africa 'were taught by missionaries that it is a sign of civilisation' (2000: 61) to despise traditional regalia (African dress) as the clothing of those who have not seen the light ('civilization'), and despise it as barbaric, 'backwardness and heathenism' (2000: 48). Nevertheless, the modern society, in view of the African Renaissance – the re-birth of Africa, proudly wear traditional clothing to identify them as Xhosa, Zulu, Ndebele, Venda, Tswana, Pedi, in traditional ceremonies, such as weddings. Even at the opening of parliament some cabinet ministers wear their traditional attire because to other people it 'represents a beautiful artistic cultural heritage' (2000: 184). Their traditional attire includes beadwork to symbolize African beauty at its best.

In the novel, Mda also uses beads to demonstrate the significance of beads to religion, culture, and tradition. Beads have a strong link with religion and culture: beads for joy; beads for sorrow; beads for prayer, contemplation and meditation; beads for decoration; beads for luck. There had been many myths over the centuries and legends surrounding beads and the powers beads are said to possess. Invariably, many religions have used beads in one way or the other. For example, ancient Greeks believed emethyst beads helped drinkers remain sober and avoid a hangover, the Chinese

believed that jade brought good luck, the Catholic's rosary is made of beads to help them focus, contemplate and meditate in prayer, and the sangomas (traditional healers) use beads to make their traditional attire and woolen hats that give them (spiritual) power and to communicate with the dead. Beads have symbolic meaning and awesome significance in the Hindu wedding ceremony. Queen Victoria of England used black jet beads when she mourned the death of her husband, Prince Albert. Beads could be used to express social, cultural and ideological values.

Ironically, Mda maintains that there are black people who, like Xoliswa Ximiya, regard this gesture as part of their history of redness, and a backward movement. They do not desire to bring back African traditions because they are civilized people who 'have no time for beads' (Mda, 2000: 184). Mda's emphasis is on peoples' divergent views on civilization and barbarism, like Camagu and Xoliswa Ximiya respectively. The Heart of Redness (2000) attempts to urge fellow black South Africans to be true to themselves and their African culture while at the same time engaging positively and enthusiastically with the best of Western culture, and to urge them not to be stereotyped. Note Camagu's response and reaction to Xoliswa Ximiya's views on civilization and barbarism:

'That child, as you call her, is not dismissive of beautiful things. Where you see darkness, witchcraft, heathens and barbarians, she sees song and dance and laughter and beauty' (Mda, 2000: 219).

Consider the statement made by Mhlakaza – the brainwashed gospel man who, as a result of the influence of British (missionary) 'civilization', changed his Xhosa name to Wilhelm Goliath – to the villagers when he was preaching about the man called Christ:

'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 heathen practices, your superstitions ... and become amaGqobhoka ... civilized ones ... those who have converted to the path that was laid for us by Christ. Throw away your red ochre blankets! Wear trousers! For our Lord Christ died for us on the cross, to save us from eternal damnation' (Mda, 2000: 53).

Ironically, Mda uses Mhlakaza (a man who had adopted English identity, changed his Xhosa name to Wilhelm Goliath and later reverted to his Xhosa identity, and 'was in the company of prophets')

(2000: 52), a man whose father was King Sarhili's councilor) to outline the fact that culture, like customs and tradition, is inherent in people and it is through it that people are able to know who they actually are. Mda believes that without attachment to one's culture, one loses one's identity (like in the case of Mhlakaza) which is the core of human existence. However, Mhlakaza's reversion to Xhosa identity should be perceived as an attempt by Mda to outline the fact that African people should play an active role in preserving their (traditional) culture and strive to rediscover their traditional heritage. It would be a shame if black people are to be judged by future generations as people who allowed their own (traditional) culture to disappear into oblivion.

Mda is often ambivalent in his treatment of the major issues of the novel. These issues include cultural hybridity, colonialism, customs and traditions, African culture, African patriarchy, African traditions and Western culture. His ambivalence regarding these issues can be positively perceived and viewed as a product of Mda's endeavour to connect his characters to the transforming country since the colonial period, through the apartheid era to the post-liberation stage. Importantly, the ambivalence of Mda's characters foregrounds his desire (as a Pan-Africanist) to identify and illuminate the positive aspects of both indigenous people's (the amaXhosa) traditional culture and western culture while being mindful of the critical insight into the oppressive features of both cultures.

The situations discussed above display the ambivalence in terms of where the African people – the colonized – can position themselves in relation to both traditional African culture, Western culture and civilization. Unlike other black writers' perception of traditional Xhosa (African) culture and its impact upon the Xhosa (African) people, Mda diverges from their writing prior to the 1980s and 1990s. He suggests that the Xhosa people in the Eastern Cape village of Qolorha-by-Sea could not reject British colonial culture and British 'civilization', even though British colonial culture and 'civilization' were used as instruments of oppression as well as land dispossession. Accordingly, the fact that British culture and 'civilization' are significant to modern, post-colonial society for trade and commerce, survival and advancement and that they play a pivotal role in the post-liberation South Africa can not be ignored.

The Heart of Redness (2000) draws on the idea of the liberation of black women (both rural and urban) from patriarchy, feminism, sexism, subordination and oppression, and how black African women in the post-apartheid period have developed to challenge patriarchy and protect their

personal interests. As far as Mda is concerned, these are essential features of the post-colonial society and the new democratic South Africa that are emerging today. Mda comments:

Indeed, the business was established, with NoGiant and Mamcirha leading a committee of very enthusiastic women. It is not as lucrative as they might wish. It is struggling on. But Camagu, for the first time after many years, is a very fulfilled man (2000: 159).

When Camagu regarded Qolorha as his permanent home, and not pondered to go back to America or even back to Johannesburg in future he made it a habit to buy fresh oysters and mussels from the women – especially NoGiant and MamCirha. Qukezwa later taught him to harvest the sea himself (Mda, 2000: 158). NoGiant and MamCirha were unhappy that Camagu was no longer purchasing their seafood on one hand, Camagu caught the oysters and mussels and sold them to hotels in East London and surrounding smaller towns on the other hand. He realized that he could not compete with the two women and decided to form a co-operative society with them, hence the black women empowerment.

Camagu was ‘disturbed that the success of the co-operative society’ (Mda, 2000: 253) was causing the women so many problems with their husbands. According to Mda, men are insecure when women make more money as that makes them more independent (2000: 254), which men do not appreciate. The emphasis here is that in the post-apartheid era men and women are formally recognized as equal. The perception that women are subordinates and should be submissive to men is outdated. Women are entitled to the freedom of expression entrenched in the Constitution.

Again, traditional culture and modern civilization are in direct contrast in the case of NoGiant and her husband. NoGiant, who according to the modern culture, has the right to tell her husband to take a bath first before he could enjoy ‘as much conjugal rights as his body was capable of taking’ (2000: 253). This condition, from a woman, infuriated her husband. The woman, according to traditional culture, is subordinate to the man and does not have a right to tell a man what to do and what not to do. Note the following comment as her husband was, out of fury and jealousy, pouring paraffin all over the rondavel, which he eventually set on fire:

Since when have conditions ever been set before he could enjoy the pleasures of marriage? Where was the bath when he paid his father’s cattle for her? What gives

her, a mere woman, the right to pass judgement on the state of his cleanliness or lack thereof? (Mda, 2000: 253).

