AFRICAN HUMANISM AND CHARACTER REPRESENTATION IN ZAKES MDA'S FICTION:

A SOCIO-CULTURAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH

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DECLARATION

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African Humanism and Character Representation in Zakes Mda's fiction: A Socio-Cultural and Psychological Approach

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ABSTRACT

African humanism and *ubuntu* play crucial roles as a vehicle in Zakes Mda's fiction, which he uses to demonstrate the full human potential of Africans and their pivotal role in community service. The study explored this philosophy as it applies in his writings, with specific focus on six of his novels and the autobiography, *Memoirs of an outsider – Sometimes there is a void* (2011). Character representation as a theoretical framework is explored with reference to Steve Biko's (1978) ideas on African culture and humanism, alongside the literary criticism of Lewis Nkosi (1983) and Njabulo Ndebele (1991) on fiction by black South Africans, leveraged against a broader theoretical background. African humanism is defined here as a catalyst for human dignity and social transformation, against a backdrop of racially inspired dehumanisation that has characterised economic and socio-political life in South Africa since the colonial era. The social relevance of Mda's literary writings inform the case that is made for close relation between selected fictional works and broader social factors. In this instance, the myth that the country's social reality constrains the imagination is dispelled and proven false, where Mda's literary work reflect a close relation between imagination and reality. The study brings to fore the symbiotic relationship between the artist and society, on which Mda elaborates in an interview in 2016, that his literary work is a response to the world around him, and the changes it undergoes. Place and landscape are some of the key features in his writings, which determine emotional and spiritual development of his characters. The thread of African humanism and *ubuntu* in his writings are based on cultural concepts that include collectivity, sharing, mutual respect, and placement of human being at the center of the cosmos, as promulgated by Steve Biko (1978:135). Condemnation of cultural and psychological colonisation in his writings is contextualised within Frantz Fanon's (2008:vi) theory on the development of critical and independent thinking, towards "decolonisation of the mind", and dealing with consequent "neurosis of blackness" towards the emancipation of colonised minds.

KEY TERMS African humanism; Ubuntu; Socio-cultural reflections; Post–colonial writing; Decolonisation theories; Psychological colonisation; Landscape in Zakes Mda's writings; Historicity and authenticity in fiction; Decolonisation of the mind; Neurosis of blackness; Cultural deoclonisation

OKUCASHUNIWE

Ubuntu base-Afrika kanye nobuntu budlala indima ebalulekile njengenqola ezinganekwaneni ka-Zakes Mda, ayisebenzisa ukukhombisa amandla agcwele abantu base-Afrika kanye neqhaza labo elibalulekile emsebenzini womphakathi. Ucwaningo lwahlola lolu lwazi oluqondene nezimfihlo zokudabuka kwezinto njengoba lusebenza emibhalweni yakhe, egxile kakhulu emanovelini akhe ayisithupha kanye nencwadi yempilo yakhe, i*Memoirs of an outsider - sometimes there is a void* (2011). Ukumelwa komlingiswa njengohlaka lombono kuhlolwa kubhekiselwa emibonweni kaSteve Biko (1978) mayelana namasiko nobuntu base-Afrika, kuhambisana nokugxekwa ngokwemibhalo kukaLewis Nkosi (1983) noNjabulo Ndebele (1991) ngezinganekwane zabamnyama baseNingizimu Afrika, isetshenziswa ngokumelene nesizinda sombono. “Ubuntu base-Afrika” lapha buchazwa njengokugqugquzela isithunzi somuntu kanye noguquko lwezenhlalo, ngokumelene nesizinda sokucekelwa phansi kwabantu okugqugquzelwe ukucwaswa okuye kwaphawulwa impilo yezomnotho nenhlalo-yezombusazwe eNingizimu Afrika kusukela ngesikhathi sobukoloni. Ukuhlobana kwezenhlalo kwemibhalo yemibhalo kaMda kwazisa icala elenzelwe ubudlelwano obuseduze phakathi kwezincwadi eziqanjiwe ezikhethiwe kanye nezici zezenhlalo ezibanzi. Kulesi sibonelo, insumansumane yokuthi isimo senhlalo yezwe sivimbela umcabango siyachithwa futhi sifakazelwa ukuthi singamanga, lapho umsebenzi wombhalo kaMda ubonisa ubudlelwano obuseduze phakathi komcabango kanye neqiniso. Lolu cwaningo luveza ubudlelwano obuzuzisa izinhlangothi zombili phakathi kweciko nomphakathi, lapho uMda echaza kabanzi ngalo engxoxweni ngo-2016. Uchaze ukuthi umsebenzi wakhe wokubhala uwukuphendula umhlaba omzungezile kanye nezinguquko ezibhekana nazo. Indawo nokuma kwezwe ngezinye zezici ezibalulekile emibhalweni yakhe, ezinquma ukukhula ngokomuzwa nangokomoya kwabalingiswa bakhe. Isici sobuntu base-Afrika kanye nobuntu emibhalweni yakhe isekelwe emiqondweni yamasiko ehlanganisa ukuhlangana, ukwabelana, ukuhloniphana kanye nokubekwa kwabantu endaweni ephakathi nendawo, njengoba kwamenyezelwa nguSteve Biko (1978:135). Ukulahlwa kwamasiko nezengqondo zamakholoni emibhalweni kaMda kuhambisana nengqikithi yombono ka-Frantz Fanon (2008:vi) mayelana nokuthuthukiswa kokucabanga okujulile nokuzimela, maqondana “nokukhululwa kwengqondo embonweni yamakholoni”, kanye nokubhekana “nokuphupha ukuphenduka ube mhlophe ” okubheke enkululekweni yezingqondo zamakoloni.

AMAGAMA ASEMQOKA: African humanism Ubuntu base-Afrika **ubuntu** Ubuntu **socio-cultural reflections** Ukucabanga kwezenhlalo namasiko **postcolonial writing** Ukubhala emva kobukoloni **decolonisation theories** Imibono enkululekweni yamakoloni **psychological colonisation** Ubukoloni ngokwezengqondo **landscape in Zakes Mda's writings** Ukuma kwezwe emibhalweni kaZakes Mda **historicity and authenticity in fiction** Umlando kanye nobuqiniso ezinganekwaneni **decolonisation of the mind** Enkululekweni yengqondo yamakoloni **neurosis of blackness** Ukuphupha ukuphenduka ube mhlophe **cultural decolonisation** Ukuqedwa kobukoloni emasikweni

OPSOMMING

Afrika-humanisme en ubuntu vervul ’n kritieke rol as ’n voertuig in die fiksie van Zakes Mda om die volle menslike potensiaal van Afrikane en hulle sentrale rol in gemeenskapsbetrokkenheid te demonstreer. Die studie het hierdie filosofie ondersoek in sover dit op sy skryfwerk van toepassing is, met ’n spesifieke fokus op ses van sy romans en die outobiografie, *Memoirs of an outsider – sometimes there is a void* (2011). Karakteruitbeelding as ’n teoretiese raamwerk word met verwysing na Steve Biko (1978) se idees oor Afrika-kultuur en -humanisme verken, met inagneming van die literêre kritiek van Lewis Nkosi (1983) en Njabulo Ndebele (1991) aangaande fiksie deur swart Suid-Afrikaners, soos teen ’n breër teoretiese agtergrond beskou. “Afrika-humanisme” word hier as ’n katalisator vir menswaardigheid en maatskaplike transformasie omskryf, teen ’n agtergrond van rasgeïnspireerde ontmensliking wat die ekonomiese en sosiopolitieke lewe in Suid-Afrika sedert die koloniale era tipeer. Die maatskaplike tersaaklikheid van Mda se literêre werke lê ten grondslag aan die argument ten gunste van ’n noue verwantskap tussen geselekteerde fiksiewerke en breër maatskaplike faktore. In hierdie geval word die mite dat die land se maatskaplike werklikheid die verbeelding in bedwang hou, verdryf en as onwaar bewys, in die opsig dat Mda se literêre werke ’n noue verwantskap tussen verbeelding en werklikheid weerspieël. Die studie bring die simbiotiese verhouding tussen die kunstenaar en die samelewing, waaroor Mda in ’n onderhoud in 2016 uitgebrei het, na vore. Hy het verduidelik dat sy literêre werke ’n reaksie is op die wêreld rondom hom en die veranderinge wat daarin plaasvind. Plek en landskap is van die vernaamste kenmerke van sy skryfwerk; dit rig die emosionele en geestelike ontwikkeling van sy karakters. Die draad van Afrika-humanisme en ubuntu in sy skryfwerk is op kulturele begrippe, soos gemeenskaplikheid (*collectivity*), mededeelsaamheid (*sharing*), wedersydse respek en die mens as die middelpunt van die kosmos, soos voorgestaan deur Steve Biko (1978:135), gegrond. Die veroordeling van kulturele en psigologiese kolonisering in Mda se skryfwerk word binne die konteks van Frantz Fanon (2008:vi) se teorie oor die ontwikkeling van kritiese en onafhanklike denke, ten gunste van die “dekolonisering van denke” (“*decolonisation of the mind*”) sowel as die hantering van die gevolglike “neurose van swartheid” (“*neurosis of blackness*”) ter bevordering van die emansipering van gekoloniseerde denke, ondersoek.

SLEUTELTERME: Afrika-humanisme; ubuntu; sosiokulturele oorwegings; postkoloniale skryfwerk; dekoloniseringsteorieë; psigologiese kolonisering; landskap in Zakes Mda se

skryfwerk; historiese waarheid en outensiteit in fiksie; dekolonisering van denke; neurose van swartheid; kulturele dekolonisering

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CHAPTER ONE:

1. AIM AND CONTEXT

1.1 BACKGROUND

The 1910 political settlement referred to as “the Union” of South Africa created a quasi-normal society, in comparison with other Commonwealth countries. The marginalisation of black people, which was common in many countries, was an established norm, designed to assert that “these” were primitive people whose defeat in colonial battles and subsequent subjugation had to be followed by exterminating their culture and their “barbaric” ways of living (Heywood 2004:111). Also noted by Heywood (2004:111) is the fact that the dehumanisation that characterised the socio-political life in South Africa during the period following the Industrial Revolution, was economically inspired. In the aftermath of mineral discovery, a flow of money was created that made it easy for ‘the powers that be’ to drive all the development, as well as underdevelopment, of the rural countryside. The consequences, which included rural depopulation and city poverty, in the South African instance as well as elsewhere, affected mostly the black population. They were subjected to legislation that prohibited them from practising farming as they were used to doing, as well as to a taxation system that forced them to leave or abandon the land for work in the mines and related industries. This resulted in the destabilisation of family life, which in turn led to the demise of African traditional values, including cultural practices that could be regarded as the proverbial “glue” of African communal life. Responding to the hardships of the time, along with these colonial impositions, literary reflections on the complicated socio-political society produced resistance and protest literature.

The literature of the time that was characterised by significant black involvement reflects a collective consciousness of the Black African as part of a group that is subordinated to a more dominant force in the socio-political order. In the chapter “Négritude: Literature and ideology” within Coetzee and Roux (eds.), Irele (2002:35) views this as a key cause of the black predicament, reflective of historical conditions that subjected Black writers to a state of dependence upon the West, which was positioned as the “master” society

and the dominant culture. The themes of resistance that characterised Black writing presented a countermovement to Western dominance. This progression from subordination to independent thinking, and from alienation through revolt to self-affirmation, reflects significant development in African literature production.

Harrison (1987:3) elaborates on the South African context post-1948, tracing the political struggle from the South African (Anglo-Boer) War, which ended with the defeat of the Afrikaners (then referred to as the Boers) by the British in 1902. However it was through the election victory in 1948, the moment that bestowed Afrikaner nationalists control over South Africa, that the policy of apartheid was imposed. This spelt the disappearance of non-white autonomy, with Black people forming the majority of casualties, and the reason for resistance. This doesn't underplay many significant moves by the British to disenfranchise the black population prior to 1948. Incidences like the formation of the African National Congress (ANC) in 1912, the passing of the Land 1913 Act, the urban Areas Act of 1923 (which created slums specifically for Blacks to supply cheap labour to white industry), Colour Bar Act of 1926 (which banned Blacks from practicing skilled trades), the Native Administration Act of 1927 (which imposed British supremacy in Black Areas, thereby degrading the role of Black royalty and traditional administration), and the Representation of Natives Act of 1936 (which removed Blacks from the common voters Roll – thereby shattering any illusion that they would ever be allowed control over their lives), are examples of oppression and black resistance under British rule (Mandela 1994:87). A significant amount of protest literature was produced around this time, although much of it would end up being censored and banned[1].

[1] The resistence and protest literature post the 1910 constitution, that got subjected to some form of censorship, came from writers across racial lines, with different points of focus. They include; DDT Jabavu – *The Black Problem* (1920), Stephen Black – *The Dorp* (1922), Peter Abrahams – *Mine Boy* (1946), JD du Toit (Totius) – "Vergewe en vergeet" (1949), NP van Wyk Louw – "Raka" (1941), PV Pistorius – *No Further Trek* (1957), Es'kia Mphahlele – *Down Second Avenue* (1959), amaongst others (Heywood 2004:19, 23, 114-127).

After a period of political instability, characterised inter alia by defiance campaigns, state brutality and the imposition of a State of Emergency, South Africa achieved a political settlement in 1990 leading towards democratic transition. The struggle that had mostly been inspired by the binary opposites of Afrikaner nationalism on the one hand, and African nationalism on the other, was not just political, but also cultural. This can be seen when, during the negotiations on a peace settlement, Peter de Lange told the then ANC representative, Thabo Mbeki, in Lusaka in 1988 that “Afrikaners were more anxious about losing their cultural identity than their economic or political power in a democratic South Africa” (Gevisser 2009:193).

At another engagement, a complementary sentiment was later expressed by Barbara Masekela, who was a close comrade of Mbeki’s, that the struggle for liberation in South Africa was not predicated upon race. She said, “we are not fighting white people, we are not fighting individuals, but as South Africans, we would like to come together to destroy the apartheid system” (Gevisser 2009: 195).

Although here was jubilation when, on 2 February 1990, the then President FW de Klerk announced the unbanning of the African National Congress (ANC), the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), the South African Communist Party (SACP) and thirty-one other political organisations, there were those who felt that the political changes that happened along with the first democratic elections in 1994 merely amounted to a narrow and neoliberal transition from apartheid, and that it would drift into another system of exploitation. Various reflections on this complex situation were made by different writers in novels, short stories, and other genres, as per the elaboration below. From the 1950s, world attention had been drawn to South African political problems through literary productions from the likes of Alan Paton, Nadine Gordimer, Njabulo Ndebele, Es’kia Mphahlele and others. Zakes Mda complements these writers. In his writings, he examines the lives and experiences of ordinary people in a democratic South Africa and, as Bell and Jacobs (2009:2) note, explores the ways in which the people come to terms with the apartheid past.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In response to protest literature by many Black writers, Nkosi (1983:133) warns against writing that focuses on racial conflict only, since a theme on this subject can be restrictive to artistic purpose. He is critical of those writers who regard racial conflict or segregation as a manner of thematic godsend that centred Black expression on oppression by White people. Despite Mphalele's (1974) own admission that he found himself unable to portray white characters in a rounded way, Nkosi observes a positive development when it came to his portrayal of characters from different races other than his own, something which he realised to be difficult, and as such, a difficulty reflected by most writers across the racial spectrum. For this reason, considering that Mda's early artworks had been overtly political, it is a difficult to determine how far his character portrayal develops, especially in post-apartheid South Africa. His Pan-African background has resonance with Mphahlele's (1974:32-36) critical view on characterisation and African humanism in South African fiction. The fact that he grew up under apartheid, with his father having been a prominent leader of both the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) at different times, this seems to have had direct influence on his political activism, which coincided with his artistic talent (Bell and Jacobs, 2009:2). It is intriguing to note how his approach interacts with *ubuntu* philosophy and Biko's conception of African culture. The concept of *ubuntu,* including Stuit's (2014:3-11) contribution, will be explored in the next chapter.

Gerrig and Allbritton (1991:381–388) and Mead (1991:440–451) posit a reciprocal relationship between literature, socio-cultural realities, and personal perception. Such a relationship affects the subjective disposition of social actors and the way in which characters are portrayed in literature. In circumstances of prejudice and discrimination based on social, cultural, and racial factors, this relationship has the potential for distortion and stereotype.

From a social and psychological perspective, behaviour can be seen as emanating from either external or internal determinants. According to Gerrig and Allbritton (1990:381), both kinds of stimuli are often involved in shaping human behaviour. Accordingly, the

central problem of this study is to investigate the way in which the social and political changes of the last two decades in South Africa have affected character representation in Mda's literary works.

In the context of a changing society, old approaches and techniques of characterisation lose relevance, and continued literary relevance requires adaptation, or new techniques. The extent to which Mda's characterisation techniques adapt in this regard is crucial. It is then also imperative to investigate how African humanism can, as propagated by Es'kia Mphahlele, be made applicable to Zakes Mda's fiction.

1.3 KEY QUESTIONS ON WHICH THIS STUDY IS BASED

In this study, the following questions will form the basis of the investigation:

- To what extent is Zakes Mda's selected literary works reflect affinity to African Humanism?
- How do literary constructs in the form of characters the selected works resemble human beings in real and social situations?
- How has Lewis Nkosi's views influenced Mda's characterisation style in the literary works selected for the study?
- How has Njabulo Ndebele's views influenced Mda's characterisation style in the selected works?
- How has Biko's philosophical ideas impacted Mda's literary approach in the works selected for the study?
- How have political and social changes in society reshaped attitudes towards ubuntu and how have these changes influenced character portrayal in Zakes Mda's fiction?
- What conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of the selected literary works within the specified theoretical framework?

In answering these questions, a multipronged approach includes a number of literary and characterisation theories. These will be discussed in the sections that follow.

1.3.1 CRITICAL REFERENTIAL APPROACH

In a critical referential approach, according to Mead (1990:440), further developed by Carrol (2012:132), characters, and the reader's understanding of these character constructs, are explained by means of reference to something else. Fictional characters are understood to imitate, resemble, reproduce, or give a perception of a meaning or reality that exists somehow outside the fiction itself. The main task of this approach is focused on providing a rationale for the presence and meaning of fictional characters through recourse to a non-fictional world. Characters in literature have meaning and are understood or felt because they refer to a second dimension of meaning outside reality at the level of the reader. Carrol (2012:132) suggests that formation and understanding of characters requires imagination that extends beyond the reader's reality, where tribes, ethnic groups, and nations have various myths of their own origin that leads to certain symbols, modes of dress, styles of decoration, and certain cultural presentations. People share the collective imagination of their social groups, and from that, "weave" the story of their own individual lives, in the process establishing a sense of personal identity. These crucial aspects in creation and understanding of characters, will be elaborated on in the next chapters.

1.3.2 BIOGRAPHICAL APPROACH

A biographical approach defines fictional characters through reference to an author's life. For instance, some of Mphahlele's experience as an educator in conflict with the Bantu education system, and who was persecuted by the apartheid government and therefore had to leave his profession, are projected into Timi's role in *The Wanderers* (1971). In *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2002), Mda deals with cultural, racial, and political experiences of the different racial groups in South Africa, both during and after the apartheid era. The narrative voice that Mda uses in this novel apparently reflects his own experiences, including himself in the "we", whilst interrogating the communal issues and challenges in which he was involved. This approach, in which the experiences of the author's life become in some way correlative for the characters in his fiction, is viewed by Mead (1990:441) as closely related to the neo-Freudian approach, which

sees coherence of character in terms of the author's psychic profile. According to Freud's psychoanalytic theory (Mario, 2010:2–3), human behaviour operates between three aspects or major components of personality; that is, the id, the ego, and the super-ego. In the writing process, literary works provide some form of media through which authors share information and imagination. In his master's dissertation, *A Psychoanalysis on the main character and the author of Sherlock Holmes*, Mario (2010:10) asserts that literary works can be used to reflect the author's personal experiences in life, where some characters' personality traits resemble either the author's or his/her perception of the people in real life. This confirms Mead's (1990:442) assertion that characters have meaning for readers insofar as they reflect or are consistent with patterns of behaviour that is familiar to them through contact with or knowledge of real people.

1.3.3. REALISM BACKGROUND

A realist rationale maintains that readers recognise, comprehend, and perceive fictional characters to the extent that their appearance, actions and mode of communication reflect those of people in real life (Mead 1990:442). In the novel *Ways of Dying* (1995a), Mda deals with issues that people experience in their concrete everyday lives. The main events unfold in an informal settlement at a particular time in the history of South Africa. The type of dwellings found in these settlements mushroomed around South African urban areas at the advent of democracy and in the years that followed. This is the period when people in South Africa started experiencing freedom, without such restrictions as influx control, pass laws, and the Group Areas Act. The two main characters, Toloki and Noria, are brought together by their discovery that they are a "homeboy and home girl" (Mda 1995:11-12) from the same village, and now meet in an urban environment, with its own type of challenges that resemble those in real world.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study is undertaken with the aim to:

- discuss African humanism with specific reference to both Es'kia Mphahlele's and Zakes Mda's characterisation techniques;
- explore Zakes Mda's construction of characters as psychological constructs as well as human beings in real and social contexts;
- analyse Mda's selected literary works in line with Lewis Nkosi's view on literature by black writers;
- analyse of Mda's selected literary works with reference to Njabulo Ndebele's philosophy on "rediscovering the ordinary" (Ndebele 1986:143-157);
- analyse Mda's selected literary works with reference to his philosophy of life and Steve Biko's ideas on culture and humanism;
- examine the impact of *ubuntu* philosophy on Mda's characterisation approach;
- draw conclusions and make recommendations on a character representation approach that combines African humanism, *ubuntu* and the African Renaissance.

In order to accomplish these objectives effectively, it is necessary to establish proper and contextual understanding of African humanism, alongside both a socio-cultural and a psychological approach.

1.5 UNDERSTANDING AFRICAN HUMANISM

According to Mphahlele (2002:137), African humanism is not just a philosophy of life defining pre-colonial African ways of living; but it continues to be a vehicle for human dignity and social transformation. It reasserts the development of full human potential in community service. In his philosophy on the African image, Mphahlele (1974:10) encourages a sense of adventure regarding literary matters, as doctrinaire positions may trigger controversial issues between the works of imagination, and social forces. Such a controversy creates the impression that social reality and imagination repel one another. However, there are moments of close connection between the two realities. Colonialism brought with it the subjugation of Africans to European ways of living. This

was manifest through the imposition on Africans of, inter alia, a Euro-centric culture, religion, and education. Through this process, African humanism was undermined, thereby increasing the lack of understanding of the concept, as well as its adaptation to successive social and economic environments.

The assaults on African humanism date back to pre-colonial times, according to Herbert Vilakazi (1999:200). The crisis initially surfaced in the African slave trade and the mass enslavement of Africans in the Americas and Caribbean. Colonisation by European powers served to deepen and systematise the domination of Africa, which in turn led to universal contempt for Africans as “incomplete” human beings. The core challenge of the African humanism debate can be well defined, borrowing from Frobenius, a German scholar, who in his writings, as Vilakazi observes, indicates that justification of the African slave trade included the circumstances where the African was turned into a “semi-animal” (Vilakazi 1999:200). Vilakazi concludes that all experiences that subsequently occurred to Africans, African societies, the image of Africa, and her role in colonial times, followed from that dehumanisation.

According to Mphahlele (1974:67), African humanism involves claiming back, re-assimilating and positioning to rightful place the African culture. Having been denigrated since colonial times, the status of African culture continues plummeting. Such denigration was, according to Biko (1987:97–98), perpetrated in order to advance colonialism and its interests. The political oppression and struggle for liberation that ensued gave rise to literary writing that distorted African humanism. Mphahlele addresses this issue in *The African image* (1974), and it is featured prominently in his literary texts that include *The Wanderers* (1971), *Chirundu* (1981) and *Father Come Home* (1984).

The imposition of Western culture that followed the colonial defeat of Africans was designed to annihilate African cultures and indigenous value systems, as noted by Biko (1978:44). Mphahlele’s approach therefore championed a ‘renaissance’ that sought to inscribe the “African self” onto a landscape, that had been seized in colonial battles. The black intellectual tradition is highlighted in his literary works as pivotal to reclaiming

cultural liberation. Literary images from both African and White perspectives produced stereotypes, and the literature was plagued by a racial economy characterised by anger and strife. Mphahlele (2004:3–4) notes that, although this initially appeared as a literature of combat, the concept of African humanism introduced the idea of the cultural revolution that he sought to achieve through his writings.

Although African humanism does not seem to be a central theme in Mda's literary work, it nevertheless emerges as one of its significant features, albeit in a slightly different context from that of Mphahlele. The novel *She plays with the darkness* (1995b) demonstrates Mda's humanistic vision in the process of societal transformation, and change of mindset. The different story lines of the siblings, Radisene and Dikosha, symbolise the divisive and inhumane life of postcolonial times. Attwell (2005:194) notes that this highlights Mda's apportioning of significance to humanistic values, and the transformation of cultural identities.

