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**Foreign Exploitation of Tourism in Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness* and
*The Whale Caller***

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Abstract

The main land of Africa enriches a large amount of natural resources that has been extracted and exploited for years. However, many African countries still rank among the poorest nations on the globe. The exploitation and sale of natural resources to western corporations have not helped Africans escape poverty. In addition, there are social issues that evolved over time from the sale and exploitation of resources. This work presented various forms of contemporary tourism and discusses matters of sustainable tourism development for local communities in Zakes Mda's fictional account of the Xhosa community in Qolorha-by-Sea. This work therefore addressed issues that are neglected in the post-apartheid era through the characters used in the novels.

Introduction

Nature and culture are often seen as opposite ideas: what belongs to nature cannot be the result of human intervention and, on the other hand, cultural development is achieved against nature. However, this is by far away the only take on the relationship between nature and culture. Studies in the evolutionary development of humans suggest that culture is part of the ecological niche within our species thrived, thus rendering culture a chapter in the biological development of several authors. Mda's *The Heart of Redness* and *The Whale Caller* touch upon many of the issues of culture and nature at the heart of the novels: culture is both dynamic and complex, and local cultures are irrevocably changed when they come into contact with other cultures, notably when the other culture, be it colonialism or the forces of economic globalization, seeks a hegemonic position. (Bell & Jacobs, 2009, p. 169).

Theoretical Framework

Postcolonial literary theory attempts to isolate perspectives in literature that grow out of colonial rule and the mindset it creates. On one hand, it can examine the ways in which a colonizing society imposes its worldview on the peoples it subjugates, making them objectives of observation and denying them the power to define themselves. The colonizers are the subjects, those who take action and create realities out of the beliefs they hold to be important. On the other hand, it can focus on the experiences of colonized peoples and the disconnection they feel from their own identities. Postcolonialism also focuses on attempts of formerly colonized societies to reassert the identities they wish to claim for themselves, including national identities and cultural identities. When this lens is used to examine the products of colonization, it focused on reclamation of self-identity.

The aim of postcolonial theory is to restore the history, the dignity, validity, cultural contributions, and global significance of those whose experiences have been represented within a worldview that provided no way to include the "other" except through direct contrast with itself. Post-colonial theory also looks at issues of power, economics, politics, religion, and culture and how these elements work in relation to colonial hegemony (western colonizers controlling the colonized).

Incursion of Mass Tourism in Mda's *The Heart of Redness*

No Petticoat says that maybe there are indeed many different paths to progress. (p. 227). The major disagreement on the present time level in *The Heart of Redness* evolves from the dichotomy between Westernization as the only correct form of civilization and the relevance of preserving traditions and the natural landscape. The prospects and destructive forces of tourism and Western development lie at the heart of the community's internal wrangling. Conservation of culture and nature, thereby provides the significant link to ecocriticism as it focuses on the restoration of an idealized past. To this point, however, Mda presents various forms of contemporary tourism and discusses matters of sustainable tourism development for local communities in his fictional account of the Xhosa community in Qolorha-by-Sea. Tourism enters post-apartheid Qolorha mainly in the prospective establishment of a holiday and tourist gambling complex which is to be built in Nongqawuse's Valley. This gambling and motor sports complex falls largely into the category of mass tourism. The ones who would profit from this kind of tourism is, first of all, the company which initiated the complex, and second, the different owners of the tourist attractions such as sports gear traders and hotel managers.

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

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

Camagu and Dalton support the Believer's aims to conserve nature and culture. They are the agents who have the means and expertise in the establishment of environmentally friendly and cultural tourism projects. It later becomes obvious that their approach to conserving both nature and culture vary tremendously and that 'their enterprises [are] devoted to very different notions of conservation' (Barnard, 2007, p. 169). Thus, Dalton and Camagu, the outsiders of the Believing-Unbelieving-conflict, also begin arguing about their understanding of sustainable development. Camagu is well aware of the fact that if they want to successfully compete with the gambling city and get the villagers' support, they have to offer a lucrative alternative.

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

The conversation is cut off, not however Camagu's thinking of alternative community-based tourism projects which would suit the village as a whole and not only a chosen few. In need of offering an alternative to both the mass tourist holiday resort and to Dalton's exotic and cultural tourism, Camagu comes up with the idea of creating a holiday camp where travellers come to enjoy natural landscape and traditional life. Dalton, however, while not rejecting that idea, comes up with his own idea of a cultural

village – one which focuses on the preservation of traditional Xhosa culture before the invasion of industrialization and colonization. Their diverging approaches to conservation and tourism demonstrate two ways of dealing with cultural and environmental heritage and their use or misuse for sustainable tourism development in contemporary South Africa. While Dalton promotes a form of eco-tourism by establishing a cultural village where the locals work as actors performing a pre-colonial life, Camagu initiates an eco-tourist holiday camp, addressing travellers who are interested in both nature and genuine local culture.