According to the extract, Bhonco responded in that way because NoPetticoat was a woman. The mindset (among African men) is that Bhonco does not see NoPetticoat as someone he has to respect or to take seriously. As far as the modernity is concerned, NoGiant, according to Mda, is an independent woman who is liberated from patriarchy and subordination, who can challenge discrimination on the basis of sex, who can protect her interest and express her views regardless of cultural expectations and demands. Mda maintains that 'men are more at home with the kind of woman they can trample under their feet' (Mda, 2000: 111). He challenges the denigratory men and the stereotypes in terms of black women in the country. Mda also challenges the tendency in western feminism to use a reductive perception of rural women especially, and to distort, undermine and denigrate black women's status quo. Mda recognizes that women's productivity is fundamental to the development and survival of the villagers. Women form the socio-economic backbone of the 'new' South Africa.

Mda argues that British colonialism and National Party apartheid system have tended to focus on the constraints placed upon (black) women under colonial and patriarchal ideology. The construction of female identity in the novel reflects on subjects like submission, subordination, wickedness and weakness. Historically, the circumscriptions on (black) men's actions and perceptions of self are far less limiting than are those confining women. Invariably, construction of gender and gender-roles in a colonial and post-colonial, apartheid and post-apartheid, and post-liberation society have changed dramatically. It is abundantly clear that the existence of democratic government distinguished the modern (post-apartheid) state from all other former oppressive states.

Mda, most importantly, outlines the growing realization of the vital role women play in the African society and the significance of attaining greater involvement of women through education. Bhonco, for instance, educated his daughter, Xoliswa Ximiya, until she obtained a BA degree in education from Fort Hare University and a certificate in teaching English as a second language from a college in America (Mda, 2000: 3). Xoliswa Ximiya became educated while others laughed and said he 'was mad to send a girl to school'. She became a principal of Qolorha-by-Sea Secondary School and when she went to Johannesburg Xoliswa Ximiya got a deputy directorship post in the National Department of Education (Mda, 2000: 316). Mda is focusing on both the traditional (pre-colonial and colonial), and modern (post-colonial) ways of raising girls in the developing South Africa. He

believes that the education of black women and the involvement and upliftment of those in rural areas in particular regarding the country's development is significant.

Mda is inclined to hold identity politics up for scrutiny, mocking notion of racialised identity as fixed. *The Heart of Redness* (2000) outlines the fact that whiteness may blur with blackness if a white man takes on African (Xhosa) custom and culture. Mda states:

Dalton is a white man of English stock. Well, let's put it this way: his skin is white like the skins of those who caused the sufferings of the Middle Generations. But his heart is an umXhosa heart. He speaks better isiXhosa than most of the amaXhosa people in the village. 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 (2000: 7).

It is interesting to note that while the novel is decrying colonial and cultural stereotypes and traditional beliefs of Xhosa people, John Dalton (the colonizer) himself caricatures (African) Xhosa culture. Some people just follow customs without knowing what they are about. Interestingly, Dalton understood the Xhosa culture and customs very well. Zim, like other villagers, regards Dalton as 'more of an umXhosa than most of us' (Mda, 2000: 169) because he was circumcised like all of amaXhosa men and speaks Xhosa better than most of the villagers. Interestingly, according to Xhosa tradition, a man is a man if he is circumcised and married, otherwise he remains a boy (or child) regardless of his age. A Xhosa boy has to go through the tradition ceremony – a traditional rite, (some) Xhosa teenagers go through to be recognized as a man. The novel moves back and forth from this land whose inhabitants are divided between traditionalists and those yearning for modernity. Mda asserts that some villagers are bats, because they do not know whether they are a bird or a mouse (2000: 198). He suggests that they currently have no culture and live in a cultural vacuum (2000: 286). Note the contrast between traditional culture and modernization in the following extracts:

About childhood:

'Child? Is that all you see in me? Child? I am nineteen, you know? I am going to be twenty in two months' time. Many of my age-mates are married with children' (Mda, 2000: 115),

About age:

'I am twenty years old', says Qukezwa.

'You are a minor still. Even if you were thirty or fifty you would still be a minor as long as you are not married,' explains Chief Xikixa' (Mda, 2000: 245)

About marital status:

'Has he ever been married?' enquires the uncle.

'I have never been married before, my fathers and mothers.'

'Then his is an umfana (boy), whatever his age', says another old woman' (Mda, 2000: 273).

On the contrary, according to the Constitution, a 'child means a person under the age of 18 years' (Act No. 28: 3) regardless of the marital status and whether or not one is circumcised. Interestingly, not all black South African people embrace the practice of circumcision. Some view this practice as outdated, inhumane, barbaric and not in line with modern civilization. As a matter of fact, throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Western culture has pursued a very biased perception of African culture. Predictably, the country needs an interpretation and perception of 'child' or 'man' or 'adult' that is neither inclined with African identity nor European identity as Mda points out that 'he does not see why the worth of a man should be judged on whether he has a foreskin or not' (2000: 233). However, the post apartheid South Africa needs a cultural ideology that is between the traditional world and the modern world. To this effect, Landman *et al's* definition of an adult appears to be appropriate:

An adult is someone who sees his life as meaningful, can assess his own life objectively and knows himself, lives a life of human dignity, can make his own decisions and act accordingly, is responsible, can identify himself with certain norms and can live in accordance with his own philosophy of life (1990).

However, the point that comes out clearly is that what Africans need most of all, according to Mda, is an ideology that would restore to them an aggressive sense of self-worth, a new pride in their essential blackness, a deep love of their country and culture, and a confidence in the future of South Africa (Readers Digest, 1995: 363). Implicitly, Mda seems to be adhering to the call made by Robert Sobukwe (the Africanist) to the graduating class at the University College of Fort Hare in 1949 when he exhorted his African audience: 'carry with you into the world the vision of a new Africa, an Africa reborn, an Africa rejuvenated, young Africa.....' (Readers Digest, 1995: 400). The key assumption is that human societies have a core that hold them together and that if this



center is dismantled that pieces that once held it together will scatter and where they fall no one can predict the consequences.

The novel takes the reader into the lives of just a few people – the villagers – and to see the full extent of it all. It shows how one event (the cattle-killing) rages a family, the village and extends into the years aged. It outlines that colonialism results in two phenomena, namely, old and new ways of looking at the world – which brings about the ‘translation of the meaning of time into the discourse of space’ (Bhabha, 1994: 251). It outlines how people remain ‘in limbo between the world of the living and the world of the ancestors’ (Mda, 2000: 289).

## **SOCIO-POLITICAL ISSUES**

‘Don’t tell me about The Man Who Named Ten Rivers!’ said Twin-Twin. ‘Like all the others he is a thief. Just as he stole the land of the people of countries across the seas, he stole the land of the amaXhosa and gave it to the amaMfengu. He stole more of our land to settle more of his people’ (Mda, 2000: 96).

In this quotation Mda uses theft of land and displacement of African people by British government’s agent, Governor Sir George Grey, in order to make a strong anti-colonial and anti-apartheid statement that places his own country in the role of the invaded, the dispossessed, the conquered and the oppressed. Whilst Grey gave more of the land to the whites he fermented hatred amongst African people as he gave some of the land of amaXhosa people to the amaMfengu, hence black-on-black violence. Consequently, the social order collapsed, Western opportunism and consumerism seeped in, and the cattle-killing divided the Xhosa nation into Believers and Unbelievers.