1.6 DEFINING A SOCIO-CULTURAL APPROACH

From a socio-cultural perspective, Mead (1990: 442) defines fictional characters not as unique real-life individuals, momentarily engaged in a novel or other fictional form, but rather, as seemingly credible illustrations of social and cultural conditions. He elaborates this with the example that Balzac's characters depict struggles against the capitalist degradation of man, whilst those of Kafka, Beckett, and Camus are illustrations of modern, alienated man, stumbling through a world that has lost all value and meaning. This highlights the significance of a social environment as a point of departure for the depiction of characters.

Projection of culture as an object of writing or characterisation will be a significant part of this study. The study will in particular explore the extent to which the evolution of culture is reflected in literature, and specifically in character representation in Zakes Mda's fiction. As different nations interact more on a socio-political level, it is expected that a cross-fertilisation of cultures ensues. An interchange between societies is crucial and should be appreciated for the purposes of cultural growth and enrichment. In his writings, Biko (1978:41) refers to this process of acculturation and, according to him,

this ought to have been the case between African and Western cultures. Acculturation implies the fusion of different cultures on an equal footing. However, he argues that in the case of these two (African and Western cultures), intake has been extremely one-sided. In South Africa, the two major cultures that interfaced were the African and Anglo Boer cultures, where, however, the former was seen as unsophisticated and simple, whilst the latter had within it the trappings of a colonialist culture, and was heavily equipped and positioned for conquest. It was therefore the more powerful culture in all facets. This skewed comparison is occasioned by the contempt that the superior culture displayed towards the indigenous culture. In a deliberate effort to emerge as a dominant and "civilised" culture, Anglo-Boer culture had to bestow an inferior status on African culture and artefacts. According to Biko (1978:41–42), this is where Africans began to lose out on their affairs and environment. The annihilation of a positive African identity and humanism naturally follows this process.

A common understanding of a national culture is crucial to achieving an egalitarian society. Frantz Fanon (1967:210–211) rejects the colonial interpretation of a national culture. According to Fanon, this is not a mere combination of "inferior and superior cultures". It doesn't require the colonised to be elevated above his "jungle status" in order to adopt the mother country's cultural standards. It should not be equated with folklore or ascribed to an abstract populism that claims access to people's true nature, and it is certainly not the remnant of gratuitous actions, which are not directly attached to the present reality of the people. A national culture can, however, be defined as the whole body of efforts by people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the action through which the people have created themselves and keep themselves, as a society, in existence.

1.7 DEFINING A PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH

According to a slightly different perspective from the biological approach, which foregrounds the author's life, works of literature are also created using actions by characters who are imaginary creations of the author. However, the course of action is attributed to both human and non-human stimuli. This leads to the identification and

development of antecedents, which in turn leads to activities or objects that are referred to as consequences. Causality is manifest through this process, but in most instances, causality is implicit in texts. This theory nevertheless foregrounds literary characters and, as Gerrig and Allbritton (1990:381) note, the author is the one with control over causality, especially in fictional texts. Psychological evidence, on the other hand, suggests that causal attribution may interact with the attributional predilections of readers.

This approach stems from the premise that characters are basically constructs of authors' imaginations. However, their behaviour and actions are influenced by either internal or external stimuli. An individual's actions may be triggered by dispositions that lead to a certain behaviour, whilst there are instances when people's responses to social conditions characterise consequent behaviours. In the novel *Ways of Dying* (1995a), the main character Toloki's actions reflect the social situations that characterise the plight of the society of which he is part. The way he and other characters like Noria act in response to the death of the latter's child, is used by Mda to reflect the ways the Black community deals with psycho-social matters (or challenges) brought about by instances like death. The protagonist's actions, as a "chief mourner", and the way in which he deals with the challenges he encounters in the environment he in which he finds himself, are indicative of his psychological prowess. This in turn determines his survival strategies in an environment that is highly susceptible to social strife.

Psychoanalysts developed a theory that humans have unconscious longings that ought to be analysed in order to understand human behaviour. According to Sigmund Freud, the largest part of the psyche is the unconscious, from which characteristics such as "drives" and instincts develop (Freud 1949:32).

The analysis of the human psyche, which in this context will be applied to the main characters that are the subject of this study, is made explicit through Freud's structural model of the different parts of the psyche. The first component, the id, functions as mental agency that has all that is inherited, especially instincts. He regards it as the

internal core personality that links to biological processes. The ego, which is the second feature, relates the organism to reality through its consciousness. Thirdly, the superego internalises parental teachings (Freud 1949:32). Kwatsha (2007:77) adds that the superego also houses the morals and standards of society that grow to form part of an individual's personality.

Psychoanalytic studies reflect on how instincts about life and death influence behaviour and an individuals' actions. According to Grinberg (1990:260), death instincts condition a substantial part of the inherent, instinctual principle that develops into people's DNA and chromosomes in real life, as well as in a figurative sense.

At another level, the theory indicates that since life generally has numerous challenges, people have an unconscious death wish. Boeree (1998:6) identifies three types of anxieties, that is, "realistic", "moral" and "neurotic". The first is triggered by fear of something in society. It is what people feel, especially when a threat comes from the social world of the superego. Moral anxiety also arises when a person is conscience-stricken, or feels guilty about socially unacceptable matters, or indiscretions committed.

Psychoanalytical theory further maintains that an individual is not born human, but develops human qualities through being nurtured into a social and cultural order. However, human subjectivity also develops through subjection to an individualistic order and to the order of "otherness" in which individuals distinguish themselves from others. De Beer (1987:12) adds that this is in most instances manifested through first person linguistic references like "I". This, for instance, is the way Mphahlele's character, Diliza, is presented in *The Wanderers* (1975). He reflects as an individual and the order of "otherness". He sees himself as not just different from other people, but also better than any other person. He regards himself as a "nationalist to the core", as opposed to typical compromisers.

1.8 JUSTIFICATION FOR THE STUDY

One of the challenges that Mphahlele reflects in his writings is the decline in the quality of family life among African people since the era of the Second World War. Studies in

line with this thinking reveal that African family life has undergone systematic destruction from the time minerals, namely gold and diamonds, were discovered in South Africa. This was the time when mining and industrial development started recruiting Africans into intensive, but cheaply acquired, labour. Owing to the fact that these indentured labourers were already dispossessed of the basic resource of land, and were pushed into reserves that could not sustain a growing rural population, migrant labour became an anathema that would both haunt and destroy family life up to the present day. This is, for instance, the theme that defines Rampa's character in *The Wanderers* (1975).

The literary response to the socio-political challenges of the time saw the arrival of African writers who were outright anti-imperialist. In his article, *Fanon, Cabral and Ngugi on National Liberation,* Amuta (1995:161) emphasises this view in his reflection on Ngugi wa Thiong'o. He specifically notes the polemical and theoretical statements that characterised wa Thiong'o's approach. He views such statements as elaborations of wa Thiong'o's fictional world of writing. The latter's essays that include *Homecoming* (1978), *Writers in Politics* (1981), *Barrel of a Pen* (1983) and later *Decolonising the Mind* (1986), provide theoretical anchor to his fictional works that include *The River Between* (1965), *Weep not, Child* (1964), *A Grain of Wheat* (1967) and *Petals of Blood* (1977). There is an emphatic anti-imperialist thrust to his social philosophy as reflected in his fictional works. This is more evident in his assigning significance to writing in Kikuyu (one of Kenya's indigenous languages), with literary works that include; drama - *Ngaahika Ndeenda* (*I Will Marry When I want*) (1977) and novel *Matigari ma Njiruungi (Those Who Survived the War)* (1986), both of which critique inadequacies of capitalism, religious sanctimony and corruption that bedevilled the government gentry that ushered democracy in Kenya. His writings also reflect a perception of African literature and art that generally reflects on cultural theories, but which places emphasis on the dialectical relationship between African literature and the historical determinants of a society (Amuta 1995:162).

The literature and fiction paradigm from the early years of the 1910 constitution found expression in the binary opposites of the black and white divide in South African society, which partly contributed to the perpetuation of the status quo. In his novel, *The dorp* (1920), Stephen Black confines blacks to the margins of the narrative. They are seen only in the incident of an assault on a *khoisan* maid by an intruder suspected of being her "Nguni-Sotho" boyfriend. According to Heywood (2004:114), the allegorical message of Black's novel is an endorsement or promotion of the status quo. The marriage of the daughter of the Afrikaner mayor of the "dorp", named Unionstad, to the son of an English shopkeeper, conveys a need for a strong relationship between the two white races of South Africa. On the other hand, he portrays the black community as "the shapeless and sinister periphery of the location – foul, mysterious and menacing". As through the writings of Sylvester Stein in the Drum Magazine in the late 1950s (Heywood 2004:118), the majority of white writers portrayed white society for white readers, depicting black characters through the Hamite ideology, that is, mostly as comic objects or passive victims.

In *Wild Conquest* (1951), Peter Abrahams wrote against the white-centred literature that characterised the period following 1910 Union. This signified a stronger development of African writing to resistance and protest literature. Having been pioneered by Solomon Thekiso Plaatje's writings, amongst others, the theme of protest also featured in Jabavu's *The Black Problem* (1920), which highlighted the problem as the offspring of white encroachment on black land, and strategies by white government to rid blacks of their freedom. In protest against economic exploitation, Heywood (2004:118) notes that Rolfes Dlhlomo's writing sought to expose the mining economy's ruthlessness and its negative effect on black peoples' lives. Es'kia Mphahlele's early writings also seem to have been inspired by the protest paradigm, which was popularised by the *Drum* Magazine.[2]

[2] Drum Magazine was formed in 1951, with a focus on reporting, prose sketches, protest writing and humour, with inspired literary editing by Es'kia Mphahlele and Sylvester Stein (Heywood 2004:26).

This, together with further repression suffered by black people, attracted more black writers. The few leading protest writers included Todd Matshikiza, Bloke Modisane, Casey Motsisi, Can Themba, Lewis Nkosi, as well as the Soweto writers Sipho Sephamla, Mongale Serote, Mbulelo Mzamane, and Zakes Mda.

Can Themba cited in Heywood (2004:141), observes: “But then we were barbarians both”, referring to the clash of cultures in South Africa between white and black in colonial times. This gives an optimistic notion that the two sides had the capability and probability of developing beyond the state of being “barbarians”. It also corroborates both Biko’s (1978:44–54) and Mphahlele’s (1974:14) views on culture and acculturation. This then prompts the question of the extent to which such a development has transpired? Biko’s (1978:51) philosophy that after the great powers had given the world an industrial and military structure and form, the human aspect, the metaphoric “human face”, is the gift that Africa would bestow on the world, has not yet been actualised in literature. This is the gap that the study intends to explore by examining Zakes Mda’s fiction.

1.9 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ON WHICH THE STUDY IS BASED

The theoretical framework of this study divided into four parts. Firstly, it will outline Mphahlele’s ideas on African humanism as set out in *The African Image* (1974), its relationship to Biko’s essays on African culture (1978), and the relationship of these concepts to *ubuntu* philosophy. Secondly, it will discuss Mphahlele’s critique of character representation in apartheid fiction and relate it to the critiques of Black writing by Nkosi (1983), and Ndebele (1986). The analysis of literary views from from these two critics will be concentrated in the third chapter of the study, which is the beginning of textual analysis of the selected works. They will, in this instance, each be dedicated to a particular novel inorder to consistently follow their individual lines of criticism. Thirdly, it will outline Mda’s own ideas on the social role of writing. Fourthly, an outline of selected theories of characterisation as proposed by Foster (1970), Pickerel (1988), Fishelov (1990) and Margolin (1990), will be provided. In spite of the limitations in terms of these

theories, dating back to the early 1990s, their seminal contribution will be considered through recent theoretical developments of Forster (2012), Margolin (2007), and Newman (2009), amongst others.

The theoretical approaches outlined above will be juxtaposed with both postcolonial and decolonisation theories, as a thread that runs through the different sections to reflect common points of departure. This is enabled by the fact that postcolonial theory derives from and utilises insights from other theories. It is also broad-based, which makes it a fertile ground from which other theories could be developed, and will therefore enable greater depth of exploration into the subject to achieve the stated objectives. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1995: 2) view the term "postcolonial" as resonant with various complexities of the different cultural experiences it implicates, addressing all aspects of the colonial process. Accordingly, postcolonial theory deals with various issues that include suppression, resistance, representation, race, gender, place, and responses to influential master discourses. Parry (1994:67) complements this definition with his view that "postcolonial theory facilitates an understanding of colonialism and its legacies, differently from the narratives brought down either by colonialism or anti-colonialist movements". This plunges the dominant colonial discourse and anti-colonial (anti-imperial) counter discourse into disjuncture. Insight into this and other aspects of postcolonial theory provide the necessary background to interrogate cultural issues, as depicted in the literary texts selected for the study.

Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1995:2) present a different perspective in the application of postcolonial theory, making critical assessment of the various kinds of slavery, suppression, resistance, race, place, and responses to the influential master discourses of imperial Europe by which these come into being. This study partly reflects on these different dimensions to understand the narrative themes and characterisation techniques in the literary texts selected for the study.

The traditional theory developed by Forster (1970:52) expresses the view that actors/characters in a literary text are to be seen as human beings. It follows then that they would be analysed in relation to “actual life”. However, the depiction of characters in a work of art should differentiate literary characters from real-life people, or even historical figures. In real-life situations, a person’s knowledge of other people can only be approximate, and limited to external signs. In dealing with texts, a reader can access all crucial information about the “people” in a particular literary text. This complete knowledge has the effect that characters are experienced as real and convincing. It is through this kind of portrayal and particularly the level of detail that is divulged that Forster (1970:75) developed a bi-dimensional theory categorising characters as either flat or round.

Although Forster’s theory clarifies basic differences between characters, as well as between characters and real-life people, the model is limited, and according to Rimmon-Kennan (1983:40), lacks the necessary depth. There are variations within and beyond the two dimensions. Fictional characters can range between the complex but un-developing, and those that are simple, but developing. This disjuncture is clarified by Pickerel’s (1988:182) proposition of the terms “essentialist” and “existentialist”.

In a more inclusive approach, Fishelov (1990:426) adds reader activity to the identification of “type” and “individual” characters in a literary work. He uses a typology called “textual” and “constructed” levels of a literary work of art. According to this theory, these different level distinctions ought to be used in a cross-cutting way. This achieves more economy (theoretical conciseness) and a more coherent theoretical framework. It takes into consideration both the “lifelike” qualities of characters and the fact that they are embedded in a literary text.

A literary character is also defined according to the use of “type” and “individual”. Margolin (1990:464) suggests a set of descriptive character qualities that include “simple” and “complex”, as well as “predictable” and “unpredictable”. His contribution to Forster’s typification theory further indicates that a broader utilisation of “type” and “individual” incorporates literary and social or psychological perspectives. A “type” in this context refers to a literary character that embodies either a recurrent pattern or

social/psychological model in society. The elaborate theoretical framework for the study will be dealt with in chapter two.

1.10 RESEARCH METHODS AND METHODOLOGIES

This study investigates current and established theories on literary character representation by linking these to African personality, humanism and *ubuntu*. It will attempt to obtain a deeper understanding of the different contexts of character depiction, with the anticipation of discovering new "grounds" for the subject. The process will include explaining, defining, clarifying, and evaluating certain character aspects contributing to an improved understanding of the concept and the contribution of *ubuntu* philosophy to character representation.

The approach to the study is interpretive, and will therefore rely on textual analysis. Different materials will be used, and this will involve analysing both primary and secondary sources. The nature of the study presupposes a qualitative method of research; this will therefore be utilised. This is also justifiable given the nature of various theories on characterisation, application, and the actual depiction of characters versus different philosophical viewpoints. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000:3), qualitative research may involve any of the following: "the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case studies, personal experience, introspection, life story, interviews, artefacts, cultural texts and production."

Qualitative research is seen as broad, and not limited to a distinct set of methods that is entirely its own. Researchers applying this method using semiotics, narrative, content, and discourse, archival, and phonemic analysis. Denzin and Lincoln (1994:3) add that they also "draw on and apply approaches, methods and techniques of ethno-methodology, phenomenology, hermeneutics, feminism, rhizomatics, deconstructionism and cultural studies".

Researchers using this method are committed to the interpretive understanding of human experience. This approach is grounded in a philosophical position, which is

broadly “interpretivist” and is concerned with how the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced, produced or constituted (Mason 2002:3).

Mason (2002:3) comments further that qualitative research is also versatile, in the sense that it accommodates two distinct paradigms. It is, on the one hand, focused on a broad, interpretive, postmodern, feminist, and critical sensibility, whilst on the other hand, drawn to narrowly defined positivist, post-positivist, humanistic, and naturalistic conceptions of human experience and analysis (Mason 2002:4).

Flick (2014:11) argues, notably, that qualitative research is specifically relevant to the study of social relations, owing to the development known as the pluralisation of the life world. Portrayal of literary character (the main subject of this study) has significant relevance to social relations. Reflexive interaction during the research process is crucial, and it is enabled by the qualitative approach. Flick (2002:2) further maintains that the researcher’s interaction with the subject can be considered an explicit part of knowledge production.

This a qualitative approach that enables this study of literary theories and subsequent observations on character portrayal/representation. My investigation will also include consideration of *ubuntu* philosophy, and through this I will be able to make judgements that are informed by analysis of relevant literary theories, interpretation of characterisation styles, and socio-literary experiences reflecting *ubuntu*. Using this method, I will also analyse texts from different theoretical points of view and proceed to a theoretical formulation or recommendation. This suggests an eclectic approach, which is supported by Denzin and Lincoln (2000:13), as they argue that the researcher is thereby enabled to deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices, hoping to gain to a better understanding of the subject matter to hand. Maxwell (2013:49) clarifies an eclectic approach to theoretical study and formulation, using the metaphors of “closet” and “spotlight”. In the first instance, a theory is regarded as a manner of “coat closet”. That is to say, a theory gives one a framework for making sense of what is perceived. Particular pieces of data, which otherwise might seem unconnected to one another or to research questions, can come into relationship via a relevant theory. The

concepts of the theory are the “coat hooks” in the closet; they provide places to “hang” data, showing their relationship to other data. In the second instance, theory is seen as a spotlight, which illuminates what is seen. However, a theory that illuminates one area brightly may leave others in darkness, where no theory can illuminate everything at a particular point in time. Therefore, filling in discernible gaps in certain theoretical suits is justifiable, as this study will in turn do. The broad nature of the study, that is, tracing character portrayal from a psychological perspective to socio-cultural realm that includes a political element, and diverse theoretical approaches on the subject necessitates an eclectic approach. This will help to keep the study broad while addressing the specific research questions stated.

1.11 CHAPTER DELINEATION

Chapter One of this study is introductory; it provides background and gives a general overview of the area to be covered, as well as a justification for doing so. It outlines and discusses the theoretical framework to be used to study character representation, and reflects on research methodologies and outlines chapter organisation.

The second chapter, entitled Literature review and theoretical framework of the study, critically explores literature with a bearing on the subject matter under study, thereby giving it a more cogent context. It traces the origins of writings on African image, through which writers like Mphahlele reflect on the critical literary positions of historical negritude and Africanism. Issues raised in *The tyranny of place and aesthetics* (Mphahlele 1981), including concerns that literary images in South African fiction writing came about as products of intuition and biased outlooks between different races, will be explored. The chapter also proceeds to question how the concept of culture, as an integral part of African narratives as well as characters, is developed in South African fiction writing, and how this feature in the literary texts selected for the study.

Chapter Three presents character analysis for *Ways of Dying* (1995a) and *She Plays with the Darkness* (1995b), through African theories**.** will focus on the characterisation approaches utilised by Zakes Mda in these literary texts. A psycho-social approach maintains that an individual’s action may be triggered by dispositions that lead to a

certain behaviour, whilst there are instances where people's responses to social conditions characterise consequent behaviours. In *Ways of Dying* (1995), the main character Toloki's actions are directly linked to the social situations that characterise the plight of the society of which he is part. The way he and other characters like Noria act in response to death is used by Mda to reflect the ways the Black community deals with social matters (or challenges) such as death. In *She Plays with the Darkness* (1995) Mda critiques the divisiveness of post-colonial life, exploring the requisite humanistic values and the power of "non-instrumental art in transforming post-colonial cultural identities" (Attwell 2005:194). In this chapter, his approach will be discussed with reference to African originated theories, including Njabulo Ndebele and Lewis Nkosi's views on Black writing.

Chapter Four presents a character analysis in *The Heart of Redness* (2000) and *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2002), focusing on the application of western theories of character. In the *The Heart of Redness* (2000), Zakes Mda investigates socio-cultural and developmental issues in post-apartheid South Africa, tracing these from colonial times. He engages his characters in a dialectic between retrospective evaluations and prospective visions in the analeptic recollection of the momentous event of the Xhosa cattle killing of 1856-57. The main character, Camagu, is portrayed as an individual through whom the intricate developments of the post-apartheid social revolution can be investigated and perhaps reconciled. His disposition and contribution are conveyed in terms of the notion of a "secular intellectual". In his interaction with the characters representing different socio-cultural views and groups, Camagu finds himself playing the role of an invidious interpreter. Thrown into the midst of a society deeply divided along socio-cultural lines and developmental thought processes and pressures, he tries to grapple with the intellectual appreciation of his circumstances, and formulates a course of action that he considers potentially beneficial for the majority of the people of Qolorha-by-Sea. This character will be studied alongside the characters of Qukezwa and Xoliswa Ximiyo. Mead (1990:443) asserts that such characters as those referred to and outlined above are understood and recognised in the sense that they represent

social or ideological types. They embody certain philosophical thoughts and represent images of cultural codes.

The *Madonna of Excelsior* (2002) explores a multifaceted theme that features; cultural, racial, identity, and changing political "landscape" in the post-apartheid South Africa. It examines the lives of ordinary people as they move between apartheid and democracy. Fincham (2011:76) notes that the novel achieves dramatisation of a culture in transition by drawing extensively, both on popular media representations (the newspaper coverage of the notorious miscegenation trial in the small town of Excelsior) and the expressionist paintings of the Jesuit priest, Frans Claerhout. The main fictional characters are Niki and Popi, the mother and daughter whose narrative dominates the novel. The analysis will, however, also include other characters, like Viliki, Tjaard Cronje, Johannes Smit, and Adam de Vries, with reference to literary theories as indicated below.

Chapter Five focuses on the comparative analysis of Mda's philosophical ideas with character representation in *Black Diamond* (2009) and *Little Suns* (2015). In the former novel, Mda critiques implementation of South Africa's economic transformation policy, Black Economic Empowerment (popularly known as BEE) and the attendant concept of the so-called "black diamond" elite. In the latter he traces political, historical, cultural, and social complexities between blacks and whites in the early 1900s. These issues include the colonial subjugation of black people under British rule, divisions among the oppressed, as some became converted to the "new ways", in the process adopting colonial culture and religion.

Chapter Six investigates *ubuntu* philosophy as it relates to Mda's literary work and approach to characterisation. Mead (1990:441) notes that a broad study of literary character has two dimensions, that is, it is both textual and ontological. The latter dimension gives effect to the notion that a linguistic construct draws meaning from human existence. It is also an exploration of the possibility and nature of human existence undertaken in textual form. It is the human attributes that define the ontology

of the linguistic construct. In this regard, attention will be given to Zakes Mda's approach to character representation, vis-à-vis *ubuntu* philosophy.

Chapter Seven of this thesis provides a conclusion. It will give a synopsis of the findings and observations of all the preceding chapters. The chapter will also assess and evaluate development of Zakes Mda as a writer, from being exclusively a protest writer to producing a balanced type of literature. It will evaluate the extent to which Mda's writing was influenced by writers like Es'kia Mphahlele, Franz Fanon, Njabulo Ndebele, Lewis Nkosi, Steve Biko and others. It will also be significant at this stage to reflect on the findings regarding the extent to which Mda embraces the concept of African humanism in his characterisation techniques, and whether he recognises *ubuntu* philosophy. Based on the findings and observations from the research, the study will end with recommendations on a character representation approach that is a hybrid of African humanism and *ubuntu*.

1.12 CONCLUSION

This introductory chapter has presented a broad overview of the subject matter that will be the major focus of this study. It has provided critical definitions of the concepts, approaches, and methodologies that inform the analysis of character representation in the literary texts selected for the study. It has also briefly explored the views of writers that are key referential points for the analysis of Zakes Mda's literary work, and provides a delineation of the structure that the study will take. The next chapter will elaborate on the issues identified in this chapter, thereby expanding on the literature review.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The first chapter of this thesis broadly defined African humanism and character representation. It posited that the political and economic conditions in South Africa, as well as in other African countries that were under colonial rule, which relegated black people to dehumanised objects used for economic production, a condition of experience ultimately leading to the rise in resistance and protest literature. This had the effect of rallying Black Africans to collective consciousness against subordination, and to become a force to be reckoned with in the socio-political order. It was further noted that although the protest literature that characterised Black writing challenged domination by the West, and reflected significant progression in African literature, it was not a holistic solution to literary production. The chapter also cautioned about writing whose point of focus is merely racial conflict. Reference was made to Nkosi (1983:133) in this regard, particularly his criticism of writers that "prey" on this theme. This, according to him, is restrictive, and misrepresents the scope of Black writing, as it gives the impression that Black people are too obsessed with oppression and racial conflict. By his own admission, Es'kia Mphahlele's (1974) initial writing reflects white characters as caricatures and those from other races, except Black people, through racial (and even social) stereotypes. Furthermore, it was noted that Zakes Mda's early artworks/writings have strong political overtones, apparently due to the hostile political environment of the time, when "everything was indeed black and white". Mda (2018: 34-35) indicates that he came across the word "justification" from William Miller's screenwriting class at Ohio University. According to their discussion, characters need not be formulaically drawn as "good" or "bad", but as persons who are understandable in light of their experiences. "Once we understand someone's past and see what has made him who he is, we see how he does, is psychologically – although not necessarily morally – justified" (Mda 2018:35).