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

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

In a conversation with Camagu, Dalton defends cultural villages, which display traditional culture as a proven kind of business. He says: 'Tourists like visiting such cultural villages to observe how the people live. The village will have proper isiXhosa huts rather than the newfangled hexagons that are found all over Qolorha. Women will wear traditional isiXhosa costumes as *their forebears used to wear*. [...] Tourists will flock to watch young maidens dance and young men engage in stick fights.' (p. 247). Camagu rejects such tourist projects because they act out a lifestyle that is no longer lived. Instead, they are products of the marketing and stereotyping of a culture seen as immune to development and progress.

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

That's dishonest. It is just a museum that pretends that is how people live. Real people in today's South Africa don't lead the life that is seen in cultural villages. Some aspects of that life perhaps are true. But the bulk of what tourists see is the past ... of

lot of it an imaginary past. They must be honest and say that they are attempting to show how people used to live. They must not pretend that's how people live now. It is an attempt to preserve folk ways ... to reinvent culture. When you excavate a buried pre-colonial identity of these people ... a pre-colonial authenticity that is lost ... are you suggesting that they currently have no culture ... that they live in a cultural vacuum? I am interested in the culture of the amaXhosa as they live today. The amaXhosa people are not a museum piece. Like all cultures, their culture is dynamic (pp. 247–248).

Camagu's reasoning reveals the dangers of performing a life that is no longer lived and thus creates an impression as if that culture was beyond time. The staging of culture in a timeless present works against the appreciation of lived, real culture. In fact, the inauthenticity and artificiality of displaying culture contributes to the lived culture and tradition and contributes to the ignoring of their present realities. Moreover, Mda argues that tradition and progress are not opposing each other. Seeing culture in a vacuum and as static is to deny people the natural passage of time. Mda (2009c) be explained: Tradition, of course, may include modernization. [...] culture is dynamic; of course, it will always change in order to meet the demands of the present. That is what tradition is all about. In other words, I don't see it as something that is static. I see it as something that is dynamic, that will change all the time to meet the needs of the present [...]. However, dividing for the sake of dividing seems to have also caught these two characters (p. 359). Hence, Camagu and Dalton do not find a common path to negotiate their diverging eco-tourism ideas and Dalton establishes his cultural village in competition with both the capitalist holiday resort and Camagu's planned backpacker eco-tourist holiday camp (scholarbank.nus.edu).

Invasion of Global Capitalism in Mda's *The Whale Caller*

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

The binary contrast between past and present becomes striking in the demonstrative pronoun 'these' which gives the present a negative connotation. This is further supported by the choice of words and the narrative juxtaposition of, loud under water bangs produced by seismic surveys and gas and oil explorations (p. 129) with relics of the past such as the colourful fishing boats along the cliffs that used to belong to fishermen of a century ago (p. 2). The boats are now restored to their former glory as a reminder of a bygone era and bygone manual practices so that present and future generations can see how fishermen of the old endured the stormy seas in small open boats powered by their own muscles (p. 2). The narrative already hints at the paradoxes of (post)modern culture which is wary of conserving history, thereby silences it as museum pieces detached from present life.

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

The Whale Caller enters this scenario, again similar to Camagu, as an outsider. He even feels like an intruder both in the lives of the whale watchers and of the local citizens. No one knew him any more (p. 10). Owing to his vagabond, nomadic life of spending more than three decades along the coastlines of South Africa and Namibia, the narrator refers to the Whale Caller as *strandloper*. According to Boonzaier et al., the word '*strandloper*', or beach-ranger, comes from the observation by early settlers at the Cape of people living along the beach and subsisting on marine food, such as seals, shellfish, fish, crayfish, birds and occasionally beached whales. (1996, p. 10). Thus, the Whale Caller is associated with an age-old Khoikhoi lifestyle in union with nature.

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

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

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

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

the usual tourists with floral shirts and funeral faces. [...] Binoculars and cameras weighing down their necks. Sandals flip-flopping like soft coronach drumbeats as the feet trudge in different directions. Fat Americans, timid as individuals, but boisterous and arrogant in groups. Puny Japanese, excitable and fascinated by the most mundane things. Inland South Africans who look apologetic and seem to be more out of place than the Americans and Japanese. All clicking away at the slightest of provocation (pp. 13-14).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mda addresses important issues that are largely neglected in the post-apartheid era – or rejected as elitist or White. Through his characters, he provides a different view on landscape and recuperates its often neglected or forgotten cultural mystical stories. While the narrative does not offer any ready-made solutions, it does raise awareness on the link between poverty and the difficulty to lead an ecological friendly life. Hence, he criticizes the political agents for neglecting the needs of rural and poor people in their efforts to live with nature. In order to explicate the importance of the ecology, Mda's creativity with environmental activism and his writings become a literature of public action. To this point, this work has analyzed the Whale Caller's home and its natural environment which is strongly influenced by two major incidents: the invasion of global capitalism in the form of tourism on the one hand and the Whale Caller's love triangle with whales and human beings.

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