Mda is of the opinion that the land question in South Africa is real and no government can ignore it. During the colonial and apartheid rule, the government moved the people down to the flatlands, gave them only small plots or barren and infertile land without any compensation, and land tenure was vested in the state, which had powers to alienate land. When the government wanted to take land away from the ‘natives’ they just took (‘stole’) the land. In other words there was no security of tenure. The extract above confirms the view that colonialism and apartheid respectively led to the formation of new states as colonial boundaries were drawn up without regard to the indigenous people, and ethnic tribes living in these particular areas. The consequences of the colonial and

apartheid processes on the Xhosa nation and the diversification of living areas for the Xhosa people also contributed to their fragmented state and the Eastern Cape village of Qolorha. For instance, in 1955 the Nationalist Party government, according to Thompson (1990: 194), removed the African inhabitants of Sophiatown where most of the families owned their own land to Meadowlands (twelve miles from the city) and 'rezoned Sophiatown for whites and renamed it Triomf' ('triumph'). Similarly, Sir George Grey, the British colonizer, took advantage of the defenceless Xhosa people and grabbed 'more and more of their land for white settlement' (Mda, 2000: 296).

The amaXhosa nation was petrified and the prevalent social chaos resulted in moral decay. Mda clearly outlines social chaos, moral decay, land deprivation, helplessness, displacement, forced labour, and forced removal in the following statement:

Pacified homesteads are in ruins. Pacified men register themselves as pacified labourers in the emerging towns. Pacified men in their emaciated thousands. Pacified women remain to tend the soil and build pacified families. When pacified men return, their homesteads have been moved elsewhere, and crammed into tiny pacified villages. Their pacified fields have become rich settler farmlands (2000: 312).

With the democratically-elected government in place, argues Mda, the land tenure system needs to be addressed before it explodes, before it is addressed in a politically opportunistic manner, as is seen in Zimbabwe recently. Mda maintains that the government of the day, like many nationalist leaders of Africa, fails to address crucial social problems timeously, resulting in unnecessary upheavals. He believes that land reform is lagging seriously behind targets. A massive increase in the pace of land reform is needed in a country that urgently needs to transform the racially skewed distribution of land. The ruling ANC should device a proactive strategy to identify areas where there is a high demand for land among poor people and redistribute land to the people who need it – the often marginalized rural communities. The current leadership of the ANC must not forget that the ANC was formed in 1912 to defend the rights of the African people which have been dramatically 'curtailed by the South Africa Act, and which were then being threatened by the Native Land Act' (Mandela, 1989: 165), and to emancipate the African people from the political situation that had arisen after many years of tyranny, exploitation, and oppression by the British Colonialism and the apartheid regime.

The statement quoted above is pertinent and clearly demonstrates that in the name of exploration and imperialism, the British plundered many new frontiers. Scores of white settlers occupied fertile lands and laid claim to regions occupied by the indigenous (Xhosa) people. This led to the indigenous people being pushed further away from their traditional lands into the harsh, barren, arid interior unsuitable for habitation. Accordingly, 80% of the population was to be squeezed into 13 percent of the land (often the least hospitable parts). To further emphasize this point, Jones & Jones have correctly asserted:

The intentions of the invaders are equally alien: they have come seeking gold to start with but their ultimate aim is to deprive the people of their land and hence of their spirit, self-respect and independence (in Jones & Jones, 1996: 51).

Consequently, the African families were being broken up and their children being taken away to be 'civilized'.

In his (Mda) analysis of the incidents in the novel and the suffering of the African children that were taken away by the British for 'civilization' when their families had broken up, Mda engages the story of Sarah 'Saartjie' Baartman (born in around 1787). Saartjie's story attests to the suffering experienced by the indigenous people in the Cape colony at the time. In order to illustrate his analysis, Mda employs the argument between Camagu and Dalton where-in one blamed the other for the prevalent suffering in the village. The altercation is attributed to the war between the Believers and Unbelievers based on their belief system. Dalton indicts Camagu and states that their 'ancestors must be ashamed of them for the way they behave' (Mda, 2000: 193). Camagu blames Dalton's ancestors (forebears) for all the suffering in Qolorha and reiterates:

'The heads of our ancestors are all over Europe .... Trophies collected in military action and in executions,' continues Camagu. 'Not only heads. In Paris the private parts of a Khoikhoi woman called Saartjie Baartman are kept in a bottle!' (Mda, 2000: 194).

Saartjie was a Khoi woman from the Eastern Cape who ended up in France in 1814, as a sideshow freak. She had abnormally large buttocks, which were her most distinguishing feature. Saartjie was lonely – far from her home and people. Life to her was a cauldron of dark sorrow. She was reportedly raped and sexually exploited by the Europeans – Dalton's ancestors – who were

fascinated by this 'big-buttred woman from darkest Africa' – Camagu's land of birth. Because Saartjie was a 'slave-girl, consent was through coercion. It was rape' (Mda, 2000: 30).

Mda's use of Saartjie's story help him to cleverly outline the rift between Believers and Unbelievers, as in the case of Zim (the Believer) and Bhonco (the Unbeliever). The Khoikhoi, according to Mda, are Zim's people and Zim 'descends from a Khoikhoi woman called Quxu' (Mda, 2000: 194). Zim was incensed by Bhonco's laughter on hearing the story of the Khoi woman – Saartjie.

It is from the vantage point of the past that the novel proceeds with the relationship between Camagu and John Dalton. This relationship constitutes one of the few attempts to portray post-apartheid South Africa and reconciliation. It is the only occasion in the story when black and white work together in the person of Camagu, son of Cesane, and John Dalton, 'a descendant of head-hunters' (Mda, 2000: 193) who decapitated Bhonco and Zim's ancestors at the height of colonialism (Lloyd, 2001: 38). Interestingly, Mda is one of the few black authors of the post-apartheid era who attempts to portray sound inter-racial relations. Mda's endeavor to move beyond black and white is commendable. His appreciation of John Dalton is striking, and subscribes to the RSA's Constitution that serves an important function as one of the invented traditions uniting the nation. That is absolutely 'what democracy is all about' (2000: 108). Mda believes that in a democratic country, citizens must learn to live in peaceful co-existence and tolerate one another because it is 'possible for us to live together in harmony' (2000: 143).

Unlike the notorious Lefa Leballo, (a black economic empowerment stooge), John Dalton is appreciated by the Qolorha villagers. Dalton believed that the whites and the Xhosa people 'need to bury their differences because there are greater things at stake' (Mda, 2000: 228). Ironically, his empathy for the Xhosa, according to Lloyd, is 'implicitly contrasted with the Aristocrats of the Revolution' (2001: 38) who disregard the people (of their own race) who endured the suffering caused by British colonialism and apartheid regime. Accordingly, Mda as well as Lloyd equate the Aristocrats of Revolution with the top (ANC) politicians, and point out that people are starving while the fat cats in ANC only get fatter. The novel reminds the reader that top politicians are hardly affected by the hardships besetting the country and the people on the ground. Dalton's empathy for the Xhosa is displayed in his tireless efforts to apply for a court order to stop Lefa Leballo's development project in Qolorha. The villagers regarded Dalton as the saviour of the village as the area earmarked for development was eventually declared 'a national heritage site'

(Mda, 2000: 311). Ironically, building of the casino and hotels signals the death of the old and the birth of the new.