It was then posited, as the object of the study, that his character portrayal develops alongside the growing sentiments of African humanism in post-apartheid South Africa. It was also proposed as imperative that the study include an investigation of the way in which his approach interfaces with *ubuntu* philosophy and Biko's conception of African culture. The chapter proceeded to provide a justification for the study, a theoretical framework upon which it is based, research methodologies, and chapter delineation.

The second chapter provides an extensive literature review so as to properly contextualise character representation in Zakes Mda's fiction. The discussion will take cognisance of the framework established in Chapter One.

The literature review will therefore form the basis for a character analysis in this study, and will focus on the following areas:

(i) Mphahlele's ideas on African humanism as expressed and spelt out in *The African image* (1974);
(ii) Biko's conception on African culture and humanism;
(iii) ubuntu philosophy;
(iv) postcolonial and decolonisation theories;
(v) critiques of black writing by Nkosi (1983) and Ndebele (1986);
(vi) selected theories of characterisation;
(vii) Mda's aesthetics and politics, and
(viii) Mda's ideas on the social role of writing.

Much of the literature will be drawn from the discourse that has come out of African scholarship, including Heywood (2004) – *A History of South African Literature*, Mphahlele E (1974) – *The African Image*, Biko (1978) – *I write what I like*, Ndebele (1986) – *The Rediscovery of the Ordinary,* and Nkosi (1965) – *Home and Exile*, amongst others. This is for the very reason that the subject matter has been a challenge that directly affects African scholars and writers. Scholars such as Frantz Fanon (2008

and 1967), E.M.Forster (2012 and 1970), David Fishelov (1990), Uri Margolin (1990 and 1989) and Ira Newman (2009) have also contributed significant theories of character that are worth referring to in the study. These include postcolonial and decolonisation theories, as well as character theories, as propounded by E.M. Forster and developed by various other theorists.

2.2. ES'KIA MPHAHLELE'S IDEAS ON AFRICAN HUMANISM AS EXPRESSED IN *THE AFRICAN IMAGE* (1974)

According to Mphahlele (1974:12), narrative in the form of a novel or a short story is better read and understood in the context of a painting. Such a literary text ought to be self-contained, more real than life, and convincing. Accordingly, a writer of literary text should strive to capture the myriad impressions and unceasing shower of the innumerable atoms that make up experience. It is a series of emotions rather than just the plot or set of events that gives a complete picture of a novel. The whole text should reflect characters' emotions. Mphahlele (1974:13) also assigns the reader a significant role in the completeness of narrative texts. In a narrative text, the reader interacts with and remembers people and human situations, as well as emotions that embrace all other elements.

The reader's interaction with characters is affected by the type of images created and presented in a text. According to Mphahlele (1974:13), literary images mainly reflect the writer's index of value in the context of his or her social milieu. A close correlation can be deduced between a writer's intention and the literary images used in a particular text; the former can determine particular images for a particular text, whilst the latter has a bearing on the former (writer's) outlook for a particular book or a short story.

Es'kia Mphahlele in *The African image* (1974) reflects a concern with the manner in which African characters are depicted in the literature, especially during the colonial and postcolonial periods in Africa. The South African context was further complicated by the pernicious apartheid policy that was in force for almost half a century. Character

depiction is, amongst other things, informed by the definition of a homogeneous group of people from which a character is drawn or formulated. Contrary to the political segregatory classification of different peoples in South Africa, Mphahlele (1974:13) suggests definitions that, according to his observation and understanding, reflect images of the different nationalities as envisioned in a free and non-racial South Africa. This defines "African" on a cultural, rather than racial basis. That is, all people who are culturally natives of Africa belong to this nationality. He disputes as improper the ascription of nationality on the basis of geographical habitation. For this reason, white people would not be referred to as Africans, unless they embrace and become part of African culture. Also, because people of colour are not fully assimilated into African culture, he refers to them as "Africans of mixed descent". On the other hand, Indians have a distinct cultural identity, entitling them to that nationality. The term "black" is used to refer to all the peoples that are not of European descent[3]. Mphahlele's writings discard racially divisive terms like "non-white" "kaffir", "native" and "bantu" (Mphahlele 1974:14).

The different terms referred to above that were previously official, entrenching racial segregation and humiliating Black people, especially Africans, who were at the lowest level of the societal taxonomy. However, in spite of a change in the political dispensation in the recent past, racism is still entrenched in South African society, where racially divisive terms are still used, though unofficially, to undermine and dehumanise Black people. For instance, an article written by Barney Pityana in the City Press (1st April 2018) involves Vicky Momberg, who used the word "kaffir" more than 40 times in an outburst against police officers who went to assist her after she was a victim of criminal attack on her car. Similarly, a former state agent, Penny Sparrow, described black beachgoers as "monkeys" when she joined other revellers at the KwaZulu-Natal

[3] The term "black" is used as a race marker to refer to all peoples that are not of European descent, however, capitalization "Black" is used to emphasize a political category.

South Coast, as reported by The Mercury (4th January 2016). Quotidian societal controversies such as these can be found to reverberate in literary stereotypes.

Mphahlele (1981:1) acknowledges controversial literary images in his writings too, with some degree of justification and a disclaimer. He lauds writers such as, inter alia, Olive Schreiner, Nadine Gordimer, Alan Paton, and JM Coetzee, for having written fiction on the black-white encounter, and each with varying degrees of success.

These writers juxtaposed their art with a considerable amount of compassion and liberal sensibility. They therefore also would not really penetrate the "formidable wall" between the different racial groups, as there would hardly be any opportunity for real interconnection so that they could get to know the "other" closely. The political and social "distance" between the different races creates an environment where they had to look at each other through "small holes" in the wall between them. Mphahlele (1981:1) laments that, as a writer, he did not have sufficient knowledge of various aspects of life pertaining to white people. For example, how does a family welcome a new-born baby? How do they react to sickness at home, or even to death? What makes them really happy, and how do they show such happiness? How are their children nurtured into adulthood, and into taking their rightful positions as adults in society? What does it mean to be a responsible citizen on their side, and what roles are they expected to play? Such particulars matter significantly to a writer of fiction. Owing to a lack of such crucial knowledge on the part of writers, they would on either side mostly rely on intuition. This is the justification that Mphahlele uses to advance his disclaimer on his literary stereotypes.

> I used to worry that, because we see each other through a key hole, I cannot portray the character of white man in the round. Often when I have turned the white stereotype around to look at from another angle, I have tugged or pushed fiercely so that the figure came back to the initial position. I missed what I had thought I might find (Mphahlele 1974:14).

This realisation and the apparent acceptance of the challenge to produce fully developed non-African characters, seems to greatly influence or inspire most of his writings. This can be traced to his philosophy articulated in *The African Image* (1974), where he states that a writer is not an outside observer, but should be committed to the society he criticises. The tragedy and comedy of its thought and action are also the tragedy and comedy of the writer. According to this view, socio-political matters permeate character and event. Therefore, what is written about human nature, even in fiction, is embedded in the particular.

The writer's predicament in producing round characters across racial lines is predicated on societal norms that impose racial segregation and human inequalities. The writer's prejudice in this regard is apparently determined by the side of the racial divide on which he/she belongs. Mphahlele (1974:15) blames his bias on the inhumanity of the white regime at the time of his youth, and at the beginning of his career as a writer. He admits, though, that he at times had been seized by the urge to play around with light and shade, angles of vision, images, and symbols, in order to portray a rounded white character, but without real success.

> Over the last ten years I have ceased to care. The white man's inhumanity in South Africa has proved that much to me. If any critic tells me my white characters are caricatures or only Monsters, he is welcome to the opinion (Mphahlele 1974:15).

This reflects his attempt at representing the value index of the society he endeavours to portray, but for a long time trapped in the "tyranny of place and aesthetics". This, according to Mphahlele (1981:1–12), encapsulates the South African socio-political environment from the colonial occupation by the British around 1820, through the 1950s when the apartheid policy was enacted; the period in which he, as a writer, experienced challenges related to spatial policies by the government and censorship.

The attempt to solve the racial problems politically through idealism that advocated a non-racial society fizzled out in ideological wars fought over the Treason trial, the

Rivonia trial, and the Sharpeville Massacre in the 1960s (Mphahlele 1981:1). The resuscitation of an endeavour for a better society manifests through a direct advocacy for African humanism. Due to the high-handedness of the regime against Black people, and its determination to keep the races apart, their attempts to reach out to white communities suffered such severe restrictions and humiliations that they saw no point in extending "their hand" further (Mphahlele 1981:2). This seems to have triggered the communities' resolve to bolster black morale and consciousness, encapsulating Mphahlele's vision of African humanism.

The subjugation and denigration of Africans through colonisation had a direct negative impact on their human dignity, which in turn contributed to distorted literary images, for instance, the depiction of black characters in Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* (1883). This conquest was made all the more complex by the fact that Africans were a target of expression by both the British and the Afrikaners. The patronising English liberal tradition expressed through literature depicted Africans as "outright wild" and therefore needing to be cultured. Mphahlele (1974:132) refers to the novelists Mikro and Sarah Gertrude Millin, who depict grovelling, degenerate, coloured labour squatters. On the other hand, he notes that C.M. van den Heever depicts Africans as part of wild nature in his writings, whilst the Hobson brothers think of Bushmen as sub-human, and write about them as baboons (Mphahlele 1974:132). The dominant themes of the time by the English, such as for example Thomas Pringle and William C. Scully, included the 'emancipation of slaves' and the 'noble savage'. According to Mphahlele (1981:2), this "frontier literature" was developed so as to include Afrikaans literature, along with its own perspective of Afrikaner heroic images and exclusive culture. It then follows that African literature in South Africa responded in turn with a sense of loss and nostalgia on the one hand, and an assertion of political, social, and cultural rights for Africans on the other.

The degradation of black people on the part of Afrikaners took a slightly different path, and was perhaps more intense. Their literature propagated an exclusive culture in which

Afrikaners saw themselves as God's chosen people, entrusted with the divine purpose to effeminate wildness, including the African "savage". Mphahlele (1974:132) mentions amongst others, the pioneer poets that include Leipoldt, Celliers and Totius, whose work extensively dealt with either the struggle of their people to liberate themselves from the British rule, or a lyrical expression of external verities, with intervals of natural phenomena. Their writing, therefore, by and large featured criticism against concentration camps, banishment, African savagery, and British imperialism. Totius' writings even depicted an image of his people as a persecuted race, who suffered in the process of bringing salvation to the "barbarians" (Mphahlele 1974:132). This connotes an analogy with the biblical Israelites who were led by a divine spirit across the desert, often having to deal with the challenge from wild heathens. Thus, such exclusive Calvinism was backed by the literature projecting the Afrikaners as a select nation with an exclusive culture, superior to any other African culture. As an activist for Afrikaner culture, Totius had the potential to build and conscientise a group of people in the society to appreciate the Afrikaner cultural heritage (Snyman 2015: 211–212). However due to racial bias, reflected in poems like "Kafferlied" (Totius 1908:42), with subjective use of the Bible, to support white supremacy, his writings can be seen as having perpertrated racial polarisation and black oppression. On the other hand, the manner in which he dealt with the Anglo-Boer war trauma, through the poems that include "Vergewe en vergeet", bear some similarities with the way in which black people process the trauma caused by the apartheid. A certain level of forgiving is discernible, but the continued reference to system and event is a sign that these are not forgotten (Snyman 2015:212).

The political triumph of the Afrikaner nation in the 1948 elections enhanced opportunities for the development and canonising of Afrikaner culture. The vehicle for such canonisation was, according to Willemse (2012:429), the embourgeoisement of the Afrikaner, which in turn leveraged further development of Afrikaans literature. The publications of the time include a three-volume series – *Kulturele geskiedenis van die Afrikaner* (1948-1951), a new literary history – *Perspektief en Profiel* (1951), and the

Anthology – *Groot Verseboek* (1951), all of which made a significant contribution to the elevation of the Afrikaans language and culture. The widened publication and increased sophistication of the literature produced by Afrikaners promoted not just Afrikaner unity and nationalism, but also depiction of Afrikaners as smart, intelligent race and therefore God-chosen leaders of the society. This was supported by writers that included N.P. van Wyk Louw and Breyten Breytenbach, who easily connected with the outside world, and therefore featured more fashionable European philosophies in their writings. Willemse (2012: 430) concurs that such literary sophistication strengthened Afrikaner political power, social hegemony, and cultural assertion.

The rise to prominence and influence by the Afrikaner nation gave rise to Afrikaner nationalism, which was apparently courted by the government, and used to galvanise and canvas the society around the Afrikaans language and culture. However, due to international exposure and broad political consciousness, some writers (that include Van Wyk Louw, Opperman and Breytenbach) began to resist producing biased literature used to promote apartheid policy. Such writers tended to focus on themes promoting intellectuality, compassion, and humaneness, thereby breaking the stereotype that apartheid belonged to the Afrikaner nation. This presented a case for a more “mature” writing, that is capable of drawing from different racial groups in producing more round characters. In this regard, Van Wyk Louw reflects capability in exploring similar themes on culture and society. In *Tristia* (1962), which focuses on objective criticism of the socio–political environment, he questions morals that had developed within the then elite Afrikaner establishment that was replete with corruption, self-indulgence, and arrogance (Willemse 2012:431),

In a similar process as that of the above, Viljoen (2012: 452) argues that in spite of the enforced use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in South African schools, which led to the Soweto uprisings in 1976, the Afrikaans language was used as a powerful tool in the struggle against apartheid. Finding themselves at the political “crossroads”, many Afrikaans speaking activists had to accept that their language was both the language of

the conqueror and of the oppressed. She identifies two phases after 1976 in which Afrikaans literature could have been divided in terms of its role in the struggle. The first phase started with the Soweto uprisings, when Afrikaans-speaking authors complained about the compromised status of the language of their writing. The second phase was the period after 1976, with intensified struggle writing, to the early 1990s, with the unbanning of the ANC and the release of Nelson Mandela from prison, and the 1990-1994 interregnum during which struggle writing subsided for obvious reasons.

As a post-World War II writer, D.J. Opperman is seen as strong believer in the concept of objective correlatives popularised by T.S. Eliot. This is reflected in his exploration of social phenomena that include rural migration, industrialisation, and the alienating environment of the city life, in his publications *Engel uit die Klip* (1950), and *Blom en Baaierd* (1956*).* Similar reflections are further made by S.J. Pretorius in the anthologies *Vonke* (1943) and *Die Arbeider en ander Gedigte* (1945), where he mainly focuses on workers' struggles, and experiences of the downtrodden, inter alia. Reference to these writers indicates how literature can be liberated from political ideologies. This compares to Mphahlele's ideas in the *The African Image* (1974), although his emphasis has been on the writers that manly produced stereotypes across racial lines.

In the African context, culture is seen as the proverbial glue that keeps the society together, and is therefore pivotal to African humanism. Devaluation of African culture then also undermined African humanism. In *Dark Pilgrim* (1959), Venter depicts black people as foolish, prone to criminality and having no formidable culture. The assumption is that such a lack of belonging, civilised and stable or ethical family upbringing, as well as organised and disciplined societal structures lead to their being vagabonds, who migrate to cities and urban environs to seek fortune. This inevitably leads them to fall into criminality, which, according to most "white" literature, is innate in the Black moral DNA. According to Willemse (2012:437), Venter's black character's misdemeanours include stealing from a white woman, who eventually rescues him from his evil ways. His subsequent realisation that he, as black man, has no place in the white city, is

attributed to racist ideologies reflecting apartheid spatial planning, white supremacy, and black subservience.

A further example of white literary dehumanisation of Africans is Olive Schreiner's literary classic, *The Story of an African Farm* (1883). Potrayal of black characters in this novel shows them as object of ridicule, and mostly exposed to Tant Sannie's wrath. She always spiteful, contemptuous, and brutal towards "kaffir servants". They are also not allowed to church services consistent with her view or belief that they are descended from apes and therefore don't need any salvation (Schreiner 1883:62). Mphahlele (1974) also expresses indignation regarding the depiction of Africans in Plomer's *Turbott Wolfe* (1925). Although Wolfe's servant Caleb Msomi is educated and trustworthy, and plays an important role in society, he is one of the characters that Plomer recognise as vaguely drawn. A reference is made to a white character, Flesher, who degenerates to grotesque hater of "nigger lovers", and "hates them more than Africans". Another white, Soper commits a horrible murder by castrating an African. He is heard telling his friends that he nearly married a "coloured" but did not, due to his belief that Africans are nothing more than animals. This attitude goes along with the undermining of black cultural practices in what constitutes a barbaric casualisation of African humanism.

Mphahlele's reference to the "tyranny of place, time and aesthetics" also determines the way one contemplates and assesses reality in terms of his or her personal beliefs pertaining the society. Mphahlele (1990:2) uses a Marxist interpretation of art and its function in a societal context. He, in this context, sees art as dependent upon social relations in societies. An individual acquires self-awareness of his or her environment through their relations with other humans. Therefore, what an artist produces is mostly consciously or unconsciously shaped by the social relations he or she has in society (Mphahlele 1990:3).

The definition of art outlined above indirectly addresses the question of the inhuman character portrayal of Africans by most South African writers of Mphahlele's era, hence his call to African humanism. This develops from his conviction about the social function of literature. Mphahlele (2002:xxi) proposes a kind of literature that is comprised of a system of storytelling, lyricism and dramatic attachment that engages aesthetics to develop and empower the human mind. This contrasts with the "combat" or politically inspired literature that encouraged white writers to draw upon the life of the white only, whilst relegating black life to the fringes of their consciousness. This, according to Mphahlele (1974:133), has been the root cause of the skewed character portrayal in South African literature.

African humanism signifies culture as central to character formation and portrayal. Culture, in this regard, denotes social cohesion, shared values, norms, traditions and customs within a particular group of people (Allen 1992:282). Zimmermann (2017) further defines culture in the article "What is culture?" She traces the origin of the word "culture" from a French term, which in turn derives from the Latin "colere", which means to tend the earth and nurture. Contextualising the term in Africa, she notes that this continent is home to various cultures. Her reference to the National History Museum in London indicates that human life originated on this continent and began to migrate to other areas of the world around 60 000 years ago. The key feature of Africa's "multi-culture" is the large number of ethnic groups throughout the 54 countries on the continent. It therefore flows from Mphahlele's argument that writing or literature should be understood as a conscious cultural act, which reflects self-knowledge and societal mores and is expressed in a particular language. That, on its own, is a cultural referent. In *Africa, my Music* (1984) he critiques his own teaching of Eurocentric literature to his students with whom he shared a township culture, "a culture that was very much an assertion of the human spirit fighting for survival against forces that threatened to fragment or break it" (Mphahlele 1984:16).

Character portrayal in South African literature has been bedevilled by different political ideologies since the time of the colonial conquest. In addition to curtailing artistic abilities, I argue that this amounted to a manner of “stage controlling” of literature, with dire consequences for character representation. This channelled the writer to reflect human behaviour at various levels of racial experience. Mphahlele (2004:248) argues that the effect of the colonial expedition and literary censorship has been cultural change in Africa. This change has occurred on all levels and across the various structures of society, mainly religion and education, turning focus away from African ways of living, and in the process prohibiting Africans from taking the initiative in the reconstruction of African institutions and strategies that would embody African culture. This is an essential aspect of African humanity, which does not define one’s worth through materiality, but values one’s relationship with fellow human beings, and the ancestors. It has become lost in African writing, and has not yet been resuscitated. In tracing his footsteps back to Maupaneng Village, and then Lebowakgomo after spending 20 years in exile, hoping to get a meaningful cultural context, as he reflects in *Afrika, my Music*, Mphahlele expresses disappointment at the hostile environment that still repels African humanism (Mphahlele 1984:8;157).

One key point Mphahlele makes is that a literary text expresses a writer’s index of value in the context of his or her social milieu. Character is the central feature of this context, through which the writer constructs and expresses himself esoterically. The paradox in Mphahlele’s literary work is the apparent contradiction between the theme of universal humanism on the one hand, and its representation as the preserve of black Africans, on the other. This is one of the key issues that will be explored, in this study of character representation, which, as Mphahlele (1981:4–5) indicates, is shaped by social and physical environment.

2.3. BIKO’S CONCEPTION OF AFRICAN CULTURE AND HUMANISM

Biko’s writings on culture and the efficacy achieved by Black Africans in the midst of racial oppression that started with the landing of Jan Van Riebeek in the Cape in 1652, contain insights that have been generally overlooked by many writers. This perhaps has

been due to the political vehicle he was associated with. This is the Black Consciousness Movement, which has always been seen as a smaller organisation compared to the likes of ANC or the PAC. However, his writings places culture at the centre of the discourse.

Such centrality makes culture the object of attack for imperialists, whose aim would be achieved through the conquest of a nation for imperialistic purposes. In the process of colonisation, indigenous culture is literally put under siege by western culture, resulting in the former being a casualty, or to its total extinction (Biko 1978: 45).

According to Biko (1978:44), the "acculturation" that happens when two cultures come together and fuse, could not transpire in the case of Africans versus the West, owing to the one-sided nature of the process, led by the dominant culture. This means that the vanquished gives up most of the crucial elements of their own culture, whilst in the process adopting that of the conqueror. The kind of mixed or "bastard" culture that grows out of such an environment develops at the rate determined by the ruler's culture. In a chapter entitled *Post-Colonial Futures*, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1989: 209) also note that post-colonial discourse problematises the concept of culture. When decolonising countries appropriate imperial culture discourse, the function of imperialism is to ensure that these cultures appropriate the assumption that their own culture is unimportant.

Culture always involves people's lives and the ways of living of those people that share societal origins. However, Biko (1978:46) argues that culture is also political. He contends that the liberation of the poor in South Africa is dependent to a great extent on the African cultural concepts of collectivity and sharing where the human being stands at the centre of society. This is corroborated by Andries Oliphant in his essay, *A Human Face: Biko's Conceptions of African Culture and Humanism* (2008: 215), where he compares Biko's idea of culture to Fanon's and Cabrals' notion that central colonial struggles are "acts of culture" (Oliphant 2008: 215). However, Biko (1978:46) cautions

against re-idolising the precolonial culture and suggests that the present situation matters and, therefore, that the mooted cultural changes ought to take into consideration current developments.

In line with the sentiments expressed above, Fanon (1965:166) argues that successive generations of the colonised nation ought to respectively discover their mission towards regarding their vanquished culture. Fulfilment or betrayal of such a mission depends on the types of action taken and dedication towards the attainment and sustenance of the national culture. Referring to Sekou Toure's address to the congress of black writers and artists in 1959, Fanon views artists in general as efficacious in promoting culture. However, he specifies qualities for such artists, including that they should be:

(i) a living part of Africa and her thought processes; and
(ii) an element of that popular energy which is called forth for the freeing, the progress and happiness of Africa (Fanon 1965:166).

His argument further reflects the notion that an artist who is not concerned with or completely identifies with the colonised people in their battle for African humanism has no meaningful contribution to make to the development of a national culture (Fanon 1965:166).

Biko's conception of culture is based on fundamental aspects that include human centredness, close communal relationships, cooperativeness, and sharing. He highlights the notion of African culture as essentially anti-colonialist, as well as anti-capitalist. Oliphant (2008:228) further isolates the possessive individualism of liberal humanism, and contrasts this with Biko's concept of humanism, which is not anti-individual, but emphasises egalitarianism. The centrality of "humanity" in his essay, characterises the quest by the formally oppressed to humanise South Africa. This is achieved in liberating her from the inhuman social system characterised by racial prejudice and the exploitation of racial groups regarded as inferior. The quest aims to

replace such a system with a society characterised by human equality and equity. In line with this, Biko (1978:51) acknowledges that the powerful nations of the “civilized” world gave the world an industrial and military look, but fell short when it came to the human aspect, the metaphoric “human face” that he believed to be the precious gift that Africa would bestow upon the world. This reflects Biko’s philosophy as essentially based on a culturally conceived humanist concept, whose reflection is envisaged in literary texts and other works of art.