However, the novel portrays Dalton as a man of courage. This reminds the reader of a man of courage (F.W. De Klerk) who, in 1989, succeeded P.W. Botha as leader of the National Party. De Klerk, soon after coming to power met jailed ANC-leader Nelson Mandela, and on 02 February 1990, De Klerk lifted the restrictions on the previously banned liberation movement and repealed all apartheid legislation (Readers Digest, 1995: 442). Like Dalton, De Klerk saved the country from anarchy. Interestingly, the relationship between Camagu (the Xhosa) and Dalton (the White) can be equated with the relationship between Mandela (the Xhosa and leader of the ANC) and De Klerk (the White and leader of the NP).

It is remarkable that the man (Dalton) who saved the village of the Xhosa people is associated with the people who, according to the novel, were cast from the sea into the land of the Xhosas. Implicitly, the sea, as it has been mentioned earlier, is, throughout the novel, associated with Nongqawuse's prophecy, the cattle-killing movement and the emancipation of the Xhosa (African) people. Nongqawuse's initial version that she saw the strangers who told her to tell the Xhosa people to kill their cattle so that the dead would rise was at a 'lagoon near the sea' (Lloyd, 2001: 38). Therefore, the challenge was for the living not to believe that the dead would really return, for the living to derive courage from the heroes and move ahead with the struggle for liberation.

Therefore, the resurrection of the leaders in The Heart of Redness (2000) is to be seen in the same light as the release of Nelson Mandela ('leader of the black army') from prison to a cheering world on 11 February 1990. Talks began on shaping a new future for South Africa, and finally arrived at a deal for a post-apartheid government.

It is interesting that February 11, 1990 cannot be equated with the disappointments in the novel. Implicitly, the disappointments can be equated with P.W. Botha's Rubicon 1 and Rubicon 2 of the 80s, which left the whole world in general and South Africa in particular astounded. Note:

Finally the date of the resurrection was set by the prophets. The full moon of June 1856. The Believers waited with anticipation. But the day came and went like any other day. No miracles and wonders were seen at the Gxarha. Nor anywhere else in

the lands of the amaGcaleka and throughout kwaXhosa. This was the First Disappointment (Mda, 2000: 148).

In this extract, like the Rubicon 1, Mda clearly points out that the people's hopes were dashed as they had, like the Believers, waited with great anticipation. Consequently, the country went ablaze after the Rubicon 1 'Disappointment' (the First Disappointment) and it became ungovernable.

Lloyd (2001: 38) emphasizes that in Nongqawuse's later version the ancestors would have led the Russian soldiers 'from over the water'. The Russian forces would then defeat the British soldiers. According to Nongqawuse's visions 'the Russians were black and were the reincarnation of amaXhosa warriors' (Mda, 2000: 203). Note Mda's further comment in this regard:

Zim knows very well that today's Russians are white people. After all, sons and daughters of the land who have spent decades in exile, some living in the houses of the very same Russians, have said as much. ... That is why they fought the English. That is why all those who benefited from the sufferings of the Middle Generations hated them. That is why they armed and trained those sons and daughters of the nation to bring to an end the sufferings of the Middle Generations (2000: 203 – 204).

Mda's emphasis in this extract is that it was the Xhosa's belief system that persuaded them to believe that the Russians were the spirits of the amaXhosa soldiers who had perished in the different wars against the British colonists. He stresses the belief that the Russians who killed Cathcart during the War of Mlanjeni were the amaXhosa forces who had been killed by the British. Mjuza, like many Believers, believed that his deceased father was coming back at the head of the Russian army to emancipate the amaXhosa people (Mda, 2000: 268). They were convinced that their ancestors would rise from the dead after they had killed their cattle. They will definitely emerge from the sea, where the Russians had emerged, because Nongqawuse has said so.

The novel also outlines and juxtaposes the role played by the Russians during the Crimean War with the role they played, in solidarity with the oppressed black people of South Africa, during the Revolution (struggle for liberation). *The Heart of Redness* (2000) endorses the contemporary belief system of black people (Believers) as they venerate the prophets of the day like they did to the prophecies of Nongqawuse, Mhlakaza, and Nombanda who caused massive destruction of the amaXhosa people. Black people in the country venerate the Russians, who took an uncompromising

stand against the state, following their tireless support during the armed-struggle and in the bitter altercations with the apartheid government. The novel reveals that since then, the amaXhosa nation 'have been great admirers of the Russians' (Mda, 2000: 70). The implications of this statement by Mda, is that in 1960, a turning point in liberation politics was reached. The liberation organizations turned from non-violent protest and civil disobedience to armed insurgency when the apartheid state enforced tougher action and then banned them altogether (Readers Digest, 1995: 368). The ANC eventually organized various sabotage attacks on strategic targets through its military wing (Umkhonto Wesizwe – MK).

It is fitting that the Russians colluded with the ANC in the 'coup against the government that colluded with the former colonial power' (Gordimer, 1987: 337). According to Readers Digest (1995: 451), guns triumphed over stones and burning barricades, signaling the commencement of a new phase of African resistance to apartheid. Mda asserts that some of those in exile lived in the houses of the very same Russians (2000: 203). The MK and APLA cadres received military training in guerilla warfare in exile, assisted by the Russians 'to bring to an end the suffering of the Middle Generations (2000: 204), and that of the black people. Armed with the Russian ubiquitous AK-47 machine-guns and automatic rifles, limpet mines and hand grenades, the cadres began slipping back into the country.

Throughout The Heart of Redness (2000) controversies and arguments manifest in the form of dialogue between characters. Mda uses controversies and arguments to reveal the legacy of black oppression, manipulation of black people by people of their own race, 'the ills of colonialism and apartheid' (Lloyd, 2001: 34) and the democratic situation where people enjoy the right to freedom of expression and human dignity. For example, Dalton causes a stir among Bhonco, Zim, Camagu and himself the day when he and Camagu visited Zim's homestead to open wedding negotiations. The uproar occurred when Dalton, unwisely, says: 'It is your forebears who were foolish for killing their cattle' (Mda, 2000: 281). The negotiators were absolutely astounded and looked at him as if he has uttered the worst of blasphemies. Zim accuses Dalton of being fickle, as he seems to have sided with the Unbelievers, hence the rift between the Believers and Unbelievers. The point that is emphasized here is that during years of oppression it was uncommon for a black person to indict or argue with a white person. Mda outlines the facts that people in the post-liberation country are at liberty to err their views, and to be assertive.

Mda goes along with Lloyd regarding the process of naming - one of the processes of appropriation elaborated by David Spurr:

The very process by which one culture subordinates another culture begins in the act of naming or leaving unnamed, of marking on an unknown territory the lines of divisions and uniformity, of boundary and continuity (in Lloyd, 2001: 35).

The implication of this statement is domination of one culture by the other. As indicated in chapter one, when one country takes over the control of another, it will introduce its culture, economy, language, and religion. Implicitly, power and control begins with the act of naming. The African names of towns and cities, villages, rivers, and even heritage sites that existed before 1840 were replaced with English and Afrikaans ones. Colonialism has a potential to persuade people to change their names to emulate the colonizer. For example, Mhlakaza, (the Christian convert) changed his name to Wilhelm Goliath. Invariably, Sir George Grey, 'the man who is great at naming' (Mda, 2000: 312) and who had been a governor in Australia and New Zealand (2000: 95), had taken the land of the Xhosa people in return for 'civilization' and strengthened British annexation of the land of the Xhosas by naming twelve rivers. Consequently, a derisive and mocking Xhosa elder had called Grey, The Man Who Named Ten Rivers. The Xhosa people also mocked Grey's pretensions of owning their land by calling him 'a friend of the amaXhosa' (2000: 96).

Ironically, Grey, a 'friend' of the amaXhosa people, planned to get rid of their superstitions, so that they would learn to appreciate the might of the British Empire, acquire new modes of behaviour, and give up their barbaric culture and heathen habits. He had built schools and hospitals for them, established health programmes, and had brought Dr Fitzgerald to the village. The governor was, of course, aware of the important part played by the Xhosa doctors, but he laid particular stress on their role and accused witches and confiscated property.

But what amazed The Man Who Named Ten Rivers was that even those amaXhosa who benefited from Fitzgerald's medicine continued to go to their own traditional doctors as well (Mda, 2000: 145).

Mda's emphasis in the extract is that the Xhosa (African) people, like in the present-day, take Western medicines without, in any way, giving up their (cultural) beliefs in the powers of the Xhosa



doctors. Mda outlines the 'greatest contest between science and superstition' (Peires, 1989: 66) and emphasizes that Western civilization ignores the positive role played by African doctors in the social, psychological, religious and medical spheres in (South) Africa. The above extract is pertinent in that Grey, according to Peires, naturally believed that the power of European medicines would concretely demonstrate the superiority of European science over Xhosa (African) superstition and belief. Peires goes along with Ahluwalia & Nurse-Bay who point out that the dependency and distortion of the colony's culture and beliefs are paralleled by a psychological dependency and distorted consciousness that makes the 'colonised the dominated subjects of another country' (1997: 29). Mda believes that millions of South Africans accept traditional healers as the mainspring of health in their communities but, for the most part, it is a role side-lined in the corridors of Western medicine.

According to Lloyd, both the Believers and Unbelievers realized that Grey's gift of 'civilization' entails the loss of their land (2001: 36), displacement and suffering. The Xhosa people were persuaded to learn to appreciate the extent of British 'civilization', grow up in a fully 'civilized' environment, and 'become entirely divorced from their own culture and its attendant habits' (Peires, 1989: 59). Grey employed 'various instruments to bring about the removal and resettlement' (Kane-Berman, 1978: 79) of the Xhosa people from the village. According to the novel, from the early 1900's during colonization, people in power in South Africa began to make laws which kept black and white South Africans apart. These laws became more important after the Nationalist government came to power in 1948. This is because that government made laws to support its apartheid policy. During the early 1990's these laws were scrapped. They are now part of history, but we can still see their effect on our settlement patterns.

The Xhosa people were forced to leave their homes as a result of the policies of the government. The policy of segregation, in the twentieth century led to many policies that resulted in people's land being taken away from them. Dispossession of land was established as policy in South Africa with the passing of the Native's Land Act in 1913. The Act served as basis for the territorial segregation of White and Black in the rural areas of the country. Black people, making up more than 67% of the population, were restricted to settle on and control less than 7.5% of South African land. Those amaXhosa who continued to occupy their homesteads, Mda points out, became 'squatters on their own land' (2000: 296) and had to work for the conquerors. They became useful servants, consumers of colonizer's goods and contributors to the revenue of whites. Thompson (1990: 165) concurs with Mda's assertion and further points out that besides dividing the country

into white-owned and African owned, certain clauses in the Native's Land Act reduced all Africans in the rural areas owned by whites into tenants and wage labourers. As labourers, they were 'contracted to work for the same employer' (Readers Digest, 1995: 170) for at least a period between three and six months. Thompson's view is supported by Biko (1978: 61) as he points out that the white man's quest for power has led him to destroy whatever obstacle on his way. In a ruthless attempt to divide the country, they have 'evolved a philosophy that stratifies the black world and gives preferential treatment to certain groups'.

## **SOCIO-ECONOMIC ISSUES**

The colonial and apartheid legacy of social and economic deprivation are a major structural source of inequality in South African society. Such legacy also undermines human dignity and the freedom to participate fully in the democratic institutions and processes. In the 1960's, no black executives existed. In the 70s, in defiance of apartheid legislation, a few trailblazers began breaking down barriers. The 80s produced greater numbers of African managers and professions (including women) while the 90s accelerated transformation with the help of corrective legislation.

The past few years after the first democratic elections have been turbulent for both the government and the black majority regarding growth and black economic empowerment. In this regard, Mda believes there are clearly no differences of opinion on the need for black economic empowerment. He argues, however, that empowerment (as indicated in the previous sub-sections) that benefits only the Aristocrats of the Revolution, the Robben Islanders, political activists, politically inclined church leaders, the politicians, the former exiles, the trade unionists, former political prisoners, former MK and APLA cadres and those in active politics, and leaves the majority of black people in the lurch is absolutely not the solution to the socio-economic problems of the country. Hitherto, the Eastern Cape, especially Transkei, is 'the greatest single reservoir of cheap labour in the country' (Mandela, 1989: 43). This is clearly seen in the following statement:

But the black empowerment boom is merely enriching the chosen few – the elite clique of black businessmen who have become overnight multimillionaires. Or trade union leaders who use the workers as stepping-stones to untold riches for themselves. And politicians who effectively use their struggle credentials for self-enrichment. They all have their snouts buried deep in the trough, lapping noisily in the name of the poor, trying to outdo one another in piggishness (Mda, 2000: 197 – 198).

Mda seems to be concerned that the current dispensation falls short on the socio-economic and development front because it has failed to empower the newly enfranchised in an economic sense. According to the above extract, the government of the day has squandered time and resources enriching the chosen few (the Aristocrats of the Revolution) and protecting the interests of the ruling party's cronies in the name of black economic empowerment at the expense of the black majority who voted them into power. Furthermore, according to Mda, the black empowerment groups in Gauteng and other big cities in the country empower the chosen few, (2000: 274). He points out that it is only the party and trade union bosses who are directors that benefit. The ruling party's cronies live in mansions in Cape Town and Johannesburg and have nothing to do with the rural communities, who are tired of 'cleaning the bottoms of the children of white people' (Mda, 2000: 186), of working as cleaners, babysitters, waitresses, and chef's assistants (2000: 164), of working in the gold mines of Johannesburg and Free State (2000: 46), of floor-scrubbing (2000: 319) and nepotism as sons and daughters, wives, and cousins of those in power are given equity.

On the contrary, there are many former exiles, such as the protagonist Camagu, MK and APLA cadres who are not able to find employment. Camagu, like the author, is well-educated, with a doctorate degree in communication, can neither find employment in the corporate world (Lloyd, 2001: 37), because they do not want qualified blacks, nor in the black government departments because he is not a 'freedom fighter'. Unfortunately, many of his former schoolmates are not 'high up in the ruling party' (Mda, 2000: 260), to lobby for him. Evidently, the majority of black South Africans are not able to enjoy the economic fruit of liberation and democracy.