2.4 THE UBUNTU PHILOSOPHY

The concept of “*ubuntu*” is understood differently. Within the broad range of definitions, two receive the most reach, where *ubuntu* either refers to the moral quality of an individual person, or to the interconnectedness of people as a community. The centrality of the concept of personhood is of the utmost significance to both understandings. According to Gade (2012:483), the question of who counts as a “person” in this regard and what personhood is, is key to understanding the whole concept. The operational terms of morality, generosity, and empathy, interconnectedness (Tutu 1999:34), create a definitive link between a person, personhood and *ubuntu*.

2.4.1 UBUNTU IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

The key issues highlighted in this section include that the *ubuntu* concept is diverse and can be viewed from different perspectives. However, for purposes of this study, focus will be mainly on two respective definitions of the term, viz. a moral quality of a person, and interconnectedness of people. Due to the universalism of the term, it requires discussion in its respective African contexts. Although *umtu* or *abantu* was in the past a derogatory word used to refer to a group of people that were seen just as “hewers of wood and drawers of water” (Mphahlele 1959: 168), the indigenous *ubuntu* philosophy conspicuously emerged in the new post colony as one of popular referents. In contrast to previously divisive notions, *ubuntu* is defined as signifying; communality, community, solidarity, interpersonal caring and sharing across racial, ethnic and tribal divides. The

derivative from a Nguni word *umtu*, the concept *ubuntu* signifies a person's moral quality.

The concept exists in various other African languages that include isiZulu, shiTsonga, shiTswa, tshiVenda, seSotho, seTswana, chiChewa, seShona, kiTara and kiSwahili, all of which have a similar meaning. In addition to being used to promote the spirit of family-hood or connectedness, the concept also refers to human generosity, being considerate and humaneness towards others. An explanation was also given of the close relation between ubuntu and respect for peoples' cultures. A point of convergence of such cultures is normally followed by a process of acculturation, which, according to Biko (1978: 45), should have no sign of domination of one by another.

The word *ubuntu* is not new in South Africa. However, it gained prominence in the aftermath of the demise of statutory (formal) apartheid. Ngcoya (2009:1) argues that the indigenous ubuntu philosophy conspicuously emerged in the new postcolony as one of the popular referents. In contrast to segregatory policies, *ubuntu* implies communality, community solidarity, and interpersonal caring and sharing, across racial, ethnic, and tribal divisions. It is derived from a Nguni word *mtu* (in isiXhosa), or *muntu* (in isiZulu). In other languages, including Sesotho, Setswana and Sepedi, the word is *motho.* The Afrikaans equivalent is "medemenslikheid". In all these languages, the word has the same meaning, that is, "a person". Moreover, it has different levels of meaning, depending on the context in which it is used at a given time. As noted, at the lexical level this word denotes a human being or person.

This concept of personhood informs the root of the humanism expressed in the concept of *ubuntu,* which signifies a person's moral quality. Regionally, there are a number of definitions of the concept, which, although emanating from different origins, mostly have similar meanings. This is referred to as *vumunhu* in shiTsonga and shiTswa in Mozambique, *vhuthu* in tshiVenda, and *botho* in Sesotho, Setswana, and Sepedi. The pronunciation and meaning remain similar even in languages from other Central, Eastern and Southern African countries. It is known as *umunthu* in Chichewa language (Malawi), *unhu* in seShona (Zimbabwe), *utu* in Kiswahili (Kenya and Tanzania) and in

western Uganda, where Kitara is predominantly spoken, the concept is referred to as *obuntu*. It is *humuntu* in Kisukuma and Kihaya (Tanzania), and *bomotho* in the DRC and Gikwese – Angola (Kamwangamalu 1999: 25).

In Botswana, which shares the Setswana language with South Africa, the concept *botho* is central to community and social cohesion. To this effect, *motho ke motho ka batho* translates into English as 'a person is a person through other people'. This is one of the five national principles of Botswana, listed in the "Vision 2016" that was launched in 2012. In this context it defines a process according to which, for a person to earn respect, he/she should respect others and acknowledge their humanity (Botswana Government 2012: 5).

In Malawi, the concept *umunthu* is also used to promote the view that people should live as one family serving one God. In line with this is a shared view, expressed in Chichewa *Kali kokha Nkanyama, tili awri ntiwanthu*, which translates to the following: 'when one is on his/her own, one is as good as an animal of the wild, but when two or more exist alongside one another, recognise and respect one another, they form a community'. The philosophy of *umunthu* has been developed in Malawi through proverbs that include *Mwana wa muzako ngwako yemwe, uka chenjera manja udya naye*, which means that a neighbour's child is one's own and one should apply/use his/her values in dealing with the child. Rwanda and Burundi's main languages, Kinyarwanda and Kirundi, refer to *ubuntu* as human generosity, or just humanity. *Gira ubuntu* means to be considerate and be human towards others. In the perspective of a comprehensive world view, *ubuntu* is a loaded term, but whichever way it is defined, it carries African culture, tradition, beliefs, customs, and value systems. Chuwa (2014:15) summarises its definition as the bond that underlies cultural diversity and various value systems of most African Sub-Saharan peoples.

The definition of ubuntu as a moral quality of a person is shared by Tutu (1999: 34), where he writes that the very possession is praiseworthy. For instance, he sums up a wording of high praise this way: *yu unobuntu*, this person has *ubuntu,* exuding high moral standards, and therefore commands significant respect amongst the people. He

further elaborates that a person that has *ubuntu* is generous, hospitable, friendly, caring and compassionate (Tutu 1999: 34).

The meaning and usage of *ubuntu* as a concept is similar in Uganda and Tanzania. In the Kitara language, which is spoken by Kiga, Nyoro, Tooro, Nyankore, Haya and Nyambo in western Uganda, as well as by some peoples of Northern Tanzania, *obuntu* refers to human generosity, consideration, and humanness towards other persons in the community. The expression *obuntu bulama* is commonly used in central Uganda by speakers of the Ganda language to encourage humaneness and kindness. In eastern Ugandan, where Lugwere is spoken, *kobuntu* refers to the behaviour generally accepted by humans toward each other. Kiswahili, which is spoken by the majority in East Africa, uses the term *utu* to refer to humanness, and it is also used to condemn acts and deeds that are seen or regarded as unfair. In Kenya, *mundu* depicts the act of being humane to other human beings, and to nature in general (Gade, 2012 :48).

The concept of *ubuntu* or *unhu* is much more elaborate in the Sishona language, which is predominantly spoken in Zimbabwe. The commonly used phrase *Munhu munhu nekuda kwevanhu* puts this in context. Literary exploration around this region reveals three maxims of *hunhuism* or *ubuntuism* that contribute to this discourse. The first states that to be human is to affirm one's humanity by recognising the humanity of others and, on that basis, establish respectful relations with them. The second reflects on *human* choices, for example when one is faced with a decisive choice, such as between wealth and preserving the life of another person, one should opt for the latter. Thirdly, according to Samkange and Samkange (1980:106), *hunhuism* is understood as a principle embedded in traditional African political philosophy, which presumes that a king owes his status (and the powers associated with it) to the will of the people under him. The last point above carries significant meaning, namely that, whoever happens to be at the helm, or has the plight of others in his or her hands, ought to treat those others humanely or with *ubuntu.* One other manifestation of *ubuntu* from an African perspective is where elderly people are not called by their first names, but rather by their surnames or clan names. According to Samkange and Samkange (1980:38), this

has the effect of banishing individualism, attributing a representative role to individuals, where the individual effectively embodies the people from whom he comes. The individual identity is replaced with the larger societal identity within the individual. This, in essence, means that an individual represents the people from whom he comes. The representivity extends to villages, districts, and regions. Being a microcosm of a bigger society places high demands on the individual to behave or reflect highest possible virtues of the particular family accentuates the realisation that individuals are living human beings within society. This also applies to character portrayal in fiction or literary texts, which portray living characters in the context of society. The concept of *ubuntu* presupposes cultural development and this indicates that the two normally thrive alongside each other.

According to Biko (1978:45), since 1652, South Africa has experienced a process of acculturation. Nevertheless, he cautions that the actual meaning of acculturation is the fusion of different cultures, which implies an equal-sided process. In this instance, however, the fusion has been one-sided, that is, the Anglo-Boer culture dominated the African culture. Whilst the latter was characterised according to a colonial gaze as being simple and primitive, the former understood itself to be lacking no adornment, a colonialist culture and was therefore overbearingly positioned for domination and conquest.

The foundational aspects of the writings of both Mphahlele and Mda involve reflecting on the subversion and domination of African culture by the British and Dutch-Afrikaans colonial cultures. The distinctive quality of these White cultures is individualism and negate communal living, whilst communalism and intimacy define African culture. Consistent with the *ubuntu* philosophy and African culture, the meaning of intimacy is not confined to particular friends, but a whole group of people who are brought together either by residential circumstances, for example being fellow villagers, or working under similar circumstances. Conversational or relational groups would be naturally determined by age and/or division of labour. For instance:

> One would find all boys whose work was to look after cattle, periodically meeting at particular spots to engage in a conversation about their cattle, girlfriends, parents, heroes, etc. All commonly shared their secrets, joys and woes. No one felt unnecessary and an intruder into someone else's business (Biko 1978:46).

The situation depicted above, represents a cornerstone of the *ubuntu* philosophy, with the concept informed through contributions from leading scholars in the subject, and commonly manifested across all age groups in African societies, in contrast to Western or non-African cultures.

2.4.2 THE AFRICAN SOCIALIST CONCEPT OF UJAMAA AND UBUNTU

The Kiswahili word, *ujamaa* originated in the traditional kinship communalism that characterised many rural African communities. Chuwa (2014:41) defines this as "familyhood" or "fraternity", namely the attitude of mind that makes it necessary to ensure that people care for each other. It is about care and reciprocity. While much thought has been about *ujamaa* as a socialist system, the proponents demonstrate that it is, in essence, not necessarily the case. For instance, destitute people can be potential capitalists that may easily become exploiters of their fellow human beings. This can be attributed to the role played by Radesene in *She Plays with the Darkness* (1995). On the contrary, a millionaire (or multi-millionaire) can equally be a socialist. He/she may value his/her wealth in such a way that it can be used in the service of his/her fellow citizens. This affirms *ujamaa* as *ubuntu* ethic.

The former Tanzanian president, Julius Kambarage Nyerere, had learnt about self-reliant communities, which he proposed to implement through *ujamaa* as a concept that was based on communalism (James 2014). The two challenges he identified that had to be overcome were: (i) the subordination of women; and (ii) poverty, both of which were an obstacle to human development and humanism. However, energised by the prospects, the communities of Litowa successfully implemented the concept and community developed economically, socially, and mutual respect, non-racialism, non-ethnicism, as well as education helped develop social cohesion in the community

(James 2014). This concept imbued certain basic principles and values of a decent human society with *ubuntu* qualities. These include:

> The right of human beings to equal human dignity, the recognition of society as a necessary means to the common good, and by the same token, that society in that last instance exists for the sake of preserving and developing the human dignity of all individuals. Only in societies where equality and a combination of freedom and a sense of community prevail are these ethical/political principles fulfilled (Boesen et al. 1977:12).

The type of ideal society referred to above is in context achieved through a network of ujamaa communities, where exploitation of one person by another is abolished and everybody recognises each other's right to a fair share of the material and social benefits of the community, as well as a necessary duty to cooperate and contribute through their works.

Ujamaa's resonance with *ubuntu* gives it an extended definition that portrays also as a cultural ethic, which plays a unifying role amongst fellow members of a particular community and across society at large. It seeks to challenge the doctrine that building a happy and successful society depends on a philosophy of inevitable conflict between human beings. The latter is the cornerstone of racial segregation policies and ethnic cleansing practices that led to the displacement and killing of many people in the African continent. *Ujamaa* is therefore, a praxis of *ubuntu*. Recognition of human dignity and personhood in all humans and safeguarding that dignity is the ethical ideal of both *ujamaa* and *ubuntu*. As novel analysis will later show, the segregation between Radisene and Dikosha in *She Plays with the Darkness* is symbolic of the evil that these concepts are meant to heal. Chuwa (2014: 42) summarises *ujamaa* as a systematised *ubuntu* in praxis. It is accordingly based on the need to recognise human equality and the ethical imperative of investing in the community, based on each individual's needs. It is ultimately about upholding the crucial paradox of all groups, that is, contributing to the community for the good of all, without denying personal rights and entitlements.

Although not developed to the extent as demonstrated by Litowa as indicated above, the community of Ha Samane in *She Plays with the Darkness* is set around similar

communal norms and values. Most people in the village know one another. They have self-made connections with each other, and arrangements to help and support each other. This contributes to broader community development. For instance, Radisene's growth and development in his youth is through support from the "Father of the Daughters" who is one of the wealthier people in the community. The dictum "it takes the whole village to raise a child", which is one of the key tenets of *ubuntu*, characterises the Ha Samane community. This is demonstrated by the village "mothers" when they gather to see and show love to Radisene, bringing him gifts, food and money, even when he is grown up and working, and still referring to him as "our son". Ujamaa, as one of the qualities of *ubuntu*, will be used in analysing the literary texts identified for this study.

2.4.3. THE CONCEPT OF UBUNTU IN THE CHANGING CONTEXT OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

As per discussion on the African context of *ubuntu* and culture in 2.4.1 above, *ubuntu* as a concept has often been defined with various points of emphasis in different times and contexts. Its amenability to affective appeal, especially amongst Africans, has exposed it to usage in several contexts, including commercial, depending on the motive of the user at a particular point in time. However, it remains a significant philosophy of shared community and belonging in the history of Southern Africa. This is attributable to the centrality of the person, which is of utmost significance to understanding of ubuntu as a concept, as well as in portrayal of characters in a literary text. According to Mphahlele (1981:8), literature is a compulsive cultural act, an act of self-discovery, an act of language, at the centre of which is a person. The operational terms that include responsibility, hospitality and interconnectedness universalise the concept clearing overlaps, in spite of differences, on a number of issues between African and Western cultures. Nevertheless, the concept itself is apolitical, and can be used internationally in dealing with all relevant societal issues.

The transversal nature of the concept has apparently enabled its utilisation in different contexts and its evolution over overtime. Stuit (2014:2) argues that such an evolution influences shifts in meaning and the affective charge associated with the meaning in a particular context. In South Africa, the concept has been developed to convey reciprocity by the Nguni proverb "*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*", translated into English as, "the person is a person because of and through other people" (Tutu 1999: 35). The proverb has been translated into other languages in South Africa and the region, in line with other related concepts indicated earlier in this chapter. It generally highlights humane qualities that include sharing (generosity), hospitality, compassion, friendliness and interest in the common good, striving for social harmony, and a positive disposition towards other people (Gade 2012: 489).

The dawn of democracy in South Africa in the early 1990s had a significant impact in the redefinition and usage of the concept. It is within the theory of binary opposites that Stuit (2014:5) traces varied usage of the concept, from its nationalistic "deployment" to its commercial exploitation. This reflects the way in which exponential shifts in the utilisation of *ubuntu* trigger changes in its affective charge, as well as the manner in which the affects of *ubuntu* determine the meaning in a particular culturally discursive environment.

The national environment, characterised by the release of political prisoners and the unbanning of political organisations in 1990 and the years that followed, created an unforeseen vacuum, which could only be filled with reconciliation. This condition, implementing structures and the process led to the publication of the book *No future without forgiveness* (2000) by Desmond Tutu, which refers to *ubuntu* as one of the seminal determinants of societal convergence and "nucleus" of human solidarity. This "essence of human being" seeks to demonstrate the point that someone's humanity is intricately bound up in others. Accordingly, a person cannot be human through a self-centred definition. According to Tutu (1999:34), one becomes human because he/she belongs, he/she participates and shares. He also argues that a person becomes "truly"

human by embedding oneself in one's environment in a way that strives for social harmony.

The use of the concept in any context other than that which promotes morality in respect of individual human beings and the community, reflects the evolving nature of the utilisation of *ubuntu*. Such a move away from the previously held meaning has a tendency to undermine the moral significance of *ubuntu*, thereby shifting the sentiment previously associated with *ubuntu* to another signifier (Stuit 2014:7). The downside of the move is that its impact either obliterates or distorts the earlier meaning, as well as the conditions under which the new meaning is created and applied.

The use of *ubuntu* in commercial contexts has impacted the usage of the concept. Stuit (2014:7) makes reference to commercial advertisements that were focused on promoting the Soccer World Cup of 2010. In an attempt to promote unity in the formerly segregated society, the advertisements focused on the racial stereotypes that characterised the society, encouraging them to overcome these, and work together. The series of similar adverts at the time of the Confederations Cup (preceding the World Cup) depict soccer matches between stereotypical groups in South Africa. The three matches (in the commercials), each end in a tie, which allows for happy ending, which is reflected through group photos, with smiling faces. In line with Stuit's object of demonstration, he focuses on the one that pits the "Mamas" team against Café owners. The "Mamas", plan of attack, is dubbed the "ubuntu strategy", which unduly aligns the concept with aspects of race, class, and gender. This team's skills at manoeuvring the ball towards the opponent's side associates *ubuntu* with exclusion, which could cause societal disintegration. However, this is neutralised by the tagline appearing on commercial/entertainment screens in the public areas that read "Beyond 2010, there is a nation united" (Stuit 2014:8). The contrast effected between the stereotypes and the "ubuntu strategy" is apparently used to draw attention to the theme of national unity, which indicates that regardless of a person's background, race or nationality the shared effort of hosting a splendid World Cup tournament cut across the racial divide.

This distortion of *ubuntu* is consequential, limiting the reach of the original concept. This is partly due to the conflicting interests of the sponsors and their economic interests. The reference to the 2010 Soccer World Cup by Stuit (2014:9) reflects the stereotypical mentality that most South African café owners are Greek, and this group of people is considered extremely racist. Owing to other expectations, like creating job opportunities for locals, the "strategy" would eventually be focused on excluding "non-South Africans", as mirrored the exclusionary and xenophobic claims against foreign nationals. This is a far cry from an expression of an endemic ethical concept that unites human beings without exception.

The international sports event and its promotion succeeded in bringing people together and some level of national cohesion was achieved, in spite of the limitations discussed above. This, however, also reflects changing parameters of the concept. Stuit (2014:9) ascribes such a change to shifts in signifiers. These include the emotional attachment to the dignified and solemn meaning of *ubuntu* in a politically charged period, the advent of democracy, and shifts to the second, light-hearted nation-building exercise. The laughter towards the end of the world cup advert, symbolising people's comfort (across racial and ethnic boundaries) and ease with one another reflects a new signifier which is commercially driven. However, the concept of *ubuntu* at this signification level is, according to Rosello (1998:35), susceptible to perpetuating stereotypes. He bases this on the experience that stereotypes are, in fact, difficult to eradicate when they have been entrenched over time. This is in line with Mphahlele's (1974:14) reflection on his frustration with portraying white characters in a rounded way. My investigation on Mphahlele's literary works indicates this as a crucial issue that has led to his quest to capture African humanism.

2.5. POSTCOLONIAL AND DECOLONISATION THEORIES

Antagonism and dissent against western conquest, culture, colonialism and neo-colonialism has been present in the writings of Africans since the 1800s, when writers

like T. Soga, S.E.K. Mqhayi and S.T. Plaatje published their perspectives on native life in South Africa. Nevertheless, intensified literary onslaughts were launched in the 1970s. The writers whose writings addressed these matters mentioned above are divided into two groups, representing different views around which the society is conscientised and organised. On the one hand are those who seek to oppose and critique political injustice in modern Africa since the attainment of independence by many African states. The other group focuses on addressing the imposition of colonial and neo-colonial forces on forms of government, society and culture in post-independence Africa. Griffiths (2000:172) argues that the shift in focus and themes by many writers includes the styles of writing, and their resolve to find forms which would appeal to wider mass audience, involving critiques about the struggle against political corruption and inequalities and the role of the new elite. Most writers in the 1970s, 1980s and up to the early 1990s continued to use social realism in their account of the new postcolonial underclass. Social messages were also conveyed through allegorical forms of writing, presenting the writers as social critics on African socio-political lives of the people, with greater focus placed on continued cultural domination. This period was also characterised by calls to return to more “authentic” African themes and forms of writing, under the umbrella of cultural decolonisation.

The writers whose themes feature resistance and decolonisation, and who seem to have had a significant influence on Zakes Mda, include the following: Chinua Achebe with *Things Fall Apart* (1958), *Arrow of God* (1964) and *No Longer at Ease (1960)*; Ngugi wa Thiong’o with *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), *The River Between* (1965), *Petals of Blood* (1977), *Devil on the Cross* (1982), and *Decolonising the Mind* (1986); Mtutuzeli Matshoba – *Call Me not a Man* (1979), Frantz Fanon – *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967), *The Wretched of the Earth* (1967), Bantu Steven Biko, *I Write What I Like* (1978) and Es’kia Mphahlele, *The African Image* (1974) among others. The African experience of colonialism and neo-colonialism led to the production of literature that seeks to enlighten Africans on the colonial trappings that Africa became entangled in and on possible options for dealing effectively with the scourge. Ngugi wa Thiong’o features

strongly in this regard, in the sense that he proposes a more radical literary shift towards the decolonisation of African cultures. Griffiths (2000:211) notes Ngugi's prominent project in his writing career, as the decisive shift in the language used in literature, from the ex-colonial languages to indigenous, as the main means of expression and writing.

The significant milestone in Ngugi's writing project appears to be *Petals of Blood* (Petals ya Damu in Kiswahili) (1977). This novel signifies a "gear change" (Griffiths 2000:212) in his literary techniques, as it is the first of the texts which followed his decision to write in Gikuyu, and Kiswahili. Acclaimed as the most prominent of his writings, it combines the positioning of the novel as a vehicle for social change with a mixture of simple to complex narrative, and characters who are represented as both credible and vibrantly drawn . It mainly deals with the scepticism around the political change subsequent to Kenya's independence from colonial rule, challenging the political system that appeared to perpertuate oppression and economic exploitation of Kenyian citizens in the post indepence era (Griffiths 2000:211).

The novel seems to be a representation of Ngugi's concept in dealing with the complex issue of decolonising the African mind. As noted by Griffiths (2000:213), it is also the first of his novels to take this approach. The characters are portrayed as experiencing the impact of political forces in the widest possible sense. The author effectively creates a totality of the social, economic, and political experience, and the characters depict life and experience in both the novel and the actual world. As indicated earlier, it is the implementation of the author's conviction that the use of European languages in literature perpetuates the neo-colonialist domination of Africa by maintaining the upper hand in cultural hegemony.

In her article, "Beyond the aftermath: Exploring psychological decolonization in a post-apartheid context of artistic praxis" (2014), Farieda Nazier explores the contextualisation of Frantz Fanon's theory, and how it can be used in the development of critical consciousness towards the "decolonization of the mind" in post-apartheid South Africa.

This involves an overview of Fanon's concept of psychological colonisation and consequent "neurosis of blackness", according to Hook's (2004b:117) perspective. Fanon's writing reflects a lived experience in a racially oppressive anti-black society. As a black psychiatrist at the time of colonial French Martinique, Fanon's personal encounters often informed his writings, which are embedded in Freudian psychoanalysis. Ziauddin Sadar, in the foreword of Fanon's book *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008:vi) posits that the mind of the oppressed is central to the decolonisation discourse. According to this, Fanon demystifies the psycho-existential complex between the coloniser and the colonised, thereby highlighting and theorising the devastating effects of white supremacy on the Black psyche. Tabensky (2010:82) argues that this oppressed–oppressor binary causes psychological damage on both sides of the divide. Fanon (2008) further elaborates that a race-based socioeconomic and cultural dispossession is susceptible by extension to a form of psychological colonisation, which if further restrained may cause "psychic disorders" in the form of neuroses.

Following Fanon's critique of colonisation, Ngugi argues in *Decolonising the Mind* (1986) that alongside the physical, material, and cultural dispossession by colonisation, Africans experienced a deep-seated indoctrination, which he equates to the "'colonisation of the mind". As noted by Dascal (2009:2), this accompanies an acceptance of and resignation by the colonised to the intellectual habits of the coloniser. In pushing back the frontiers of colonisation, decolonisation would require the colonised to be bold enough to resist and oppose the dominant ideologies. However, Sium, Desai and Ritskes (2012:3) argue that decolonisation is not a simple process, like rejecting an embedded inferiority complex. It instead requires re-imaginative and serious re-articulation of power, real change, and balanced knowledge, through manifold epistemologies, ontologies, and axiologies.

In support of the complexity of theory pertaining to decolonisation, Paulo Freire (2005:125) argues that true liberation or critical consciousness can only be accomplished through revolutionary praxis. He contextualises praxis as the development of such critical consciousness through integrative reflection on human

activity and theory. Hook (2004a) agrees with Freire's conception of the process of awareness, but points out that it requires getting to understand the "tools" to critique the status quo towards liberation from oppression. The key objective of such a 'knowledgeisation' is attaining the critical consciousness that enables the oppressed to deal effectively with transformational problems. In line with Ngugi's, Fanon's and Freire's theories, Biko (1978:74) states as most significant the realisation that the mind of the oppressed is the oppressor's most powerful weapon that the latter uses and manipulates. The three theorists affirm the revolutionary praxis as an instrument to recondition the oppressed's consciousness with pride and dignity to alert them to the danger of the complicity they are pushed to be part of, unconsciously allowing themselves to be misused and further oppressed.

According to Hook (2012:491), this involves an internal struggle pertaining to racial oppression and the required redress, with a focus on changing falsified perceptions of the Black self-image. At another level, Fredrickson (1997:189–207) places emphasis on "psychological rehabilitation" by reclaiming positive Black identity and renouncing western hegemony. In this regard, he identifies four variables: (i) resistance; (ii) critical pedagogy; (iii) critical consciousness; and (iv) praxis, which are the "tools" to be used towards liberating and decolonising the minds of the oppressed. These are reflected in the literary work of both Mphahlele and Zakes Mda.

It has, in this section, been noted that consistent with the views of both Es'kia Mphahlele and Zakes Mda, on the social role of writing, a number of writers have over the years ventured and contributed to postcolonial and decolonisation theories. Soga, Mqhayi, Plaatje, and Achebe, pursued a clearly identified decolonisation agenda. It is however wa Thiong'o who proposed a more radical literary shift towards decolonisation of African culture. This is complemented by Farieda Nazier's contextualisation of Frantz Fanon's theory on critical consciousness, towards "decolonisation of the mind" in post-apartheid South Africa. As the study will further reveal, these writers seem to have had a significant influence on Mda's writings.

2.6 AFRICAN WRITING: A CRITIQUE BY NKOSI AND NDEBELE

In his publication, *Home and Exile – and Other Selections* (1983), Nkosi examines creative writing in South Africa from the 1950s to the 1980s, as well as his experience with Black writing in other parts of the world. His critique of South African writing starts at the time when D.F. Malan took over the political reins of the country on a mandate to improve the implementation of apartheid policy, this in response to the perceived weakness of Smuts' government that ruled before his election. This is the time when African communities were characterised by the time-tested morality of "the tribe". and the Christian indoctrination of these communities.

Most of the literary texts of the time reflected the *Jim comes to Jo-burg* theme, which was attributed to so-called white liberal writers. This routinely carried the implication that Jim's loss of place from a tightly woven tribal structure and the attenuation of the elders' authority over him was the main cause of his woes, rather than the effects of the nation's tragedy. Nkosi (1983:4) argues that this theme developed an inherent distortion, so as to necessarily imply that Jim's disaffiliation from the tribe to indulge in the self-seeking individualistic ethos of urban life, was tantamount to his loss of his personal sense of manhood. Such an interpretation amounts to a lack of knowledge about the ethos of African communities.

It is accordingly identified as a sub-theme in Alan Paton's *Cry, The Beloved Country* (1959). In spite of his generosity of spirit, courageous plea for social justice, and all the qualities that earned him the great respect of many Africans, his representation of the African character discredits his noble intentions. The absurd character of Stephen Khumalo (his protagonist) – with the embodiment of all pieties, trepidations, and humiliations – does not portray the reality of African qualities of strength and success. He therein reflects the biased racially divided South African society. When the reverend goes to Johannesburg in search of his son, he is afforded an opportunity to witness the moral decay of the society for which the major responsibility lies with the white government of the time. Nevertheless, Nkosi (1983:4) observes that this is the kind of "Gethsemane" from which Khumalo emerges, without moral change or critique,

returning to Indotsheni, his innocence still intact, and convinced that there is nothing fundamentally wrong with a society that cannot be set right by love and prayer. Therefore, caught up in the Christian liberal dilemma of how to persuade people to change for the good without resorting to violence and revolutionary tendencies, Paton's novel ends with a distorted, ameliorative vision, in which reconciliation is reflected through liberals providing supplies and helping to build a dam for the inhabitants of a Bantustan. However, Paton has other publications which much more positively represent African characters, like *Tales from a Troubled Land* (1961).

Mphahlele (1974:9) refers to instances of historical negritude and the way this informed social thought. Nkosi (1983:32) traces the development of the negritude movement from resistance to the prefix "non" that was used together with the word "white". The revolt triggered in this instance sought to affirm African values and the dignity of the African personality. This is the subject that ought to be sacrosanct in African writing, according to Nkosi (1983:124). Negritude was in this regard thought of as not just a concept, but a deeper feeling which inhabits African art.

Nkosi (1983:133) warns against writing that focuses merely on racial conflict, as such a theme can be restrictive to artistic purpose. He observes that Mphahlele's writing moved in the direction of reflecting more positive qualities about black experience in the South Africa, instead of writing as though all that blacks do was a reaction to colonial and apartheid oppressive regimes. Nkosi (1983:129) agrees with Mphahlele's observation on the cultural cross-fertilisation that has partly transpired in South Africa, that had enriched rather than impoverished the African. It is, however, a concern that the African had to shed much of his/her cultural heritage to assimilate to the ridiculous and sometimes barbaric demands of a white-controlled society. In spite of the continued relevance of government's current attempts to integrate the society at various levels, that is, political, business, professional and social, across the racial spectrum, to build a "rainbow nation", that life and justice are not experienced equally. The former deputy president, Kgalema Motlanthe's view discussed in recent round table discussions on "whiteness" complements the point made above on racial inequality. He argues that the

transatlantic slave trade that subjected Black Africans to chattel slavery was based on the notion of racial supremacy (Motlanthe, 2015). This, in turn, corroborates Vilakazi's (1999:200) point that all experience that followed the slave trade was a manifestation of the dehumanisation of the African to the level of semi-animal.

Motlanthe (2015) also challenges white-centeredness, which, over time, commanded the position of the "normal", and normative, against non-whites, who were not only "othered" but defined in reference to "white" as a norm. He regrets that this white norm still continues even under the new democratic dispensation. Zakes Mda deals with these issues in his novels, *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2002) and *Little Suns* (2015). In the former, Mda addresses, amongst others, contraventions of the Immorality Act by the people it was purportedly established to protect. A small farming community of Excelsior (Orange Free State Province) was in the 1970s rocked by a scandal of a group of Afrikaner men who were found to have had sexual relations with black women in the area. The group included the pastor of a local Dutch Reformed Church, whose doctrine was that apartheid was God's law. This was exposed when a number of black women gave birth to mixed–race children. He further reflects on how, in spite of such incidents, the racial divide worsened. In *Little Suns* (2015), Mda traces political, historical, cultural and social complexities between black people and white people in the early 1900s. These include colonial subjugation of black people under British rule, divisions amongst thar oppressed, as some got converted into the masters' ways and religion. Socio-cultural clashes would lead to more tensions and ultimately the killing of the colonial magistrate, Hamilton Hope. Acknowledging whiteness as a social and historical construct, he suggests that progressive, intellectual endeavours should lead the process to reconstruct "our world" in line with non-racial norms. This suggests the creation of space for the formerly marginalised African narrative.

Ndebele (1986:156) emphasises the point that rediscovering the "ordinary" helps in developing South African literature. This is demonstrated through the narratives that include *The Conversion*, *Man Against Himself* and *Mamlambo* by Michael Siluma, Joel Matlou, and Bheki Maseko (Ndebele (1986:156), respectively. These draw attention to

the fact that the problems of the South African social formation are complex and cannot be reduced to a single, simple formulation. African humanism is a complex concept, which if fully applied through rediscovering the ordinary can translate to fully developed characters. Serote's novel, *To Every Birth its Blood* (1981) also deals with the ordinary concerns of people thereby placing the problem within the broad political and social context of the country.

2.7 SELECTED THEORIES OF CHARACTERISATION

The theoretical base of the study follows an eclectic approach, which makes use of four relevant theories in an attempt to investigate widely the representation of character in Zakes Mda's fiction and African humanism in his literary work. The theories outlined are diverse and broad. Consistent with the decolonisation discourse surveyed in 2.5 above, focus is placed herein on African originated theories. Western theories will however, also be used as proves efficacious.

2.7.1 AFRICAN HUMANISM AS PROPOUNDED BY ES'KIA MPHAHLELE

Mphahlele's ideas on African humanism, as set out in *The African Image* (1974) were outlined in 2.4 above. The relationship between his ideas and Biko's essays on African culture (1978) reflect close similarity, and respective analysis will be done alongside each other.

This involves evaluating literature on various areas of African life and thought. In his writings, Mphahlele took a critical view of the literary positions of historical Africanness, which he equates to negritude, and the social thought it informs. Although he admits to the ever-presence of tensions between the artworks of imagination and social forces, he maintains that the rejection that happens between social reality and imagination can be seen in the light of a "mother and child" tension, which, regardless of frequency, is always followed by moments of reconciliation (Mphahlele 1974: 10).

The study of African images and humanism reflects a process through which the imagination (and intuition) cuts across the divide between literary work and social reality. This motivation by Mphahlele could not insulate him from criticism that his

theoretical approach isolates character from its context in a literary text, and therefore renders injustice to fictional works. However, his argument that characters should be focus point in a literary work seems convincing, and worth investigating. He elaborates that what comes to readers' minds regarding a novel or any literary text are the characters, more than linguistic features (Mphahlele 1974: 11). For this reason, the types of images created through character (and setting), and the way creative writers view Africa, that is, its people (and social milieus), are critical to proper contextualisation of African humanism.

2.7.2 CHARACTER REPRESENTATION IN SOUTH AFRICAN LITERATURE OF THE 1950s AND BEYOND – THE LITERARY CRITICISM OF LEWIS NKOSI (1983) AND NJABULO NDEBELE (1986)

Literary critique of character representation in South African literature of the 1950s and the years leading to the democratic dispensation is studied and juxtaposed with the critiques of Black writing by Nkosi (1983) and Ndebele (1986).

Nkosi (1983:31) indicates that the problem of social stereotypes starts with the question of identity. He took his skin colour for granted until he discovered that he was not just black, but also non-white. Although he liked being African, he regarded the prefix "non" with absolute hostility and he felt insulted by public notices like "non-whites only", that adorned all public amenities prior to democracy. This creates a negative perception of only on Blacks, but also the government of the day, and what it represented.

According to Ndebele (1986:151) it is not enough for a writer to reflect just the situation of oppression. A literary work should go beyond such a challenge in order to explore ways of its redemptive transformation. He cautions those whose themes merely reflect self-pity in their writings, emphasising that such will not help, but looking ahead is helpful, in that it can reveal that rationality can imerge even from an oppressive environment and such should not be regarded as the end of the world. This emphasises Nkosi's (1983:30) point regarding the African personality, namely that the negative forces (colonisation and subjection) helped to create in Africa. A more conscious and

united Africa emerged out of European aggressiveness. Writing that goes back to rediscovering the ordinary is a step towards round portrayal of African character, as argued by Ndebele (1986:152). Giving attention to the “ordinary” helps to achieve a more positive consciousness. Although South African reality was in the past a symbol of spectacular moral wrong, it can be used effectively as an object of change.

2.7.3 MDA’S AESTHETICS AND POLITICS

The different approaches to literature at different political phases in South Africa by Zakes Mda, in his writings do not come as a surprise when one considers that his own life has been conterminous with the rise and fall of the apartheid regime and its policies. Born in 1948 (Mda2011:14), the same year that the National Party was voted to power, with the mandate to institute and implement the policy of separate development (Harrson 1987:3), shows that Mda grew up in a racially (and ethnically) polarised country. In this regard, Bell (2009) infers that it was inevitable the his political persona would develop alongside his artistic profile.

The harassment experienced by A P Mda (Zakes’ father) when he was a teacher in Herchel forced him to go to exile in Lesotho where he changed career to practising law as an attorney (Mda 2011:138). The continued persecution of the family left behind also compelled that Zakes be sent to join his father in exile, at the age of fifteen (Mda 2011:64). This hard experience, which included having to leave behind his mother, siblings, school, friends, crossing Tele river at night, as well as other related experience, is reflected in his writings. He also writes that the attempt by his mother to protect him from being premacurely involved involved in politics didn’t help, as it was not long after he got to hgh school that he got drawn deeper into politics. He writes about this in his biography and his fascination with the Lesotho politics, as he saw them as an extention of political struggle in South Africa (Mda 2011:79).

He admits in an interview that his earlier writings were not just meant to play the role of a social commentary, but also targeted at rallying people to action (Holloway 1988:83). His drama work that includes *Joys of War* (1989) purposefully depicts the social and

poitical milieu that characterised apartheid governance as acted upon through peoples struggles to reclaim their freedom and humanity. This is in line with what Freire (2005: 125) calls praxis, human activity that consists of action and reflection. The development of critical consciousness characterising his writings, is also central to Biko's propagation that "the mind of the oppressed is the oppressors's most powerful weapon" (Biko 1978:74), hence he emphasised significance of critical consciousness. In addition to Mda's own political experience, as reflected in the autobiography, *Some Times There is a Void* (2011) his political writing was also informed by Fanon's concept of psychological colonisation and the resulting "neurosis of blackness" (2008:xiv).

As his writing developed alongside the socio-political scenario in South Africa, his drama themes and tone reflect changes towards development, as reflected in his publication, *When People Play People: Development Communication through Theatre* (1993). This, according to Bell and Jacobs (2009:4), goes further to contribute to a theoretical framework shaped by Paulo Freire on praxis as the development of critical consciousness through integrative reflection and action (Freire 2005:125). An observation is also made in this study that Mda's writing is significantly influenced by African humanism and African renaissance, and this is elaborated in 2.7.4 below.

Although life of ordinary people didn't just just change for the better with the official ending of apartheid and coming to power of a democratically elected government, Mda concedes that despite this, his approach had to change. His writing now had to accommodate more heterogeneous voices that had arose in contemporary South Africa, and had to be represented in fiction. He explains his change of focus in an interview in 2005, that the end of apartheid freed imagination in his artistic mind. In spite of the fact that the narratives still come from a highly charged political environment, his mission this time became to tell a story rather than propagate a political message (Bell and Jacobs 2009:4-5). This is explored in the ensuing analysis of his selected novels in the following chapters.

2.7.4 MDA'S OWN IDEAS ON THE SOCIAL ROLE OF WRITING

Zakes Mda's writing bears foundational qualities similar to that of Mphahlele, where they apparently started their writing career on a similar footing. Their writing was initially inspired by their strong conviction to respond to social decay and the less than human living conditions entrenched by the apartheid system of government.

They both have historical linkages to the ANC and the PAC. Born in Soweto in 1948, to parents who were initially ANC activists, but later transferred their membership to PAC, Mda was moved at an early age to Herchel (Sterkspruit) in the Eastern Cape. However, for political reasons, his parents had to emigrate to Lesotho in the 1950s, and this is where he finished most of his primary and secondary education. He and Mphahlele also both attach significance to the social value of literature or works of art. The argument forwarded here is that similar to Mphahlele's view on literature's role in society, Mda is against the notion of art for art's sake, where according to him, an artist should be a social commentator (Bell and Jacobs 2009:3). An observation made in the introduction to Eskia - Education African Humanism and Culture, Social Consciousness, Literary Appreciation, expresses the same view: "under Mphahlele's tutelage, literature for the sake of literature was simply an anathema" (Mphahlele 2002:xxi). They both promote the idea of art / literature that uses aesthetic to develop and empower the human mind. "Literature has to have a social function" (Mphahlele 2002:xxi).

Mda's writing career started with writing politically charged theatrical productions, in response to apartheid. At this point in time he used his work as a weapon in the struggle against apartheid. The regime had also put in place measures to champion its cause for exclusive *"*Afrikanerdom*",* which the state imposed on South African society (Harrison 1987:3). His earlier works reflected his double role as a playwright and activist, as is reinforced by the strength and resistance of his characters against poverty and struggle. This motif continues until the late 1980s, with plays like *Joys of War* (1989), reflecting the social and political struggle under apartheid.

As reflected by Bell and Jacobs (2009:4), Mda's literary works started to reflect changes in the early 1990s, that shifted his focus from the struggle and apartheid to a softer and more conciliatory theme. The play, *The Bells of Amersfoort,* reflects the aesthetics of reconciliation (Bell and Jacobs 2009:4). The socio-political changes that were brought about by the end of apartheid permeate Mda's literary works at the time, and ushered in a new theme of healing and nation building. This also signalled a change of genre for Mda, from drama that gave him a ready weapon to lambaste the regime and its social structures, to a more balanced and critical novel writing.

Human equality is a thread that links Zakes Mda's oeuvre to the concept of African humanism. Drawing from western as well as African indigenous traditions, Mda explores the history of Southern Africa during and after apartheid. Bells et al. (2009:1) note the context of his writing, that is, his native country South Africa, as well as from the position of an exile. He examines the lives of ordinary people in a democratic South Africa and the ways in which they come to terms with the effects of apartheid. His assertive approach is reflected in the character portrayal that demonstrates the resilience of people, where they are not overwhelmed by apartheid or constrained by its categories. This characteristic feature relates closely to Mphahlele's philosophy on African humanism, as well as Biko's concept of African culture and humanism.

In a literary biography on Zakes Mda, Steele (2007:50) refers to Mda's remarks on Africanism as follows: "Africanism must be promoted, i.e. Africans must struggle for development, progress and national liberation so as to occupy their rightful and honourable place among nations of the world." He expressed the same view in an interview that I had with him in February 2016, and therefore this appears to be the foundation on which his writing is based.

A similar observation is made by Holloway (1988:83), as he reflects on Mda's conviction about the social relevance of art. This is elaborated in Mda's argument that social relevance does not render a literary work unartistic. He accordingly would like to see his work playing the role of a social commentator, and therefore social matters are central to his artwork.

The social function of Mda's work and its categorisation as a social commentary means that it is an expression of an African aesthetics. Fincham (2011:14) notes this approach in his reflections on practical commitments to the African humanist conception of ubuntu. This links the individual to the community that defines him/her. Mda's initial deployment of *ubuntu* philosophy is through the communal narrator in the novel *Ways of dying*: "we are the all-seeing eye of the village gossip. The story teller begins the story with the words: 'they say it once happened ...' No individual owns any story; the community is the owner of the story, and it can tell it the way it deems fit" (Mda 1995:12).

In the book *The Past Coming to Roost in the Present* (2006), Adrian Knapp undertakes a comparative analysis of Mda's novel, *Ways of Dying* (1995) *and* André Brink's *Imaginings of Sand* (1996). In this study, Knapp explores the notion that, whilst many South African writers have taken up the challenge of producing works that offer new ways of critically re-imagining the country's violent past, these two novels respectively constitute renegotiations of the past during the period of transition. This section spells out Mda's ideas on the social role of writing**,** which is implied to be one of the determinants of his characterisation techniques, and therefore one focus area of the study. He ascribes critical commentary on social ills and aesthetics, to works of art or literary texts, through agency of the character.

2.7.5 CHARACTER THEORIES PROPOSED BY FORSTER (1970), PICKEREL (1988), FISHELOV (1990), MARGOLIN (1990), AND NEWMAN (2012)

The study also investigates selected theories of characterisation proposed by Foster (1970), Pickerel (1988), Fishelov (1990) and Margolin (1990). These are studied insofar as they provide foundational information and knowledge on literary character. However, in verifying the continued relevance of these theories, later publications on the subject are studied and utilised in order to balance and enrich analysis of character representation in the study.

Acknowledging the limitations inherent in the different theories of character, it is inconceivable to undertake a balanced study of character without the basic theory developed by Forster (1970:52). His seminal theory holds the view that characters in all texts are seen as human beings, and therefore would be analysed from the perspective of "actual life". However, such a depiction still ought to differentiate literary (fictional) characters from real-life people. In *Man is the Measure*, Forster (2012:161) emphasises the human aspect of character. His vision is a culture-specific expression, accentuating the significance of humanitarian qualities. His wider view is for a narrative that celebrates normative human universals, parental investment and attachment, pair bonding, communal gathering, and adherence to small social circles, among other things. He nevertheless differentiates between real-life situations and fiction.

The study unfolds from a premise that recognises characters as human beings. However, this does not equate characters in works of art with historical figures or physical beings in everyday living, as will be reflected in characters like Malangana in *Little Suns* (2015) and Dikosha in *She Plays with the Darkness* (1995). This is what, according to Forster's (1970: 53) theoretical rationale, differentiates between these two categories of "people". For instance, in a real-life situations, it is impossible to have complete knowledge about any person, whilst in the fictional world, the converse pertains. A fictional text reader can have access to as much information about "people" in the text, as the author's indulgence and/or creativity will allow. In this context the reader experiences characters as "real and convincing". It is also a particular kind of portrayal and specifically it is the amount of information that the reader is allowed that led to Forster's (1970: 75) typology of "flat" and "round" characters. Nevertheless, the deeper character analysis that identified significant limitations yields further variations of the typology. These include "essentialist and existentialist" by Pickerel (1988:182), Fishelov's (1990:426) "textual and constructed" levels of literary texts, as well as Margolin's (1990:464) character theory that defines character along the continua between "simple and complex" and "predictable and unpredictable".

Basic tension always exists between the individuality of a character and on the other hand, the individual is seen as an intersection of abstract typical traits. According to Fishelov (1990:422), it depends on the author's intention and approach as to whether to emphasise the typical aspects or the characters individuality, and which wins out. The reader's role is however also critical. A character may be perceived as typical and has his/her existence in a novel is only as a representative of some social, psychological and physical element or context. This summarises the value and function of the character in one simple phrase.

Alternatively, it may be felt that any labelling is inadequate and the characters individuality prevails. Reader's responses may change in the process and the author can lead the determination on the first encounter with a character to categorising him/her as a type, whilst the process of reading can raise a different categorisation.

Although the basic idea in Foster's typology is not totally disputed, some theorists suggest further development and perhaps slightly different terminology. According to his typology, flat characters are both simple and un-developing, whilst round characters are viewed as complex and constantly developing. Rimmon-Kenan (1983:41) counters this thinking, and argues that such criteria do not necessarily co-exist. Conversely, literature has fictional characters, which are complex, but non-developing, as well as those that are simple and developing. At another level, alternate terms (to Foster's) are suggested by Pickerel (1988:182). These are "essentialist" and "existential". Accordingly an essentialist is one whose "essence precedes existence", whose nature remains largely unchanged by the experience it encounters. On the other side, for an existential character, "existence overshadows essence and his/her nature is shaped by experience. The only reason cited for Pickerel's terms is that they are more neutral than Foster's, but do not exist at odds with the typology.

Most of the defects in Foster's typology cited by Rimmon-Kenan are addressed by Fishelov's (1990) character theory. This entails a descriptive classification of character, which enables accounting for both typical and individual qualities on a textual and constructed level of a narrative text. Similarly, Margolin (1990:464) re-examines

utilisation of “type” and “individual” in different theoretical perspectives on literary character. He notes that Foster’s terms are synonymous with simple and complex, as well as predictable and unpredictable, respectively. Therefore, deeper and more substantial use of “type” and “individual” would reflect both literary and social or psychological considerations.

Fishelov’s basic classification takes into account both the lifelike qualities of characters and the reality that they are embedded in a literary text and therefore developed in and through language. In evaluating Foster’s typology on a “round, less flat or lifelike” categorisation of characters, Fishelov argues that it is necessary to determine whether a character gets a flat or a round categorisation at textual level, or at the constructed level. He refers to numerous factors that determine character types at textual level (1990:425):

i. Impression of a lifelike character is created when the latter has many traits, depicted from varied points of view, described extensively, portrayed from different situations.
ii. The constructed level, by contrasts stretches beyond linguistic references, literary techniques and levels of representation. It postulates active involvement of the reader, who will then construct an image of a character, based on the manner on which it is portrayed in the text, and the readers experience and knowledge vis-á-vis the situation around which the character is constructed.

Fishelov’s character classification model populates four types of characters in literary texts, that is, “pure” types, type like individuals, individual–like types and “pure” individuals. As estimated above, Fishelov (1990:426) juxtaposes the four types of characters against textual and constructed levels. A textually flat character depicts a character from only one perspective. A textually round character gives a rich and elaborate appearance, which a character attains over the course of the text. Constructionally flat characters represent some simple category, for example, moral, and social, into which he/she can be fitted after constructing information from various levels of the text. Constructionally round refers to when it is not easy to reach the

depths of a constructed type. The categories of character developed by Fishelov are descriptive and are amenable to a study of character analysis here.

A literary character is also defined according to the utilisation of “type” and “individual”. Descriptive character qualities suggested by Margolin (1990: 464) include “simple” and “complex”, as well as, “predictable” and “unpredictable”. The theory further states that a broader utilisation of “type” and “individual” incorporates literary and social or psychological perspectives. A “type” in this context, refers to a literary character that embodies either a recurrent pattern or social/psychological model in society. This in turn represents a quality that is widespread in human society. Margolin (1989: 4) refers to an “actant” undergoing “qualitative semantic definition that assigns to it a role that includes “a bundle of social functions”. This points to standardised and stereotypical attributes associated with norms of action, appropriateness, expectations and values which become the defining features of a character. These aspects will be investigated according to their relevance to Mda’s writing, with specific focus on his literary works selected for the study.

Psychoanalysts developed a theory around the idea that humans have unconscious longings that should be analysed in order to understand human behaviour. According to Freud (1949:31), the largest part of the psyche is the unconscious, from which characteristics such as drives and instincts develop.