Embattled Camagu finds himself settled in the village of Qolorha-by-Sea where a 'black empowerment firm arrives to plan the developments' (Lloyd, 2001: 37). According to Lloyd, Mda is given an opportunity for sly satire as the clearly ignorant Lefa Leballo (the black executive) is ill-advised by the highly-paid white consultants on the matter of the time-share development. Camagu argues that the development is unlikely to provide the required employment to the villagers as they are uneducated and lack expertise on how to manage and control the project. He also argues that the villagers will lose their land and be 'reduced to tourists curiosities' (Lloyd, 2001: 37). Instead, Camagu proposes that, in order to empower the historically disadvantaged villagers, cottage industries be developed and be limited to the selling of seafood delicacies, hence the establishment of the co-operative society with NoGiant and MamCirha (Mda, 2000: 159). Camagu, for the first time after many years of frustration, 'is a very fulfilled man' (p159). Unlike the fat Aristocrats of the Revolution, Dalton supported Camagu's venture to empower the villagers, and to generate

profits in order to install the electricity and running water in the village and apparently create more employment opportunities (Lloyd, 2001: 38).

Note Lefa Leballo's comment concerning the plans to build the casino and time-share development in the village:

The government has already approved this project. I belong to the ruling party. Many important people in the ruling party are directors of this company. The chairman himself was a cabinet minister until he was deployed to the corporate world. We'll see to it that you don't foil our efforts (Mda, 2000: 232).

The comment illuminates the level of corruption, nepotism and dictatorship in the post-apartheid period. Mda, cleverly, suggests that the post-apartheid South Africa is fraught with stories of struggle heroes turned 'capitalist blood-suckers', comrade capitalists, or 'real' black empowerment champions. The extract highlights that the issue of politicians leaving parliament for the private sector has been a feature of many countries that fought for liberation. Undoubtedly, this is a natural progression as it is not logical for all the politicians to remain in parliament. The names of some icons of liberation that endured the wrath of the apartheid system, according to the above statement, are fast fading from the political scene as they join big business. However, Mda does not openly criticize this venture, but subtly leaves questions to the reader: Is it the lure of big money from the corporate world, which they do not get from parliament or politics, that they are not able to resist? Or is it simply a noble effort to rescue black economic empowerment from its rocky waters and, for once, attempt to benefit the black majority?

Although Mda has cleverly hidden the names of the Aristocrats of the Revolution in the novel, these names become clear to the reader. Sexwale (former ANC activist who served thirteen years on Roben Island, is now a chairman of a number of companies: Mvelaphanda), Phosa (regional commander of the ANC's military wing – MK, is a director of Afrinet), Ramaphosa (a trade unionist, and now the chairman of Jonnic and South African Breweries), Jay Naidoo (former COSATU Secretary-General, who became the Minister of Posts, Telecommunication and Broadcasting quit parliament in 1999 and is now the chairman of the Development Bank of Southern Africa), Max Sisulu (the son of ANC stalwart – Walter Sisulu – left parliament to become the deputy CEO of Denel), Maharaj (a strategist in the ANC's military wing, is now a non-executive director of First National Bank), and Macozoma (executive member of the ANC's

national executive committee, is the CEO of New Investment Limited – NAIL) are some of the Aristocrats of the Revolution that are mentioned in the novel. Indeed, the post-liberation South Africa, ‘empowers only the chosen few’ (Mda, 2000: 274).

According to Darby, one of the facets expounded by The Heart of Redness (2000) is that although ‘black people had made great strides toward freedom, they still had a distance to go’ (1990: 87) to liberate themselves economically, regardless of nepotism, corruption and dictatorship practiced by the ruling party as expounded in the above quotation. Implicitly, there are many leaders in the country who are hoping that life might offer them the opportunity to serve the people and make their ‘humble contribution to their freedom’ (Mandela, 1989: 163). Such leaders have a dream that one day the black nation ‘will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed’, (King in Darby 1990: 83), and in the name of the struggle and freedom shall, according to The Freedom Charter, share in the country’s wealth.

## **RELIGIOUS ISSUES**

We need to look rather more closely at the central beliefs, belief systems, religious beliefs and practices of the African people, then and now, if we are to understand how and why the Xhosa nation in general and black people in particular came to naively, weirdly accept and believe the colonizer’s religion (Christianity) in the nineteenth century.

The Heart of Redness (2000) opens in Eastern Cape village of Qolorha where the Westernized protagonist Camagu finds himself embroiled in the controversy between Nongqawuse’s followers (the Believers) and their opponents (the Unbelievers). The controversy follows after the defeat of the amaXhosa nation by the British forces during, according to Mda, The War of Mlanjeni, which, historically, is known as The Seventh Frontier War. After the war, as a result of frustration, Nongqawuse, to save the land of the amaXhosa, prophesied that the dead would rise if the people killed their cattle and ‘planted no grain’ (Lloyd, 2001: 35). She predicted that at a certain date the people’s food will be replaced and healthy cattle will arise from the sea, together with the amaXhosa nation’s ancestors. This prophecy split the nation, as the Unbelievers refused to comply with Nongqawuse’s commands and some, Lloyd believes, had so forsaken their religious beliefs and tradition of their forebears that they ‘align themselves with the British’ (2001: 35). Consequently, the entire nation’s fabric was completely ruined, and the split and animosity between Believers and Unbelievers is conspicuous to this day.

Mda comments:

Nxito's was a house divided. It was the same with many families. Even a great Believer like Chief Maqoma, the revered general of the War of Mlanjeni, was opposed by his sons, Ned and Kona, who were not only staunch Unbelievers, but Christians as well. Ned even worked at the Native Hospital. Then there was the rift between Twin and Twin-Twin. And there was Mjuza, whose father was the great Prophet Nxele. Yet Mjuza was an Unbeliever. Families were being split apart (2000: 144).

Mda's comment brings forth the issues of faith that the amaXhosa nation was grappling with after the cattle-killing event. The comment demonstrates that many of the villagers seemed to be 'sinking deeper into collaboration with the conquerors of the people' (Mda, 2000: 153) as many of the amaXhosa people could not resist conversion, and were becoming Christians. Interestingly, when a specific date was set for the dead to arise bringing with them new cattle and crops, the nation was disappointed when nothing happened. The people were prompted to believe that their god was weak. Mda points out that many people turned to the god of the white man, 'for they have seen that he is more powerful than our god' (2000: 299). According to Thompson (1990: 156), 'Christian missionaries were having a profound impact on African populations' and by 1951, according to the census of that year, 59 per cent of the African people had converted to Christianity. Remarkably, the Christian faith acquired a political favour in 1948 when the National Party came to power. It actually lost much of the spirit of sacrificial and brotherly love so essential to the teaching of Jesus Christ. The apartheid regime was more oriented towards one religion (Christianity) at the expense of other religions. Similarly, as representatives of a society that at all times claimed to be the bearers of Christianity, 'the colonial army showed a remarkable unchristian talent for devising new ways of brutality' (Readers Digest, 1995: 151) to the indigenous people.

Evidently, the belief system of the Xhosas was in tatters as the Christian 'civilization' swept away their tradition and superstition, and consequently their antique laws and customs mouldered into oblivion (Mda 2000: 237). But ancestral spirituality did survive in some parts of the village communities and elements of it remained in the beliefs and practices of the people even after they had converted to Christianity.