The analysis of the human psyche, which in this context will be applied to the main characters in the selected texts, is made explicit through Freud’s structural model of the different parts of the psyche. The first component, the “id”, functions as mental agency that has all that is inherited, especially instincts. He regards this as the internal core personality that links to biological processes. The “ego”, which is the second feature, relates the organism to reality through its consciousness. Thirdly, the “superego” internalises parental teachings. Kwatsha (2007:77) adds that it also houses morals and standards of society that grow into forming part of an individual’s personality.

The psychoanalysis studies reflect on how instincts about life and death influence behaviour and individuals' actions. According to Grinberg (1990:260), death instincts form part of the inherent instinctual principle that develops into people's DNA and chromosomes in real life, as well as figuratively.

The theory indicates that, since life generally has numerous challenges, people have an unconscious death wish. Boeree (1998:6) notes that this accompanies three types of anxiety: that is, realistic, moral, and neurotic. The first one is triggered by fear of something in society. It is what people feel, especially when a threat comes from the social world of the superego. Moral anxiety also arises when a person is conscience-stricken or feels guilty about socially unacceptable matters or indiscretions committed.

Psychoanalytical theory further maintains that an individual is not born "human", but develops human qualities through being natured into a social and cultural order. However, human subjectivity also develops through subjection to an individualistic order and the order of "otherness" in which individuals distinguish themselves from others. De Beer (1987:12) notes that this in most instances manifested through emphatic first person references like "I".

The character of Camagu in *Heart of Redness (2000)* is presented in this manner. He is presented with exceptional intellectual prowess. In the midst of trepidation to limitations imposed by past experiences, rivalries and animosities in the community of Qolorha-by-sea, he is portrayed as an individual through whom the complexities and challenges of the post-apartheid social revolution can be tackled and mediated. In the course of the novel, his character evolves into a prudentially distinguishable figure. He is a communications and economic development graduate, who achieved high qualifications in exile, but finds himself disillusioned by the lack of progress in his country's development in the aftermath of the democratic elections, which had promised prospects of a better life for all. Mead (1990:443) asserts that such characters are understood and recognised in the perspective that they represent social or ideological types. They embody images of cultural codes. As indicated, psycho-social analysis will also be a significant part of characters study in the ensuing chapters.

Newman (2009:73) refers to characters as “virtual people”. He maintains that, whilst on the one hand fictional characters are fully embedded on their discrete fictional contexts, their intelligibility is enhanced by the application of framing principles that their study shares with the readers’ understanding of real human beings. He refutes the thinking that ties the character closely either to the author or to the narrative artefact. He maintains that fictional characters are not entirely under the thumb of their artefactual background, but they escape the constraints their genesis and structural situation imposed on them. In addition to the cognitive projection of actual world structure, characters contribute to the reader’s comprehension of the actual-world configurations by casting back such projection to their real-world prototypes. This is processed through the characters drawing from the audience; puzzle-solving procedures that become paradigmatic for illuminating various aspects of human reality (Newman, 2009:73). Although not directly opposing other theorists, Newman’s (2009) perspective enriches them through comparison.

He notes that a normal reading of a literary text leads to a question of what function the formal configuration of character contributes to articulation of human reality. He explores the polarities of fiction and reality, each of which has a significant role in understanding a fictional character. A fictional habitat of a character may be distinct in spite of resemblance to some real world habitat. Newman notes in this regard (2009:73) that, like some exotic creature, thriving in an environment specifically attuned to its own needs, each character inhabits a fictional world of its own. For instance, in the *She Plays with the Darkness* (1995), Dikosha is presented as living in a strange world of her own. Lonely as she appears to be, she is described as happiest in the world of sadness she had created for herself. She is often seen walking among the aloes on the hillside, turning over boulders and rolling them down in search of snakes. She loved these creatures and was not afraid of them. She played with them and mesmerised them with her dance (Mda 1995: 4). She was also known for her love of singing and dancing, to the extent that she would not even speak to anyone, including her mother and the group of girls with whom she sings and dances. They would hear her voice only when she

sang. Dikosha's personality fits the exotic environment in which her character is created.

Characterising "character" is also crucial to understand fictional character according to Newman (2009:74). This draws attention to functional connection between character and fictional world, as well as to an apparent equivocation in the two meanings of the word "character". Functional connection, in the first instance, means that the actions and events of a character's fictional life provide data through which a reader determines who the person is in terms of psychological or moral character. This in turn is accentuated by the observation that a reader is unable to draw substantive conclusions on a character unless he or she can cite events in the character's life, including thoughts and actions expressed in response to the occurrences.

In an attempt to simplify the functional connection, Newman (2009:74), defines two senses of "character". Firstly, character as a general psychological and moral trait (which he labels - Character 1), and character as an individual person in a narrative (Character 2). The latter is comprised of the set of events that together constitute a narrative of the individual. He therefore cautions that we should be circumspect pertaining these different meanings of character. A writer may "play" on the orthographic identity of the words to designate two different phenomena. This will be dealt with in analysing the selected literary texts in the next chapters.

2.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter has attempted to contextualise the study of African humanism and character representation in Zakes Mda's fiction by reviewing the relevant literature. The initial point of focus was Mphahlele's ideas on African Humanism, as expressed in *The African Image* (1974). He challenges the distorted manner in which African characters are depicted in South African literature. Contrary to the segregatory classification of people in the apartheid era, Mphahlele suggests definitions that reflect images of

different nationalities as was envisaged in the conception of a free and non-racialised South Africa. This defines “African” on a cultural than racial basis.

His realisation and acceptance of the challenge to produce fully developed characters across racial boundaries has significant influence on his writings. He therefore challenges writers to shrug off prejudice in order to be able to develop round characters irrespective of race or ethnic group.

Biko’s writings on racial oppression, decolonisation of the African mind and cultural development, were also analysed. Through powerful use of language and cultural philosophy of black pride and resistance, he became the voice of Black Consciousness. His criticism of colonial domination of African culture and his call for greater humanisation of South Africa is a crucial contribution to African humanism.

The *ubuntu* philosophy was also surveyed through both South African literature and literary contributions from various other countries. This included *ubuntu* in the African context, which involved tracing the origins of the concept and meaning from perspective of different African languages. The African socialist concept of *ujamaa* was also examined to determine efficacy of such a communal strategy on human development and African humanism.

Although African writers were justified to approach literature and their own writing through resistance and protest forms, Lewis Nkosi and Njabulo Ndebele’s critiques caution against continued reliance on such forms of writing. Critical issues in this respect received elaboration. A brief look at Mda’s ideas on the social role of writing logically followed the critiques on African writing. The chapter ends on a survey of selected theories of characterisation, which are crucial analytical tools that will be used in the text analysis in the chapters ahead. The next chapter will focus on character analysis in *Ways of Dying* (1995) and *She Plays with the Darkness* (1995).

CHAPTER THREE

3. CHARACTER ANALYSIS IN THE NOVELS: *WAYS OF DYING* (1995) AND *SHE PLAYS WITH THE DARKNESS* (1995)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the second chapter the study focused on literature review pertaining character representation by Zakes Mda in his literary repertoire. This featured Mphahlele's ideas on African humanism. In his philosophy, expressed in *The African Image* (1974), Mphahlele indicates that a literary text, which he views as a manner of painting, should be independent, more real than life, be convincing. Emotions are as important as is the plot, so writers ought to ensure that characters' emotions are properly depicted in order to effectively make a particular point. Mphahlele (1974: 13) emphasises significance of people and human situations in a literary text. *The African Image* (1974) was conceived out of Mphahlele's concern about the inappropriate depiction of Africans in the South African literature of the colonial and apartheid eras. Although this indictment was mainly directed at white literature's depiction of the "Black man" or Africans in general, he also acknowledges shortcomings in his literary images too. His attempts at portraying white people and their living conditions failed in his view to yield good results, as he would still end up with white stereotypes. Probing the matter through his writings, that include *The Tyranny of Place and Aesthetics* (1981), he comes to a proposed solution in *The African Image* (1974), which recommends an approach to writing or literature that advocates for African humanism.

Steve Biko's writings on the subject criticise the type of relation that was built between Black and white people from the 17th century onwards, when South Africa was first subjected to colonial rule. The latter wouldn't be successful without a targeted attack on the indigenous culture. Biko (1978:44) asserts that, instead of a balanced acculturation, African culture was besieged by Western culture. Having been vanquished, the crucial elements of the African culture were therefore crushed, giving way to a kind of a bastard culture, under domination. This leads to distorted portrayal of Africans, and their ways of living, in literary texts. Biko (1978: 46) argues for a return to basics pertaining to

portrayal of African cultural concepts of collectivity and sharing that reposition the human being or humanity at the center of society. This requires evaluation and featuring of the *ubuntu* philosophy in literary texts on Africanism.

African humanism should also be explored from the perspective of postcolonial and decolonisation theories. This was tracked through the burgeoning literature of the 1970s, with mainly two groups of writers, that is, one that focused on opposing and critiquing political injustice in modern Africa, and the other that challenged imposition of colonial and neo-colonial forces on forms of government, society and culture in post-independence Africa. This development was characterised by a shift in writing styles on the part of most writers. A critique on African writing by Lewis Nkosi and Njabulo Ndebele was surveyed in Chapter 2, for a balanced critical appreciation of African writing. The chapter was concluded by a brief account of selected theories of characterisation that will be used in the analysis of Mdas' literary writings, namely, African humanism as propounded by Mphahlele, character representation through the critiques of Lewis Nkosi and Njabulo Ndebele. Mda's own ideas on the social role of writing, as well character theories proposed by Forster (1970, 2012), Pickerel (1988), Fishelov (1990), Margolin (1990, 2007), Fokkema (1991), and Newman (2009).

The main focus in Chapter 3 is character analysis in Mda's *Ways of Dying* (1995a) and *She Plays with the Darkness* (1995b). The major subject, therefore, will be African humanism, with the specific human aspect of character, as propounded by Es'kia Mphahlele. As a starting point, this requires proper differentiation between textual character, and real life people.

A brief explanation of major differences between fiction and reality will be done in order to provide a background for the character analysis as the main focus of the chapter. It appears that a "social space" or "setting" is a crucial "bedrock" for Mda's literary writing. This will be explored in relation to Mda's literary precursor, Mphahlele. The latter highlights the inevitable symbiosis between social reality and the imagination that informs literary writing. There are moments when these two would run parallel to one another, but concurrence also existed, which is equally significant.

The term post-colonial literature will be used in this study to refer to writings from the countries formerly colonised by European that include Britain, France, Portugal and Spain. Aschroft, Griffiths and Tiffin's (1989:1) semantic definition of the term includes literary reflection on the society and the national after departure of the imperial powers from former colony. It is also used to distinguish the periods of existence, politically, socially, and culturally, as well as in literal terms, pre- and post-independence. The differentiation is crucial in constructing national literary histories and in comparative studies between the historic periods.

The study further uses post-colonial references to encompass all the culture affected by the imperial process, from the colonial era to the period after colonial domination. Aschroft et al. (1989:2) note the preoccupation with European imperial aggression throughout the pre-independence historical process. They emphasise the appropriateness of the term, "post-colonial literature" for the discourse generated in the process, as it points to a novel cross-cultural criticism which subsequently emerged.

Regional diverse literatures including African countries, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Caribbean countries, India, Malaysia, Malta, New Zealand, Pakistan, Singapore, South Pacific and Sri Lanka, are also post-colonial. In spite of their distinctive characteristics, these countries have strongly emerged out of colonisation and asserted themselves through foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, thereby accentuating differences and cessations of the imperial centre (Aschroft et al. 1989:2). It is in this context that the study examines human existence and development, during and after the period of European imperial domination, and its effect on contemporary literature, with specific focus on Zakes Mda's fiction.

Character analysis in Mda's *Ways of Dying* (1995a) and *She Plays with the Darkness* (1995b) will follow this outline:

(i) African humanism and character definition;
(ii) African humanism in *Ways of Dying* (1995a);
(iii) African humanism in *She Plays with the Darkness* (1995b);

(iv) character analysis in *Ways of Dying* (1995a) through literary critique by Lewis Nkosi;

(v) character analysis in *She Plays with the Darkness* (1995b) through literary critique by Njabulo Ndebele; and

(vi) post-colonial, decolonisation and character portrayal in the two novels.

This study relies on postcolonial and decolonial theory. This will feature in the contextualisation of pertinent theoretical views from Frantz Fanon (1967 and 2008), Steve Biko (1978), Paulo Freire (2005), Farieda Naizier (2014), and Derek Hook (2004). Fanon's theories and phenomenological approach to racial discrimination provide significant input to decolonisation discourses. His writings on the subject are complemented by Hook (2004b:117) in his treatise on Fanon's concept of colonisation and the resultant "neurosis of blackness". In addition to bemoaning the colonial oppression, Steve Biko conscientised black people to be positive and sentimental about their blackness, in his writings on "Black man you are on your own" (Biko 1978: 101-108). The common factor amongst these theorists is a deep and intensified decolonial discourse, which Ngugi wa Thiong'o accentuates in his book *Decolonising the Mind* (1988). It is within the similar context that Hook (2004a or b:88) analyses colonial indoctrination in Africa, particularly South Africa, indicating that apartheid ought to have been considered a particular variation of the basic politics and conditions of colonialism. Paulo Freire also in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2005:125) argues that true liberation, which is equivalent to critical consciousness, can only be achieved through revolutionary praxis.

3.2 AFRICAN HUMANISM AND CHARACTER DEFINITION

A focus on African Humanism and characterisation inevitably draws on the contentious issue of the extent to which a literary character represent a human being. Character theories that highlight human aspects of character include the traditional and structuralist views on this subject. According to these theories, meaning formation of a literary character relies heavily on the human aspect, or actual person (Fokkema 1991:18). The theorist further argues that a balanced comprehension of a character

depends on both the character's textuality and resemblance to actual persons. Despite the poststructuralist's perspective emphasising textuality of character, Fokkema (1991:18) supports the traditional view that literary characters represent human beings. Novels or literary texts are about people, a psychological motive that sustains plot.

The human aspect of character is foregrounded in Foster's *Aspects of the Novel* (1970:52), where he maintains that actors in literary text act or present the image of human beings. This justifies the necessity to analyse these actors in relation to actual life. However, he identifies qualities that differentiate between novelistic or textual characters and real-life people, and even historical figures. Such a distinction is affected through portrayal, which is different from producing a mirror image. The latter involves real life situations, where societal knowledge of people about the other (or certain individuals) can never be complete, but only approximated, depending on external signage. On the contrary, those in a literary text can be fully comprehended by the reader, depending on the author's depth in character portrayal. The character's inner and external lives can be exposed to the reader, and it is this capability of complete portrayal of fictional characters that, according to Forster (1970: 70). become real characters.

Despite the stark difference between fiction and reality, both Mphahlele and Mda highlight social relevance of literary works of art. The former specifically notes perennial tensions between "works of imagination and the social forces". The symbiotic nature of this relation is as though social reality and the imagination reject each other, like "mother and child", which by definition means that there will always be moments of reconciliation between the two (Mphahlele 1974:10). This inevitably brings to the fore images emanating from South African literature both during and after the apartheid regime. The key challenge identified by Mphahlele in this regard is the poorly developed or stereotypic portrayal of characters across the racial divide. Significance of character in a literary text is highlighted by Mphahlele's (1974:13) reference to Foster, namely that the first thing that a reader remembers from a text is (or are) people followed by the story, human situations, settings, and most importantly, the emotions that unify the

different elements. In the context of the distortions of race, Mphahlele's focus on *The African Image* (1974) is on the imagination that reorganises the forces that shape African characters and the relevant social milieu.

The concept of African humanism was defined in Chapter 2 as featuring culture as central in character portrayal, which requires deeper knowledge and close interaction with cultural practices of the people that are the subject of the writing. This is used and perhaps sharpened by Mphahlele in his philosophical work on character representation in South African literature, from colonial times to apartheid, and on into a post-colonial era. His vision in this regard has been on African character rooted in culture and tradition, contrary to definition by race, or even ethnic origin. Mda's concept of social function of literature is in line with this vision, and this is evident in his characters mostly represented in the specificity of their cultural context.

3.2.1 AFRICAN HUMANISM IN *WAYS OF DYING* (1995)

In *Ways of Dying*, the novelist starts by drawing the reader's attention to the way Noria's child encountered his death, with the emphasis on the fact that the boy is killed by those who lead the liberation struggle, and that such deaths have recently been a common occurrence. Noria is introduced at the beginning of the novel, as the mother of the deceased boy whose funeral is held on the Christmas Day, as per her insistence. When Toloki at the funeral, and comes close enough to see the "chief mourner", he immediately recognises her as "Noria, the stuck-up bitch from his village" (Mda 1995a:11). He remembers her as a little girl with whom they grew up, in the same village, attended the same school, and who through her beauty, lovely laughter, and seductive voice, ended up with the epithet "stuck-up bitch". However, as I argue here, this is not the real reflection of her behaviour or inner life, other than in terms of her unconscious "power" that stirs up jealousy amongst certain members of the community, especially women. Toloki's mother is the initiator of the epithet. Noria also recognises Toloki, where she says "you are Toloki from the village" (Mda 1995a: 12). The communal narrator goes on to reflect on the way the nurse is heckled due to his comments about the killers who are supposed to have been, protectors of the boy and

the community, instead. Death is normally experienced with grief, which is expressed through specific set processes of mourning in African communities. However, the prevalence of death at this point in time, especially through murder, is an indication of a deep social misalignment in modern society. Toloki's career takes off in the midst of and due to prevalence of death in the community. At one of the funerals where he provides his professional service, the nurse spells out in her speech that where she went looking for his brother's body, there were about 20 bodies of old and young men and women, beautiful girls with stab wounds lying in grotesque positions, children who were barely in their teens, all victims of a raging war, "consuming our lives, I tell you mothers and fathers, there is death out there. Soon we shall experience death of birth itself if we go on at this rate" (Mda 1995a:19). All this is regarded as a bad omen for the community at large. Consistent with this view is the observation by Mervis (1998:49) that Mda depicts a time when people lost sense of moral and collective responsibility. This belies pre-colonial ethos and collectivism that characterised African communities, which is apparently what the author draws our attention on, vis-à-vis post-colonial societies. African humanism and culture is central to understanding the novel and portrayal of characters. Biko's (1978:46) definition of culture corroborates this point. In spite of a time lag of about 18 years between his writings and the publication of *Ways of Dying*, his view that the liberation of Africans depended largely on the cultural concepts of collectivity that reposition humanity at the centre of society, reverberates in the novel. The social apathy reflected through the killings mistrust and deception amongst the different groups, as indicated at the beginning of the novel, is the antithesis of the value of collectivism. The conflict that the author refers to here is twofold. First, it is the "struggle" waged by the black masses against the white regime of the time condemned, not only for the apartheid, but also for its perceived sponsoring of violence to derail reforms towards a new non-racial democratic order. Casualties in this struggle included children, who were largely those at the forefront of strikes and demonstrations which often led to confrontation with the police; this only made the latter all the more the foremost enemy of the people. This is reflected in the Nurse's speech: "It is not the first time that we bury little children, we bury them every day.

But they are killed by the enemy, those we are fighting against" (Mda 1995a:7).[4] State violence is further foregrounded in a community meeting that is convened to address residential problems in and around the informal settlement where Noria stays. The challenges addressed at the meeting include sporadic attacks on the residents by the migrants from the nearby male hostel dwellings and by soldiers (Battalion 77), which includes foreign mercenaries from a destabilised neighbouring country. The people's reaction to the challenges leads to preparation for a public demonstration, addressed by Malehlohonolo, one of the women active in the affairs of the settlement:

> While our leaders are talking with the government to put things right, the government is busy killing us with its Battalion 77, and its vigilantes. What kind of negotiations are these where on one hand they talk of peace and freedom, and on the other they kill us dead? (Mda 1995a:173).

In the second instance reference is made to Black on Black violence. In contrast to his statement on condemning "the enemy", the nurse turns focus on fellow blacks: "This our little brother wa killed by those who are fighting to fighting to free us" (Mda 1995a:7). This utterance causes some confusion, as the people attending the funeral get divided, where some want to hear the truth (on what led to the boy's demise), whilst others get defensive that the nurse will be "selling out" (by doing so), and therefore feel that he "shouldn't give ammunition to the enemy" (Mda 1995a:7). Later, Noria relates to Toloki, Vuta the second's story, and events that led to his death, where he becomes a "sacrificial lamb" at the "Young tigers'" altar. These are the same people who, in the name of the "struggle", vowed to be the protectors of the settlement and its people, who are their fellow comrades. The role of the two main characters, Toloki and Noria, in negotiating this social apathy that divides the society and plunges it to self-destruction, is conveyed when they are introduced, at the beginning of the novel. Toloki discredits the pandemonium that accompanies the proceedings at this funeral, which is

[4] In considering the present day, it is notable that 24 years into the new democratic order, the governing party is still riddled with numerous killings of its members. This is reflected in an article by Paddy Harper, *Two more hits in KZN bloodbath*, giving details of political killings in the region and various others countrywide (Mail & Guardian, November 24th-30th 2017).

supposedly a solemn gathering (all the more so on Christmas Day). As he tries to get closer to the makeshift podium, a number of people are heckling the nurse, while some are heckling one another. He has since developed much respect for a funeral, and is therefore shocked and frustrated at the proceedings. The narrator in the novel refers to this as a “sacrilege” or abomination that has never befallen an African community, much less on such a “sacred” day. He believes in the freedom and discretion of the nurse to “say it as he sees it” (Mda 1995a:8). Mda provides “voice” to the silenced.

He has, through taking part in a number of funerals, developed admiration for those given the role of a nurse at these rituals. Such designates are, accordingly, those fortunate to have witnessed the last “alive” moments of the deceased. Through the communal narrator, he insists that like all good nurses, the nurse must be faithful to the facts. This precision apparently reflects Mda’s concern for authenticity on social and historical accuracy (Fincham 2011:XVI). This is consistent with his view on the role of an artist as a social commentator (Holloway 1988:83). My agreeance with Fincham’s observation stems from the fact that even folklore in African societies is informed by specific events. It therefore naturally flows that African aesthetics is based on social specificity. In his recently published book, *Justify the Enemy: Becoming Human in South Africa* (2018:12), Mda corroborates this view, as indicated by Jacob’s comments that according to Mda, there is no creative or literary work that is fully fiction or non-fiction. All fiction, even the most fantastical, draws from what the author knows or remembers of the real world and real occurrences. Mda (2018:13) further argues (or motivates) for the hybrid mode of historical fiction to humanise history, as well as to enable the reader imaginatively to experience what it was like to be part of what happened.

The unusual circumstances in which Toloki meets Noria for the first time since their childhood days in the village creates a platform that determines the kind of relation they develop henceforth. In spite of the pain on the part of Noria having lost her son through a brutal murder committed in the name of the “struggle”, and Toloki’s hard experiences in his quest for love (Mda 1995a:60) while having escaped a rural poverty-stricken life to even harder urban living, they recognise and develop an interest in one another. This

triggers an analeptic reminiscence on their past young life in the village, occurring as it did with experiences that could have caused enmity between them. Toloki also remembers her as the “stuck-up bitch” (Mda 1995a:29) that caused the downfall of his father, Jwara, thereby ultimately leading to a shamed relation between their families.

The realistic, unpleasant, critical introspection by the now mature homeboy and homegirl, leads to mutual respect that does not only reflect trust, but also egalitarianism, both of which are African humanistic values. Knapp (2006:57) notes that this mutual respect and admiration leads to these characters regaining their humanity. The suggestion by Noria that they live together as homeboy and homegirl (Mda 1995a:114) leads to a practical realisation of transformative humanism, in spite of Toloki’s earlier misgivings on the idea. Notwithstanding Noria’s earlier negative reputation that earned her the title of the “stuck-up bitch” and her former fascination with charming “taxi boys” in return for worldly favours (Mda 1995a:101), she rises above all this risqué behaviour in her suggestion of living together and the compliment she gives to Toloki that he knows how to live (Mda 1995a:115) .

Conscious of her own experience and maturity, she qualifies her viewpoint on the matter, noting that they can teach each other how to live, and further states that “I can teach you other ways of living” (Mda 1995a:115). This also demonstrates progressive conception of human rights movements that promotes gender parity as part of African humanism, according to Mangena in *The Black Consciousness Philosophy and the women’s question in South Africa from 1970 to 1980* (2008:253). The suggestion by Noria that they stay together so that they help each other, also reflects the basic African concept of communalism in terms of the adage “I am because we are”, as per the discussion in 2.4.1 on *ubuntu* in the African context. This, according to Mphahlele (2002:138), is one of the strongest pillars on which humanism rests. In this regard, he argues against the individualist principle and reasserts the development of full human potential, which is invaluable for community service and development. Toloki’s experiences had hitherto isolated him. When Noria suggests that they stay together, he rejects the idea, emphasising that he cannot live with anyone other than himself. He

explains further that is the reason why he decided to live alone in waiting rooms, and even stay away from home-boys and home-girls (Mda 1995a:115). However, the narrative voice gives background to Toloki's dislike of other people, especially those from his home village. This includes the bad experience he had with Nefolovhodwe, the furniture and coffin maker, who made good fortune in the city and then gave his back to his countrymen and women, looked down on them and pretended not to know them (Mda 1995a:13). Toloki is one of the victims in this regard, and the fact that he not the type who forgives and forgets, rekindles memories, when he used to be treated as an outcast (Mda 1995a: 54).

However the narrator contrasts Toloki's solitary state of mind with that of Noria, who on the other hand, has always lived in communion with her fellow villagers, and with other people from all parts of the country, who have settled in the squatter camp (Mda 1995a:13). Toloki's decision to join Noria in her residence at the informal settlement and accompanying her to community meetings as well as some project activities, demonstrates the power of communalism, which he learns more about during his stay at settlement and interacting with the residents and its community structures. Linking this cohabitation to the plot contextualises it clearly, as this is neither exploitative nor lustful type of a relation. After introducing Toloki as a professional mourner and his encounter with Noria at her son's funeral, the narrator takes us through his odyssey from the village to the city, which initially meant "a wondrous world of freedom and riches" for him (Mda 1995a:59). Leaving the destitute village behind and the wanting conditions of his family, Toloki motivates his venturing to the city, "in search of love and fortune", as a noble quest (Mda 1995a:60). However, he gets very little, if at all, of what he originally hoped for. The challenges of city life turned out to be equally severe with those he ran from in the countryside, if not more so. He ends up living in a quayside shelter and waiting room, living a solitary life and deliberately avoiding people (especially home boys and home girls) as much as possible, and deciding to earn his living through providing a service to mourn for the dead.

It is at “his headquarters” that he hears (from dockworkers) of the woman whose child was killed, and she insists that the child be buried on Christmas Day. This is all due to the characteristically restful nature of the day that he doesn’t have any funerals to attend. He therefore takes the chance to seize the opportunity and spend a fulfilling day at the graveside, in Vuta’s burial (Mda 1995a:14). The unforeseen encounter with Noria at the funeral later leads to the two staying together at her shack, which Toloki helps her to rebuild. Noria suggests that they live together, because they can teach each other ways of living (Mda 1995a: 114-115). Whilst they were completing their construction, a group of children brought water to help: “we brought you water for your floor mother Noria” “thank you my children” (Mda 1995a:69). Then, the women of neighborhood also brought some household items that include pots, a primer stove, a washing basin, a bucket, a plate and spoon. Others brought two grey blankets, a pillow, a *billi* can of soured soft porridge, and steamed bread (Mda 1995a:69). Toloki’s amazement on all this kindness is answered by Noria: “It is our life here at the settlement, Toloki we are like two hands that was wash each other” (Mda 1995a:69).

Noria also learns a lot about funerals and mourning, as he gets to attend some with Toloki. At the first funeral they attend together, Toloki sits on one of the five mounds, then groans, wails, and produces other new sounds that he has recently invented, especially for mass funerals, with political overtones. Such are sounds based on chants that youth utter in political rallies, which Toloki has modified. On this day knows that Noria is watching keenly from the audience, so he gives his best performance (Mda 1995a:108). From a liminal position, Toloki mediates between a varied range of cultural forms and expressions of modernity and rural past. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha (1994:13-14) endorses the hybridised form of expression, as it ushers in the previously marginalised knowledge into the dominant discourse.

The notion that “we are not islands unto ourselves” is central to the African thought on individualism versus communalism. Emphasising the point of interdependence among community members, Winks (2011:456) explains that every individual is an extension of others. He also refers to Gyekye’s argument that an individual human person cannot

develop and achieve fullness of his/her potential without a concrete act of relating to others, as reflected in the essay on African Philosophical thought (Gyekye 1997:24). This points to the importance that community ought to ascribe to individual identity and human dignity for each community member. Respect for human dignity, as enshrined in the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, spells out that the right and freedoms of each individual ought to be upheld with due regards to those of others, collective security, morality, and common interest (Gyekye 1997:459). African humanism in this respect reflects high regard for reciprocity, equality, and human solidarity.

The expression that each of the two characters uses to reflect admiration and apparently affection for each other – "You know how to live" (Mda 1995a:115) – reflects mutual respect and inclination for solidarity. Against the backdrop of a violent society in transition from apartheid to democracy, with numerous other transitional problems, like patriarchy, racism, lack of social cohesion, and Black on Black violence. Toloki is presented as having ability to relate with Noria on an equal level. After being celibate for all this time, he has been staying alone in "waiting rooms" (Mda, 1995a:115), he starts to have feelings for Noria, when moving in with Noria in her shack. In spite of this he does not take unfair advantage of her. He looks at her in her sleep, with affection and admiration that cause adrenalin rush through his body, but still manages to restrain himself. He can't hold her in his arms and tell her how much he admires her. He cannot even look at her sleeping posture for too long as he feels this in some way violates her (Mda 1995a:153). Although, as noted by Knapp (2006:58), his staying with her makes it almost impossible to repress his feelings, leading to his wet dreams. He is ashamed of this and tries by all means to hide it.

Mphahlele (2002:138) frequently features the question of morality in his discussion of African Humanism. He accordingly notes that on one level, a human being ought to endeavour to maintain order or harmony with all the forces he perceives in an environment or a social system of ethics. Complementing this view, Coetzee and Roux (2003:275), in *Morality in African Thought – Social Conditions which Unite a*

Community's Social and Moral Identity argue that at another level and according to social thesis an individual's way of life is not unlimited, but is subject to the community's pursuit of common goals. This should always take precedence over individual and selfish pursuits. The common good defines substantive conceptions that determine the way of living in specific social contexts. A person's way of life is therefore, highly or lowly ranked, as it contributes to or detracts from the societal common good. The period of political interregnum that the novel depicts is not only accompanied by violence and death endemic in Black townships and informal settlements, but by also apathy, as well as growing moral decay in society. This is foregrounded early in the novel, with the introduction of Toloki as a professional mourner. It is at this first funeral that the narrative "voice" gives details of him being 'thrown into the deep', testing his own professionalism.

His immediate response to the situation identifies him as central to the negotiations and the redressing of the social apathy and moral decay that undermines society. The heckling of the nurse brings about by his pointing at the truth that a child is killed by Freedom fighters, some people are against this, as they feel that this is utterance gives "ammunition" to the enemy and parades their shame to the world. In the midst of this, Toloki retains a righteous posture, and a feeling that, regardless of the consequences, the nurse ought to remain faithful to the facts (Mda, 1995a: 7).

The hard experiences that he encounters in his odyssey to the city in the search of love and fortune, are almost intolerable, but he soldiers on, resolved not to accept any handouts. His response to a man who feels pity for him and offers him some money to buy food reflects this moral conscience resolve:

> It is true, I am hungry and if I do not eat I will die, but I do not accept charity. I desperately need this money father, but I insist on doing some job for you in return (Mda, 1995a:61).

Courau and Murray (2003:91) reflect on the way Toloki describes his difficult journey to the city as a noble quest and that his narrative in this regard is presented alongside Noria's. The latter's mature life in the city reflects moral conduct and behaviour that Mda

contrasts with the younger Noria's risqué behaviour. The mature Noria is as if the opposite of the "Noria of the aloes" (Mda 1995a:74), and one who played truant a school and rode around in the buses and taxis to offer pleasure to drivers in return for gifts and money (Mda 1995a: 73). A now more moral and upright Noria is more cautious about accepting handouts and favours from men. When Shadrack offers to give her back the money she paid him for petrol when he helped transport building material for her shack, she turns down this offer, discrediting the ulterior motive on which it is based, as she says: "You need me for wrong reasons, Bhuti shady" (Mda 1995a70). Knowing the dire need on Noria's part, Toloki wonders at her decline of such a good opportunity. To this, she emphasises "I do not take things from men, Toloki" (Mda 1995:71). She adds that she accepted his help because it was out of his kind heart and not for looking for anything in return. In spite of this, she is still determined to pay him when she has means to do so. The two characters are portrayed in contrast with moral degeneration and a lack of collective responsibility (Mervis, 1998:49). They play a crucial role in negotiating these social ills which are characteristic feature of the South Africa in the early 1990s.

3.2.2 AFRICAN HUMANISM IN *SHE PLAYS WITH THE DARKNESS* (1995b)

Zakes Mda's narrative writing is characterised by a pattern of pairing certain key characters apparently to portray or critique a particular societal value. This has just been demonstrated in the case of Toloki and Noria in *Ways of Dying* (1995a). The trend continues to other writings that include, The *Madonna of Excelsior* (2002) – Popi and Tjaart, as well as Popi and Villicki and *Little Suns* (2015) – with Malangana and Mthwakazi.

In most of his writings, Mda uses twinship on a metaphorical level, however although still literary, it is ontological and biological kind of twinship that we get in *She Plays with the Darkness*. Radisene and Dikosha do not share a father, but were born in the same year, from the same mother. Africans welcome twins as more of a blessing than a normal birth of one child. Good luck and fortune are, therefore, always expected to happen or befall the family when twins arrive. The two people are in most instances

regarded as one. Another African belief is that they should be paired, even at death. The one who survives is usually instructed to get into the grave before the deceased is laid to rest. The African way of dealing with twins is always used to promote family unity, which is in turn expected to contribute to greater unity in the community as a whole. Although this practice derives from a socio-cultural belief system, it resembles a psycho–social perspective, where Heinz (1971:303-307) refers to the desire in early childhood development to feel likeness to other human beings. His study further postulates that the existence of another individual who is a reflection of the self brings the experience of twinship in line with the psychology of the "double". In another instance, it was noted that at the height of the relationship, Freud was in narcissistic transference that he saw in Jung an idealised version of himself, and that conversely, in Jung, there was his reflection. This type of convergent relationship of twins is reflected on by Mda in his autobiography *Memoirs of an Outsider – Sometimes there is a Void* (2011:197–198). Mda fell in love with identical twins, Mpho and Mphonyana, and they also both fell in love with him. Their further "laying down of the law" pertaining their relationship with Mda accentuates their own symbiosis. They categorically state to him that they had always shared everything, including boyfriends, and that Mda should learn to see them as one person (Mda 2011:197). It also becomes a pleasant observation for him to learn later that Ha Qokolo, their village, is a village of identical twins (Mda 2011:198), and social cohesion in the community is noticeably highly.

The scenario depicted above does not fully apply in the context of Mda's novel due to a number of issues, including the nature of postcolonial modernity, characterising the society on which the novel is set. The natural bond between the twins is violated by an the social understanding of the time that women need not be educated. This leads to the church fathers, in charge of the missionary school, sponsoring Radisene's education and leaving Dikosha to drop out of primary school. This is in spite of her intellectual prowess that makes her an "A student". She gets a first class pass in standard seven, her ultimate involvement in school, whilst her twin brother was a third class student (Mda 1995b:5).

The split or artificial separation of the two previously closely attached siblings is initiated at a social level, at school, which is expected to play more of a uniting role. A contrast is created here between the normal relationship between twins themselves, on one level, but also between themselves and the community. The developments following this initial separation is what MacDonald (2009:134) in his essay *Twinship and Humanism in She plays with the Darkness*, compares to "a warp and woof" pattern, reflecting a tension that gives form to South African colonial modernity.

From their completion of primary education (Grade 7) the twin's growth and development takes divergent routes. Radisene continues on with high school education, becomes a teacher, and starts working in the more urban lowlands of the country (Mda, 1995b:9). It therefore follows that he adopts a lifestyle of a town or urban environment, characterised by amongst others, individualistic and competitive urge. Condemned to the doldrums of Hasamane, Dikosha, conversely retreats to a solitary life of social contradictions and anti-social activity that in turn defines her character henceforth. Contrary to other people's habitual lives, she walks among the aloes on the hillside turning over boulders in search of snakes, for which she shows affection instead of fear (Mda, 1995b:4). She does not just play and have fun with these symbols of darkness and the underworld, but also drains venom out of their bodies before she skins and roasts them in an anthill, for a meal that she shares with herd boys in the veld.

The vendetta she has against the "holy fathers" (Mda, 1995b 1:18) leads to her deviant behaviour and attitude. At the age of 18, she is not able to make herself presentable, and is not bothered by her own unclean and untidy hair, harbouring head lice. She is subsequently rejected from traditional roles that the society expects of her as a girl and young woman growing in a Basotho cultural environment. She does not want to cook or even help her mother with any of the chores in their home (Mda 1995b:2), and defies any thought of marriage, or courting. She regards boys of her age as mindless creatures with whom she has no association (Mda 1995b:5). Moreover, she refuses to talk to people, including family, her mother, and brother. Dikosha's self-imposed loneliness is set against what appears to be a "happy communion" amongst the people

of haSamane's and the surrounding villages. The twins grow in the community with people who do not only know each other and one another, but also have a keen interest in one another's development and well-being. For instance, the fact that the Mother of the twins had no husband, and could not work when the children were young, did not get in the way of her livelihood. In the true sense of *ujamaa*, she gets communal support from other members of the community (c.f. 2.4.1., *ubuntu* in the African context). The father of the daughters has a task for the young Radisene to tend his calves, and in turn supplies his mother with grain and milk. The support continues even when the boy starts schooling, to ensure that he gets a foothold in life, as well as the family's livelihood (Mda, 1995b:15). The love shown by the village mothers who gather around the mother of the twins to appreciate her grown up son, bringing him gifts and wishing him more blessed growth and development, is a further indication of a communally interwoven community.

The humanism that is symptomatic of the interconnected Hasamane community described above, is depicted against the splitting of the twins, in the first instance, then Dikosha's disengagement from the community (norms and values) and Radisene's stray development from his home community's aspirations and noble expectations. Having gone to the lowlands to pursue a high school education, Radisene not only adopts the urban style of life (which is not that glittering after all), but also develops survival strategies to deal with employment challenges he encounters, as he starts working as a temporary teacher, a precarious type of employment with a low salary (Mda, 1995b:30-32). However, the competitiveness of the city environment contributes to the greed that has already been growing in him. This is confirmed in a conversation he has with Sorry-My-Darlie over the latter's new car. There and then he makes up his mind. He is not going to be a teacher forever. He is not going to be poor for the rest of his life either. He will find his niche. Somewhere there must be 'easy money' waiting for him (Mda 1995b:29). From this day on, although not yet in a high-paying job, he keeps on strategising or paving his route towards this goal. He ends up becoming an ambulance chaser, making huge sums of money from defrauding third party claims from Road Accident Fund victims and insurance companies. His growing materialistic tendencies,

greed, and unscrupulous means to riches alienate him more from both Hasamane community and Dikosha's way of life and values.

The disunity reflected between the twins on one level and between each and the community is symptomatic of post-colonial environment. This is usually noticeable in decolonising societies. where people develop cultural cleavages, including ethnic, gender, and class polarities (Aschcroft et al. 1989:210-211). This also reflects the complications of depicting issues like race, ethnicity, culture, and human identity, where the modern era focuses more on divisive elements. MacDonald (2009:134) argues that in such situations, twinship ought to be used as a binding single identity to counteract splitting of identities that effect divisive perceptions into modernity's binaries, such as traditional, modern rural/urban, male/female, self/other. However, the concept is used by Mda alongside African Humanism, apparently to defuse postcolonial modernity's portrayal of the world as fundamentally divided. Mda's foregrounding of the splitting of the twins creates a contrast with the basic nature of twinship itself. This uncommon phenomenon breaks apart a single identity of the family, whose members start pursuing different objectives and personal cultures according to their experiences.

In a different way from Radisene, who pursues a strong quest for wealth, Dikosha comes into communion with the past world of Barwa through cave paintings that she then regularly visits. The subsequent self-isolation is the effect of her refusal to submit to patriarchal pressures that lead to the destruction of her educational future. Fincham (2011:91) notes that her rebellious reaction leads to her shunning all domestic chores that include cooking, cleaning the house and even grooming herself to a neat lady (Mda 1995b:18), but she instead focuses on dancing and singing. In her apparent mission to turn upside down the patriarchally dominated role and ordering of society, she shuns marriage, and intimidates boys, through the brave manner by which she charms and easily kills even the most dangerous snakes in the world (Mda1995b:4). Through regularly visiting the caves, Dikosha asserts vitality of non-instrumental art, and is thereby characterised by MacDonald (2009:140) as a post-colonial cultural innovator; isolated, yet vital. According to Fincham (2011:92), the Barwa cave paintings teach

Dikosha more than just dancing, but also about healing in the trance state enacted by the cave dancers. She even learns “the power to see songs (in dreams). Her creativity stimulated by the “ditema” patterns on the walls of the villagers’ homesteads and finds powerful inspiration in the caves. In spite of her contentment with her “escape” and her private realm in the cave, her inter action and communing with the paintings or “people of the cave”, she runs the risk of being “enveloped” by the darkness of isolation. In this instance Fincham (2011:92) refers to MacDonald (2009) in explaining the metaphor of darkness in the novel, which is mostly enacted through Dikosha’s private realm. This somehow justifies the reason that Mda allows the cutting off of the cave attraction for Dikosha, so as to channel her livelihood or social life back to the community of Ha Samane. Even when her role is reduced to hearing confessions by the village men, she (when there are no confessions), gets to catching the stars floating in front of her eyes in the darkness of her room, and “dance with the darkness” (Mda 1995b:179). Rescinding relations first with the symbols or agents of colonisation (the Church Fathers) and their cronies, including Radisene (Mda, 1995b:18), her mother and the whole community for being accomplice in her ostracisation, solely on the grounds that she is female, she turns to eating snake meat, sustaining herself through communion with the figures conjured to life from the walls of the Barwa caves. The discrimination she suffers. which reverberates through her social relations or the lack thereof, translates to dehumanisation; hence her negative response to the community and all that seems to challenge her human dignity. This can be equated to Frantz Fanon’s (1967:170-171) argument that ideological essence of colonialism is the systematic denial of “all attributes of humanity” of the subjugated people. He emphasises that such dehumanisation is achieved with physical and mental violence by which the perpetrator means to inculcate a servile mentality upon the oppressed. One positive remedy to the suppressive situation experienced by Dikosha, is freeing and decolonisation of the mind, according to Fanon (1967:166). He defines decolonisation as a process of changing the way we view the world, or what happens around us (1967:166). The imperialism leaves behind germs of rot, which we must clinically detect and remove, or purge from our minds, and eventually from the whole society. The “suffocating”

patriarchy that Dikosha tries to resist is the imposition by the church fathers, who are the agents of colonisation. This colonisation was perpetuated over the years because imperialist regimes benefitted from it, hence, the continued imposition of it, with the disastrous effect of permanently dividing the twins. Fanon (2008:14) notes that separating individuals from their culture and family was the tactic used by conquerors or colonialists to subjugate the colonies (and its people). This is also what happens to Radisene and Dikosha. Fanon (2008:18) believes that it is necessary for a black person to overcome the psychological effects of colonisation, in order to attain real freedom. This is what Mda apparently demonstrates through Dikosha.

It is perceived dehumanisation that Dikosha acts on throughout her interaction with the church, family, or community. She openly turns against the church for the injustice of denying her the deserved opportunity of going to school (Mda, 1995b:19). She “fights” her mother through non-cooperation with all that traditionally requires of her in dealing with her mother or even the home chores. This is evident in her response when cautioned of the pain she inflicts on her, “Then she must go back to that night – dance and un-conceive me” (Mda, 1995b:18). Radisane encourages her to groom herself into a decent lady. She rejects this and emphatically indicates that she wants to be a “monster-woman-dancer” (Mda, 1995b:18).

Her deviant behaviour is an apparent onslaught on the “oppressive” traditions and societal norms on her as an individual, but also on gender discrimination. This leads her to even non-participation in communal feasts and other activities, where she kept her distance from other people and shuns away from the food served. She instead prefers to spend all her days in the Barwa cave, as this reflects resistance to the dominant culture of oppressive materialism, nationalism, and modernity. In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1967:27), Fanon supports this course, as he encourages the oppressed to violently reject such subjugation. This he describes as a mentally cathartic practice, which purges servility from the oppressed psyche and restores self-respect for him/her. In her private realm of the cave, she sees herself as the monster woman dancer, who leads all dancers in the cave, as well as all dancers in the whole world. She also sees

herself in a state of and having superpowers to devour other dancers, strengthening herself to dance forever (1995b:16). This is an attempt to shake off the power that the world exercises upon her, according to MacDonald (2009:137). She experiences absolute peace and genuine love when she is with the people of the cave. “No voice is ever raised in anger, and they do not seem to know any form of violence directed at other human beings. Men do not deem themselves more important than women” (Mda, 1995b:52-53). She takes delight in the fact that there seems to be equality among the cave people, which does not exist in the world of haSamane (Mda, 1995b:53).

Although disempowered by being denied educational opportunities and therefore in a weaker position vis-á-vis the civilised society in Lesotho, Mda uses rituals to empower his protagonist. Due to the fallout with societal leaders, including the Church fathers and all what she sees as oppressive traditions, she doesn’t fully engage in the rituals of the community around of Hasamane, Hasache, and other villages. She conversely succeeds in creating strong communion with the ancient traditions depicted in the cave paintings of the Barwa people. This gives her freedom to engage in rituals of a new generation according to her terms, in the private realm, through which she asserts her power and dignity.

Ritualisation, as used by Mda and as an aspect of African Humanism, draws people together and strengthens communal societies. According to McAllIister (2006:67) in his article *The Anthropology of Performance*, ritual can on one level be viewed as a form of performance. Dancing and singing performance is reflected as Dikosha’s strong points from the beginning of the novel. This is the only thing that brings her close to other girls, from her teenage years as indicated below:

> As Dikosha baked her feet, songs were ringing in her head. Songs always rang in her head. Perhaps that is why she did not want to speak. In her dreams she saw the new dance steps that she was going to teach the girls the next day (Mda, 1995b:3).

The dance motif around her follows her to her private realm with the people of the cave, where she conjures them to various sorts of dance moves (Mda 1995b:50). Her attraction to the monster-woman-dancer who seemed to lead other dancers in the cave

is a reflection of her own qualities and her endeavour to be the dance queen of the whole world. Although she initially closes herself off from her community rituals, she later comes back to share her participation in some rituals with Hasamane and the rest of the other villages around her. Her love for Shana's beautiful music that featured songs about social ills in the communities, is one of the things that draws her back to the community. Her sense of loss when Shana dies leads to her lasting tribute dance (towards the end of the funeral) that is warmly applauded by the people at the funeral, in spite of her sitting alone, a little distance from the rest of the people, having been side-lined in the community for a long time:

> Suddenly she jumped up and danced. The proceedings of the funeral stopped as everyone watched her. She danced like a woman possessed, like the whirlwind in August. She raised helical dust to the skies, which could be seen for miles away. It was visible even in distant villages (Mda, 1995b:169).

Victor Turner's (1982:104) theoretical contribution on rituals in society is helpful in dealing with transformative literary works like She *Plays with the Darkness* (1995b). He emphasises the social process of a ritual. This involves a corrective interaction as a mechanism for resolution of conflict and social transformation, through re-alignment of social relations between individuals and groups. In this context ritual involves an "interpretive re-enactment" of experience, positioning this within the realm of basic values, enabling people to introspect and either reaffirm their beliefs or adjust to changing circumstances. Ritual performances are also regarded as agents of change, providing a "social eye" through which culture sees itself, and the sketch board on which the actors sketch out what they believe to be more appropriate designs for living (Turner 1982:24).

In spite of her initial rejection of the Hasamane community, its social context and rituals, Dikosha's embracing of these societal aspects is depicted with significant measure of success in promoting humanistic values. Although she earlier lost currency and intimate connection with the people in Hasamane, she manages to bring to unison, people of different communal structures and individuals through her dancing skills. Having permanently left the cave she spends plenty of time playing with the darkness in her

room and she alternates this with dances she enjoys with the community. Mda (1995b:170) lists a number of groups that now enjoyed dance sessions with her. These include the people's dances, Mathuela diviners, Zionists, Mokgibo dancers, little girls, with their pumpkin songs and *monyanyako* dance, *matebele* men doing *indlamu*, *baSotho* men with *mohobelo,* as well as the *famo* dance of the *fuchu* parties of the night. All are overjoyed by her participation and her presence amongst them. As part of what Turner (1982:104) refers to as interpretive re-enactment of experience, Dikosha embarks on a practice of hosting and listening to men's confessions. Men are initially drawn to her room as they pass by and see her door open, they knock, and she invites them in. In the darkness of her room, these men, including strangers and labour migrants from the mines returning home, often came to confess their dark secrets.

Although she merely listened with no specific response, they leave feeling relieved. The role she plays in this instance can be equalled with performing a ritual (MacDonald (2009:146). However, the use of her room for people to situate their experiences within the structures of the society as a contribution to societal cohesion and development, and more importantly her re-integration within the community. Van Gennep (1960:5) identifies three stages (or phases) of ritual that people undergo through the rite of passage. In the first stage, people withdraw from their societal status, and prepare to move from one place (or status) to another. This first phase, also called "separation", comprises symbolic behaviour signifying detachment of the individual or group, from an earlier fixed point (regarded as impure) in the social structure. This also symbolises "cutting away" from the former self, signified in symbolic actions or rituals. For instance, cutting of the hair for a person who has just joined the army, also for those undergoing African initiation schools. He or she is "cutting away" the former self. The second phase is the period between states, during which one has left one place or state but has not yet entered the next, called the transitional (liminal) phase. The attributes of liminality or liminal personae are necessarily ambiguous. The third phase is marked by "reaggregation" or "incorporation", when the "passage" is consummated by the ritual subject. Having completed the rite and assumed their "new" identity, one re-enters society with a new status. Reincorporation is often characterised by elaborate rituals

ceremonies. There may be no specific reference of the latter in *She Plays with the Darkness* (1995b), although the basics of ritual get performed.