According to the novel there were some Unbelievers who had converted to Christianity but still clung to their customs and traditions. Such demonstrates that the church has failed over the centuries to learn spiritual truths from the people it was so determined to convert. The missionaries failed dismally to learn from the beliefs of the African people. From the religious perspective they failed (in their determination to dominate) to realize that God is at work in every religion, culture, custom and tradition. Ironically, some Christian converts slaughter goats, sheep, chicken as a 'sacrifice to their own ancestors' (Wilson & Thompson, 1969: 127) and people gather to partake of the sacrificial meat and beer. Such sacrifices, according to Wilson & Thompson, provide the most usual and most acceptable sacrifice, among black people, at puberty and at marriage, in sickness and at death. Peires shares the same view as he points out that animals were slaughtered in a ritual manner as the 'correct way to communicate with the ancestors, to please them' (1989: 312). Peires' view is based on the central beliefs and existing amaXhosa's religious concepts, namely that 'the dead do not really die, but live on' (1989: 313). Incredibly, most African people, while leaning extensively towards Christian religion, 'remained orientated towards the pre-colonial religious tradition' (1989: 170) and are, vigorously, holding on to cultural and traditional practices, and rituals.

The patriarch lived his life with dignity, and brought up his children to fear and respect Qamata, or Mvelinqangi, the great god of all men and women, and to pay homage to those who are in the ground – the ancestors (Mda, 2000: 13).

The statement confirms that before the black people's contact with Christianity, even before colonialism, the African religion (ancestral worshipping) was pagan and involved worshipping gods – Qamata, Mvelinqangi, Nomkhubulwane and many others. Undoubtedly, the Xhosa people were (and still are) very conscious, according to their belief system, that there are spiritual powers out there, powers that are benevolent and flamboyant, powers that are benign and malignant. Their spiritual awareness coloured and embroiled every aspect of their day-to-day lives. The villagers, according to Mda, were absolutely aware of the spiritual aspect of nature and the environment. Mda believes that Christianity was at the outset a far more spiritual religion than it is today.

Mda asserts that 'real people in today's South Africa do not lead the life that is seen in the cultural village' (2000: 285). The implication of Mda's assertion is that even though the novel does not give any explanations and answers to many concerns such as: Who were the spirits who appeared to Nongqawuse? Who came with the idea of resurrection? Which dead exactly were going to rise?

(Peires, 1989: 123), it does attempt to revive African spirituality, faith and beliefs, and African religion. For instance, the Zionist church and Shembe have moulded many of their old spiritual beliefs into Christianity. Isaiah Shembe, like Nongqawuse, Mhlakaza, Nombanda, was a prophet who formalized the establishment of the Nazaren Church at Nhlankakazi (Ndwedwe area in KwaZulu-Natal) in 1918. Shembe taught people to use their traditional cultures as a point of departure for understanding the Bible and striving for morality. The result of Shembe's fusion of beliefs can be described as 'African Christianity' – an exciting and thrilling faith that is flexible in its approach to spirituality of the African people.

Peires, however, believes that if the indigenous people had made their choices in accordance with their existing pre-dispositions, it is abundantly obvious that 'neither Christianity nor pre-colonial religion *per se* was a determining factor' (1989: 171). The view of Peires' is further elaborated by Thompson, who expounds that some African people (Christians), adopted a different response. He maintains that they broke away from white churches and formed religious communities where African leaders (like Isaiah Shembe) acted independently, and without 'white intervention and where Christianity was adapted to African culture' (1990: 157), and where they would not be the 'followers of the god of the white man' (Mda, 2000: 126) but continued to be faithful to the god of their forefathers.

It is interesting to note that Twin, like many Believers, was sad that no one had ever died for the amaXhosa people in the same way that his ancestor, Heitsi Eibib, had died for the Khoikhoi (Mda 2000: 25). On the contrary, the Unbelievers (Christians) believed that no one had died for the people except, the son of God, Jesus Christ. Christians also believe that, contrary to the Believers, it is Jesus Christ who had resurrected from death as he had died for people's sins.

Here is another fascinating contrast from the conversation between Twin and Qukezwa as she was standing in front of a pile of stones:

Tsiqwa is the one who tells his stories in heaven. He created the Khoikhoi and all the world. Even the rocks that lie under water on the riverbed. And all the springs with their snakes that live in them (Mda, 2000: 23).



With regard to the creation of the universe, the assertion quoted above outlines a different view from the one expressed by the Biblical doctrine in Genesis Chapter 1 of the Holy Bible – New International Version:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the spirit of God was hovering over the waters (verse 1 – 2).

The Bible further states:

And God said, ‘Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water.’ So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it. And it was so (verse 6 – 7).

The novel reveals another sharp religious contrast as expounded in Qukezwa’s prayer:

‘Father of fathers, oh Tsiqwa,! You are our father. Let the clouds burst and the streams flow. Please give life to our flocks, and to us. I am weak, oh Tsiqwa, from thirst and hunger! Give me fields of fruit, that your children may be fed. For you are the father of fathers. Oh, Tsiqwa! Let us sing your praises. In return give us your blessings. Father of fathers! You are our Lord, oh, Tsiqwa!’ (Mda, 2000: 23).

Contrary to Qukezwa’s traditional prayer the Bible, in Mathew Chapter 6, teaches that:

‘This is how you should pray: ‘our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one’ (verses 9 – 13).

The above statements demonstrate that Africans, according to Mbiti, are religious, and ‘each people has its own religious system with a set of beliefs and practices’ (in Moleah, 1993: 66). Mbiti believes, however, that African religion is about ordering man’s social relations, as well as relations with nature and relations with God and the departed ancestors. African religion is ‘firmly grounded in African life’ (1993: 67). Accordingly, the missionaries put forth the claim that the God of

Christianity, argues Mbiti, is universal, and perennial, and is the God of all people (1993: 68). Moleah agrees with Mbiti and asserts that the colonizer considered itself 'superior to earlier societies or 'more primitive' contemporary ones' (Moleah, 1993: 25). Invariably, Peires warns that it would be a grave mistake to perceive a sharp dichotomy between the pre-colonial (African) tradition and culture, and Christian religion (1989: 170). Peires maintains that some (African) people were 'credulous of diviners and prophecies, while others were frankly sceptical'.

Moleah (1993: 67), however, points out that all Africans share in the belief of a 'Supreme Being who is Creator of all that exists' in the universe. Moleah further argues that the act of creation is perceived in various myths of creation. The creator, according to Moleah, is variously referred: in Xhosa He is Thixo; Zulu – Nkulunkulu; Venda – Raluvhimba; and Sotho – Modimo. Nicol (in Moleah, 1993: 402) concurs and points out that we can be good 'Christians and at the same time watch over the survival of our race with a holy gravity', and still venerate our ancestors.

In spite of all the controversy surrounding the belief system of the Xhosa nation, Mjuza insists that 'happiness can only be achieved after death, when we join the Lord and sit at his right-hand side' (Mda, 2000: 210). According to this statement a sharp conclusion can be drawn to the fact that Biblical doctrine and the Xhosa belief system are fraught with ambiguities and uncertainties. They are both not sacrosanct, but are dynamic.

Notwithstanding such religious ambiguities and uncertainties the Constitution of the country states clearly, according to Act No. 31: Section (1) a – b that:

Persons belonging to a cultural, religious or linguistic community may not be denied the right, with other members of that community –

- (a) to enjoy their culture, practise their religion and use their language, and
- (b) to form, join and maintain cultural, religious and linguistic associations and other organs of civil society (1996: 15).

## **WHITE PORTRAYAL**

Throughout The Heart of Redness (2000), except for one incident where Dalton saved the village from being developed into the casino, hotels and time-share development, Mda portrays the British colonizers and Afrikaners as artful propagandists, misleading and deceiving African people to further their own selfish aims, selfish gains, personal interests, self-aggrandizement, and also the

interests of the British Empire. With regard to the tourist village that was to be developed at Qolorha, Mda suggests that whereas whites may find it easy to envision a harmonious relationship with nature, the villagers (like the black majority), whom they have displaced no longer have such recourse, as the intention of the white man was to 'exterminate all amaXhosa' (2000: 19) by razing 'the amaXhosa nation to the ground,' or starve them into submission (2000: 25).

Lloyd points out that, men like John Dalton enriched themselves 'by selling goods to Xhosa survivors' (2001: 36) who could not resist the British after the disastrous cattle-killing of Nongqawuse. Lloyd adds that missionaries exploited the devastating consequences of the cattle-killing by finding 'rich ideological pickings in disillusioned people'.

Mda also premises the imperialism arrogance which he exposes in the Saartjie Baartman saga, the British soldier's boiling of the heads (to be used as souvenirs, or for scientific enquiry) of Bhonco and Zim's ancestors, Dalton's wife's sneering attitude, and shooing the rowdy villagers away, and the boot-licking ceremony, where-by the Xhosa chiefs and elders were forced to kiss Sir Harry Smith's 'staff and boots' (Lloyd, 2001: 35), John Dalton exploiting the situation ('great darkness') by 'going up and down selling candles to the Believers' (Mda, 2000: 242) to enrich himself, and Sir George Grey scoffing the Xhosa customs.

The tension between Camagu on the issue of developing the village into a casino, hotels and time-share was so severe that it could be equated with the tension between De Klerk and Mandela at the signing of the National Peace Accord in 1991. Interestingly, after the altercation between Camagu and Dalton they reconciled because they wanted to develop Golorha with the involvement of the villagers. Similarly, De Klerk and Mandela wanted to build a 'new' South Africa, in which all the people will 'participate in decisions affecting their lives at all levels of government' De Klerk (in Thompson, 1990: 242).

No one is ever invited to a village feast. When people hear there is a feast at someone's homestead, they go there to enjoy themselves. Others, especially the neighbours and close friends, go beforehand to help with the preparations and to contribute whatever food they can afford. Everyone is welcome at a village feast. Indeed, it is considered sacrilege to stay away from your fellow man's feast (Mda, 2000: 68).

This statement raises some significant points. The first is the degree of compatriotism, unity and oneness among the villagers. The oneness is also expressed in the following extract: 'tomorrow more stories shall be told, seasoned as usual with inventive spices by whoever is telling the story at the time' (Mda, 2000: 172). Furthermore, in view of the split caused by the villager's traditional belief system and the cattle-killing, it would appear that solidarity, oneness, and unity can occur only in relatively small groups of people. Most importantly, even in these groups (like the case of Believers and Unbelievers), a sense of oneness seems to be breaking down. Even though it is considered sacrilege to stay away from your fellow man's feast, the Believers did not attend. This further confirms the breaking down of oneness among the villagers. Perhaps Mda is also outlining the gradual destruction of traditional value. He warns that in the post-liberation period a balance needs to be found which can accommodate the best qualities of both the traditional culture and modern tradition. Mda attempts to give a beacon of hope and optimism in the country admired by Africa and the whole world, in spite of the desperate living conditions and hopelessness.

## CONCLUSION

In my introduction I made a claim that Mda's novel outlines the scars and ills of British colonialism and apartheid, and that such scars of history are attributed to Nongqawuse's prophecy that resulted in the cattle-killing episode in the mid-nineteenth century in the Eastern Cape village of Qolorha. The cattle-killing event caused a split among the villagers, and the split can be experienced even in the present-day. Mda establishes links between the pre-colonial era, colonial era, apartheid period and post-apartheid order and juxtaposes the link with the black people's dilemma of where to position themselves between traditional beliefs and contemporary desires.

Mda's use of dialogue throughout The Heart of Redness (2000) points to his interest in extending the boundaries of the freedom of expression and assertiveness in the new democratic country. It also gives Mda 'scope for a sardonic critique of British imperialism' (Lloyd, 2001: 35). Mda's strategy of fusing devices of the traditional belief system and modernization is distinguishable in the novel. His distinguished ability to juxtapose reality with supernatural has, according to Naidoo (1998: 304), enabled Mda to establish a novel that clearly depicts worlds of 'multiple realities during times of historical change'. Mda's use of the supernatural elements and historical realities (facts) enable him to go beyond the forces of history and its scars in the post-liberation time. The novel affirms historical realities as outlined in Mandela's claim that: 'when freedom came, Africans would have the opportunity to own their own business in their own names, to own their own houses and property' (1994: 164).

The novel illuminates a historical concern, expounded by Mandela, that to achieve fairness in South Africa, one had to dismantle apartheid itself 'for it was the very embodiment of injustice' (1994: 164). Now that apartheid is gone, Mda, according to the novel, believes that in order to achieve fairness in the post-apartheid South Africa, one needs to destroy greed, nepotism and corruption.

In The Heart of Redness (2000), Mda has succeeded in bringing together myths of African regeneration and belief systems that are inherent in the amaXhosa people's culture and tradition, and history of the struggle and transformation. The novel, however, shows that Mda does not shy away from expressing his criticism of the post-liberation government. It expresses his views on the indigenous people's beliefs, and how sickened he is by nepotism, corruption, power-mongering and betrayal of the majority of the desperate black people. In The Heart of Redness (2000) Mda outlines that the voice of the ancestors, according to traditional African beliefs, points to the fact that death merely means entry into the world of the ancestors – the world of the spirit.

The Heart of Redness (2000) points out that African people, in their rush into a modern and materialistic future, abandoned essential (traditional) beliefs that are now in urgent need of revival. Mda affirms this claim as he states that the traditional isiXhosa costumes:

were becoming very popular among the glitterati and sundry celebrities of the city of gold since the advent of the African Renaissance movement spearheaded by the president of the country (2000: 185).

The statement quoted above emphasizes that at this point in time, the black people have reached a stage where they need to rediscover the spiritual belief that is relevant to their culture, tradition, customs and practices, and to their own way of life. Accordingly, some elements of African spirituality need to be revived. Such efforts are likely to receive unbelievable support especially this present-day when President Thabo Mbeki preaches the re-birth of (South) Africa – African Renaissance.

Invariably, it would be naïve and grossly irresponsible to assume that Mda does not believe that there have been remarkable successes in the country since the 1990s.

However, it is intriguing to note how Mda explores how South Africa managed to come to terms with the problems of transition during negotiations of the new democratic, political dispensation in Ways of Dying (1995). His observation of the developments in the country after the country's 1994 General Elections, as expounded in The Heart of Redness (2000), is absolutely fascinating. Interestingly, both novels reflect on South Africa's new political dispensation and its black majority rule.

The Heart of Redness (2000), however, does not prescribe dynamic socialist solutions such as prescribed in the ANC's Freedom Charter (1955). But its author (Mda – the Pan-Africanist) argues that the ANC needs to follow a social democratic approach rather than the British version of democratic solutions that it has embarked on. Besides, Mda shares President Thabo Mbeki's view that:

Together as a people, we have made great strides. The successes we have achieved make a clear statement that acting together, we can and shall push back the frontiers of poverty and expand access to a better life.

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