Dikosha's success, as indicated above, marks significant difference with Radisene's as the latter is unsuccessful in fully reintegrating into the home community after his escapades in the Lowlands. In fact, in spite of his limited signs of success, Radisene doesn't really get a proper and lasting success in all aspects of his life. He doesn't do well at school, in spite the favouritism he got from the church fathers, over Dikosha. He gets general certificate, with dismal performance in crucial subjects or learning areas like English language (Mda, 1995b:25). This lends him a job as a casual teacher of an informal night school, which he abruptly loses when a state of emergency is declared in the country. The corruption he becomes entangled with whilst he works as a clerk for a firm of lawyers specialising in third party claims leads him to establish his own company of insurance assessors, fraudulently operating as a lawyer. As an ambulance chaser, with connections in the police force that help him to get ahead of other lawyers, he makes a lot of money, which is even further enhanced by the huge amounts he fraudulently skims from the claimants' pay-outs for himself. However, this doesn't give him real and lasting fulfilment.

MacDonald (2009:141) argues that Radisene's fortunes and eventual misfortunes are the portrayal of the "ultimate fruitlessness of an uncritical embrace of the individualistic materialism of modern life". This also demonstrates the nihilism of the modern era individualism. In his article *The Party of Modernity* (2003:2), David Kelly defines modernity as a term that historians use to describe individualist and rationalist culture. Working to serve just individual interests is not sustainable, as it doesn't the required support in the long run. Thriving under trying experiences, Radisene makes up his mind to pursue wealth by any means necessary, and looks forward to this as ultimate personal achievement, that would enhance his power to do what he likes, and win favour for him in his community, family, and more particularly, his twin, Dikosha. However, due perhaps to the disjuncture between such individualism and communal values, and specifically humanism, this becomes a burden. As indicated above,

individualism and pursuing only selfish personal interests and desires, is unsustainable due to inevitable lack of communal support. However, Radisene continues to be driven by greed in everything he does, attempting to present himself as the epitome of success to the community of haSamane and its environs. Having seen Sorry my Darlie's new car and thinking that this achievement is just through football, "there and then Radisene made up his mind that he was not going to be a teacher forever, not going to be poor for the rest of his life either… Somewhere there must be easy money waiting for him" (Mda 1995b:28 -29). From this point onwards, he focuses on accumulating personal wealth. Having accumulated wealth through third party insurance claims, he doesn't only employ and designates Trooper Motsohi's, he also snatches his wife, a sheer abuse of power. This is certainly against community values. Tampololo's father dislikes this: "It was shameful that his daughter, who had been brought up so well, had run away from her husband to live with another man" (Mda1995b:131). This is also openly frowned upon by other members of the community. On the occasion of the Ha Samane traditional lekgotla to discuss a case between father-of-the-daughters and Hlong, the latter objects to the suggestion that it be held at Radisene's home, since Radisene "does dirty things" with the plaintiff's daughter (Mda 1995b:138). He is therefore discredited even to his home community.

Radisene's portrayal with the lack of historical continuity reflects the significance Mda ascribes to the relation between this aspect and community evolvement. His abrupt material success in the lowlands doesn't reflect any historical base that would give credibility to his overall success. For instance, through misjudgement, he misses the opportunity to develop livestock as part of his both intangible and tangible wealth. His youthful love of herding cattle is evident in his renting people's cattle on some weekends, when he is at haSamane, quenching his thirst of herd boy reminiscence. In spite of all the sentimental fulfilment he derives from this exercise he doesn't think beyond the rentals. This is in spite of suggestions from those people whose cattle he wants to rent that he should buy his own: "He is rich enough. But of course, he won't, we know how mean he is" (Mda, 1995b:111). This does not only discredit his wealth but also his ability to fully reintegrate into the haSamane community. After disappearing

from the home village for extended periods of time (in times of his unemployment and suffering) he reappears and frequently visits his home in haSamane. It soon becomes clear that he does this in order to display his newly acquired wealth, with the understanding that the community will readily embrace him on account of his riches. As indicated through Father-of-the-daughters' dislike of Radisene's cohabitation with his daughter, as well as Hlong's remarks about "dirty things" done by the two people in the village quickly see through his latest visits and realise that they were not genuine. His meaningless participation in the local traditional affairs, including Kgotla sessions of the village, are further dampened by the criticism against his immoral cohabitation with Tampololo, his façade as a lawyer, as well as his meanness and greed. He ultimately sees for himself that his participation is not appreciated, and he resolves not "to interfere again" in the affairs of the Kgotla sessions (Mda 19956:141). He ultimately loses the wealth he accumulated through defrauding widows and other road accident victims in his subsequent fraudulent dealings with Nigerian scammers.

Radisene also fails to reintegrate with Dikosha. Trying to reconnect with her is one of the three things he prioritises in his regular visits to Ha Samane at the time of his prosperity in the lowlands, after long periods of "drought in his life" (Mda1995b:126). This is the time when she attempts to reintegrate with the community, but also with the special preference of being on her own in her dark rondavel. However, she ensures that she doesn't meet with him, as she has come to believe that they are different and therefore belong to different social worlds, her to the village, and Radisene to the lowlands (Mda, 1995b:116). The narrator seems to draw attention to the fact that their friendship, which appears fractured, is not an end in itself. In spite of the dichotomies of a post-colonial society, their individual twinship to the community counteracts total disunity and foregrounds humanistic significance of the community. MacDonald (2009:142) notes that the twins remain divided, even when Radisene managed to access Dikosha and drove with her to the lowlands, and to distant areas of Quting. It is her connection to haSamane that withstands the test of time and therefore upholds the humanistic theme, even when they have climbed the hilltop of Mohale's Hoek in Ketane HaNohana (Mda 1995b:207), and the red marwana ants nibbling at their legs, their

minds remain connected to haSamane. When Dikosha demands that Radisene takes her back home, they start to reminisce about a number of things in their home village; Nkgono, grandma maSelina (and her chickens), as well as Sorry My Darlie. At this point Mda (1995b:207) describes them as the two odd doves who descend from the sky to feed amongst the chickens, who, on second thought, grandma Maselina let be (with the chickens) as she refers to them as "the doves of God". MacDonald (2009:145) refers to Turner (1969:128) in arguing that, as "edgemen" in their respective contexts throughout the novel, the two are split and twinned both with each other and with the community in explicit demonstration of the efficacy of twinship and associated humanistic effect over the divisive forces of post-colonial modernity. The rural-urban divide, the failed twinship intimacy between the two main characters and Radisene's adoption of the Lowlands culture, perpetuate the divide within a single identity to the end of the novel. This paradoxically highlights the significance of African humanism as an antidote to divisive practices imposed on the post-colonial society.

Although the two main characters partly succeed in bridging the divide between individual and community, they fall short on historical continuity, especially Radisene. Dikosha's escape from the oppressive confines of the society, including the strong patriarchy that turns her life up-side down, leads her to a secluded, fulfilling life with the people of the cave, through which she connects with the past. The Barwa's past even predates Dikosha's forbears, the Basotho societies. She creates a social mix of this past with elements of her time and age, as well as those of the historical Basotho, which portrays her version of modernity.

The lack of completeness in the portrayal of the two main characters, vis-á-vis the humanistic vision depicted in the novel, is compensated by Mda's use of a less visible, but significant character. Misti can be seen as an alternate model for the humanistic theme of the text. She is not only of the similar age to the twins, but also Radisene and her have a crush on each other from a young age into adulthood, working and staying in Maseru (Mda, 1995b:96). Having a more accomplished portrayal in this regard than the main characters, her character is developed to transcend and link the divide, between individual and community, as well as past and present, and link the divide between

individual and community (MacDonald, 2009:142). She has an advantage in the sense that her parents manage to enroll her in school before he proceeds to university. Due to her brilliance, she is awarded a scholarship to complete her BSc in Medical Laboratory Technology and even pursue doctoral studies abroad, in Ireland (Mda, 1995b:46-47). This enables her to attain high level of success in her career as she comes back to practice in Maseru. It is at this point that she finds herself having to heed the call by the ancestors. She becomes a *lethuela* and diviner, at the surprise and disgust of a one-dimensional person like Radisene. In spite of Misti's mother's defeatism and distress at this calling (after such an effort and sacrifice on educating their child), she is comforted by her husband:

> There is really nothing we can do about it, Mother of Misti. When the ancestors call, they call. You know that her grandmother, who died long before she was born, was a diviner too. She must be the one who is calling her to follow in her footsteps. We must be proud that she has chosen our child among all her numerous grandchildren (Mda, 1995b:120).

Misti's character is thus successfully used to disrupt the divide between the past and the present. She is also not just an individual. In spite of her having lived in big cities, she doesn't develop individualistic attitudes or focus on just her own selfish development. Her heart remains with the community. Her graduation ceremony at her home draws in multitudes who come not just to celebrate her success, but also to perform ritualistic observance of their heritage and culture. This involves spectacular display of traditional clothing in line with the "trod" formation and colours of the horses ridden by men attending the occasion. The traditional blankets that include Seana Marena to Lefistori, seshweshwe dresses and performance by various groups, on Mokgibo, Mohobelo and Indlamu (Mda 1995b:47). She is different in many ways from Tampololo, and she never talks badly about other people. Conversely, Tampololo would gloat that "Radisene lost her job, he anyway was not a real teacher, he is a rag who is drunk all the time, he survives on begging from people like her husband, he is again unemployed – fired by the lawyers – as he deserves to be, from the job he got through her husband" (Mda, 1995b:76). Misti speaks favourably of him. For instance, she says that she met him and learnt that he has established his own insurance company. When Radisene is sick she

takes time off her work to attend to him, she gets good medication, and brings him food every day until he gets better, without making this public. In bridging the gap between individual and community, Misti also presents an alternative to Dikosha's self-isolation. This is in spite of the latter's circumstances, including her being denied opportunity to education and developments. She also manages at some point to turn around and gain some significant level of integration in Ha Samane, through her hosting and hearing confessions. Mda's use of Misti to transcend the divide between past and present, is anchored in twinship that is descended from the ancestors – between her grandmother and herself. She is also portrayed as having a significant ability to balance her positions as an educated, sophisticated individual, and as an ordinary human being who loves and respects traditions and culture of her community.

3.3 CHARACTER ANALYSIS IN WAYS OF DYING (1995a) THROUGH LITERARY CRITIQUE BY LEWIS NKOSI

It is a fact of life, as noted by Lewis Nkosi (1983:3), that a young generation is young in all aspects, that is, beauty, plausibility, perceptiveness, and courage to challenge the elders, who are assumed to have supplanted the plight of the youth. The mutual antipathy and denigration are aggravated by varied nature of challenges characterising each era. Frantz Fanon (1967:166) corroborates this view and extends it to note that African writers should, through their writing, take part in the African revolution. To achieve this a writer should be a living part of Africa and her thought. He/she should be an element of that popular energy that is called forth in freeing, progress, and Africa's happiness. He maintains that there is no place outside that fights for an artist or intellectual who is not concerned with and "at one" with the people in the battle of Africa and suffering humanity.

The literary period in which Nkosi (1983) evaluates creative writing in South Africa coincides with the coming into force of the policy of apartheid. This flows from the National Party Government's notion that different races have irreconcilable interests, and therefore had to live in separate demarcated areas, legitimizing the formation of Bantustans. According to Nkosi (1983:45), the aim was to limit the number of Africans moving from countryside to urban areas. Development of the Bantustans into

economically viable areas would also enable the government to move the urban Africans who had settled in the cities for generations, back to tribal reserves. The Physical Planning Act was also passed to restrict number of workers, where a firm could employ in the urban areas, which was also detrimental to employers. The net-effect of these policies was to reduce Africans to rootless, mobile gang labour (Nkosi 1983:47). They then would have no permanent right to reside either in urban areas or the countryside, since they would be forever commuting between the two. The urban spatial development policies of the time didn't accommodate Africans, with the result that migrant labourers would be packed like animals into male-only hostels. Therefore, these men would live separately from their wives and children for long periods, mostly resulting in broken families. The legacy of these legislative policies, including the Bantu Education Act (1953) and the Job Reservations Act (1924), which expressly excluded black employees from the definition of an "employee" with rights like to form and join registered trade unions, and other decent work benefits, is still felt in the present day.

It is against this background that Nkosi looks into the theme "Jim comes to Jo'burg" around which literary texts of the 1950s were written. The motive of such a theme seem to have been associated with the ideology of separate development and the Bantustan. However, its presentation portrays Jim as a vagrant who leaves his home in an integrated tribal structure to indulge in a carefree city environment without communal tribal and parental restrictions. This eschews a national tragedy that might result in such rootlessness and vagrancy, with neither city nor countryside as their permanent abode. This is then the theme he explores in examining the much acclaimed, Alan Paton's *Cry, The Beloved Country* (1959). Paton's novel doesn't fully reflect his renowned courage and advocacy for social justice as well as that hallmark of a well-respected South African writer. This is due to the method and his fictional control of the African character represented in Stephen Khumalo. His portrayal includes being ridiculously sanctimonious with all trepidations and humilities he encounters in Johannesburg.

Paton's protagonist most discernible quality is his naïveté and simple-minded goodwill, which according to Nkosi (1983:4), reflects the erstwhile South Africa's underlying wish "to survive the tragedy which would ensue, but could be averted if the country could

have good hearted and forgiving people like Khumalo" as well as Africans who "knew their space". Conversely, Mda's African character is not just assertive, but also active participants in rebuilding the country and the normalisation of the society. In *Ways of Dying* (1995a) Mda places more focus on the two main characters, Toloki and Noria, whose roles were partly analysed in 3.2 above. Although the setting of this novel can be seen to have similarities with Paton's *Cry the Beloved Country* (1959), in the sense that it has both the rural and urban sides, the characters in the former are stronger, more formidable, more independent and not just puppets formed to serve some sectarian or political interests.

Toloki's odyssey from his rural home to what he thought was a "wondrous world of freedom and riches" (Mda 1995a:57), becomes a mission that takes three months. In the process he goes through such terrible experiences that he could easily have given up the expectations if he was a weakling. To his dismay he finds himself begging for food, which he experiences as utterly demeaning. He is alarmed to realise how difficult life can be, especially for the people of his colour, the discrimination they are subjected to in the small towns and farmlands. This also reflects on the way of life and denigration of a migrant labourer in South Africa, which Mda (1995a:59-60) presents as a sort of initiation for Toloki, who leaves the poor and struggling rural life, only to become subjected to a more challenging urban lifestyle. He is nevertheless resolute to continue with his journey to the city, determined not to accept charity or alms, on his quest for love and fortune. He courageously regards this experience as a noble adventure.

Toloki is featured along with an equally strong character, Noria, both of whom come from a rural background. They are both portrayed fully. Her escapades back in the village, including her affair and a tumultuous marriage to Napu, as well as her disastrous business of entertaining men, seems to have contributed to her strong character and composure later in life. Through the perceptions of people in the village and small town where she lived with Napo in a brickyard, she developed a glowing perception of city life and thought all the glamour and achievement would help her forget all the pain she experienced when losing her mother and son. She, however,

does not crack down when she gets a rude awakening that the city streets are after all, “not paved with gold and diamonds” (Mda 1995a:135). She meets with Toloki in the city when she has lost not just her second son, but also her home as her shack burnt down. In spite of this, she remains hopeful and positive about life and humanity, especially amongst the residence of the informal settlement where she stays. Squatter areas like this “mushroomed” along the major urban areas in South Africa in the early 1990s. Encountering similar challenges to those experienced by Khumalo and differently from his naivety about the situation, the two exude confidence and determination to succeed. It is in this regard that Toloki notes that Noria “never refers to the area as a squatter camp or the people as squatters” (Mda, 1995a:53). This breaks stereotypes as indicated in the problem statement. A reflection was made through the statement, on subjective disposition and portrayal of characters in certain literary texts. This is in turn triggered by circumstances of prejudice based on social, cultural and/or racial factors, leading to character stereotypes. In this regard, Mda (1995a:53) advances a strong point that social background does not necessarily define a person’s character. This thinking dominates Toloki’s mind as he walks through in search of Noria’s place. He further notes the squatter people are a close-knit community and they particularly do not like to be referred to as squatters.

This identifies Mda’s writing as particularly assertive post-1990. This is by no means similar to protest writing or using racial differences as a determining reference point. Critical of liberal writing, Nkosi also does not promote writing whose pivot is racial conflict. Negritude and Black consciousness both of which characterise Mda’s writing, are not mutually exclusive. Nkosi (1983:31) accentuates Mphahlele’s point that whiteness and blackness are not and should not be regarded as exclusive opposites. This is clearer when one considers difference between being black, African, or non-white, which was a classification used on the people of South Africa, that were non-white pre-democratic South Africa and was also used to demarcate social amenities. The nature of this colonial concept contributed greatly to polarising the society on a racial basis, and in casting the other in a negative light. Nkosi’s argument is that this negative prefix served to justify the whole scale administering and effects of European

colonialism with fatal assault on African personality, justifying the African response to the scourge of racism. This comprises Negritude sort of solidarity, which contributes to post-colonial and decolonisation theories. The subsequent modus operandi to affirm "African values" and the reverence of the African personality, which gives effect to humanness, results from the innate hostility in the term "non-white" (Nkosi 1983:32).

The social role of art is manifest in writing that places people's living conditions at the centre, however, Nkosi (1983:132) cautions against literary works or fiction that exploit the readymade plots of racial violence, social apartheid, and inter-racial relationships, without any attempt to transcend such social facts into artistically persuasive fictional works. He applauds writers who move towards positive portrayal of black experiences in South Africa, and avoid writing that gives the impression that all that black people did in the country was a reaction to the white oppression. This is a distinctive feature of Mda's literary work and his conceptual ideas on the social role of art.

Bell and Jacobs (2009:3) highlight the social function of his art and its obligation to provide social commentary as grounded in an African aesthetics. In his writings, Mda delineates post-colonial identity, hinged on cultural interaction between different identities that include cultural, material, ethnic, gender, and class. This is in line with Nkosi's objection to African writers whose writing focus on rehashing racial conflict and related themes. In *Ways of Dying* (1995a) ,he focuses on the renewal of cultural identities, which had been regarded as the "glue" that kept African societies intact in pre-colonial era. The social-political change brought about by political developments, which at times is characterised by intolerance between different role players, tend to exert pressure on socio-cultural formations. In response to social violation that leads to despair, hopelessness and lack of communal solidarity. Mda's narrative foregrounds community ideas and historical contexts in dealing with death and funeral rituals.

Courau and Murray (2009:92), in their article *Of Funeral Rites and Community Memory – Ways of Living in Ways of Dying* (2009:92), note that the processes of mourning depicted through Toloki is meant to find ways of living by enacting the memory of the dead, carry with them the baggage of a turbulent and often distorted history. The urban

environment is, in the process, presented as an ambiguous space (unlike in Liberal narratives, like *Cry, the Beloved Country*, where the city environment is presented as perfect, and the only problems that crop up are a result of Black influx), that features a locus of collective remembrance, as well as a host of spiralling inhumanity that leads to death, pain, grief, suffering, and moral decay. In spite of the fact that urban areas that have been hitherto classified as “white areas” and whose special development has been white responsibility to the detriment of Africans, Mda focuses on African traditions/cultures’ significance in moulding and sustaining a strong, socially integrated community/communities in *Ways of Dying* (1995) which demonstrates successfully co-existence of the two worlds. That is, the dead and the living, in traditional African societies.

The old traditions are reworked so as to meet the demands of the new society emerging in South Africa. This, at present is characterised by high African urban migration. However, Mda’s tenacity in dealing with the tensions between colonial and post-colonial determinants reflect his effectiveness in transcending the monolithic definition of human experience and thereby drawing focus to the inevitable dynamic shifting of boundaries. In line with prudence and open-mindedness of writers noted by Nkosi (1983:133), challenges the established parameters of traditional narrative writing in his allowing voice to the supposedly silenced. Toloki becomes a well-recognised professional mourner and a leading character, despite his inauspicious introduction to the reader as someone unkempt, and living in squalor. When staying at the informal settlement with Noria, and having attended some community meetings, he shares observations that he notices that the people who are most active in the affairs of the settlements are the woman. Not only do they do all the work, but they play leadership roles. At the meetings he attended they present the most practical ideas to solve the various problems (Mda, 1995a:172).

Mda uses social realism mediated through a wide range of cultural and traditional practices in the setting of urban community. The distinctive social realism is used by Mda for its representation of historical condition, which is at times undefined and

sometimes largely metaphorical value (Courau and Murray 2009:94). The progressive development of the different styles of mourning becomes part of tradition in an urban context and this is a part of moulding the community, including further development of characters. The space he works within is also defined through representation of historical condition that is mostly characterised in metaphorical terms, as per the explanation below. Courau and Murray (2009:94) cite Stern P. Molslund to the effect that the historical representation in the novel "passes" a Jamesonian rigorous judgement on the present by the future. Therefore, the present and the future become differentiated contestations that pass a verdict on one another within the realm of historical possibility. The temporal context of the novel is reflected in the non-fixed living of the two main characters. They move from the rural areas to the city, where they still do not acquire permanent dwellings. After Toloki's shack is destroyed by Government together with others, he gets himself a place in the quayside shelter waiting room, which he later refers to as his headquarters. Noria, on the other hand, stays in a shack, which is burned down when his son is necklaced[5] by the vigilantes. After the funeral, Toloki helps Noria builds a new shack, into which they both move.

This, according to Mervis (1998:39) in *Fiction for development*, signifies a nation in the process of transition and formation. The social uncertainty that is reflected through nomadic form of movement characterising the main characters, Noria and Toloki, symbolizes a society that seeks new ways to define itself. In this process it can't obliterate the past, and therefore makes efforts to build on it whilst focusing on the future, which gives hope towards envisaged resolutions to the present societal challenges.

In his approach to *Ways of Dying* (1995) Mda avoids "telling narratives" or attempting to solve problems that have been solved before, and according to Nkosi (1983:131 -133),

[5] This term was used in the periods of high prevalence of state brutality in trying to stamp out political resistance and uprisings mostly in Black townships, in the then apartheid-South Africa. Any person who was suspected to have links with the police or police informer (spy), he/she was killed by placing a burning tyre on his/her neck, hence dubbed, a necklace.

has moved to presenting more positive attributes on African life. This is comparable to Mphahlele's *The African Image,* which points to developing characters that reflect positive image of Africans without obscuring this with instances of racial conflicts similar subjects. The new society is here portrayed through black urban community, with its ability to provide itself with continuity and stability, despite political violence and the fragile shifting patterns of association that constitute urban belonging. Courau and Murray (2009:101) argue that Toloki's mourning performance has an effect of uniting the community. It also draws attention to cultural rituals that colonial forces devalue through which Africans maintain social cohesion and group dynamics. The role of a nurse is one of those rituals that Mda remodels, with the implication that tradition and culture evolve in response to social developments and community needs. The original title and role imply care giving, support, and contributing to sustaining life. Mda extends this so as to be the last person to have seen the deceased alive. The nurse's role at the funeral therefore becomes a moral and emotional support for the community. Mda (1995a:7) describes the nurse as a fountain of fascinating information about ways of dying. It is this "critical voice" that helps in keeping the community intact during difficult times of bereavement, and that also bridges the gap between tradition that originally mostly characterised rural communities and urban modernity. This is the role to which Mda connects his protagonist.

3.4 CHARACTER ANALYSIS IN *SHE PLAYS WITH THE DARKNESS* (1995b) THROUGH LITERARY CRITIQUE BY NJABULO NDEBELE

In his assessment of South African literature, Ndebele (1986:143) focuses on the rediscovery of the ordinary. Central to his writings on this subject is the analogy from Roland Barthes's essay on wrestling. Such an action is the manifest display of violence and savagery that captures the attention of spectators. He uses this to describe socio-political climate of pre-1994 South Africa, characterised by highly organised spectacle of political wrestling. This comprises the monstrous show of force from sporadic shootings and killing of innocent people, to economic exploitation, the key symbol of which has been the mining industry. Other issues involved passing of draconian laws targeted at certain population groups and related processes. At the wrestling ring, the main actors

had been the white political lawmakers, who have been at the helm for three centuries, to develop all the characteristics he/she needs as a wrestler.

In a review of black South African writing prior to the all-inclusive democratic regime, Ndebele (1986:144) cautions about the spectacle of social absurdity that was reflected on by some writers. He attributes this to the triteness of thought and expression (through rehashing themes that have been explored before), resulting in the overwhelming display of oppression in their writings. He accentuates the importance of interiority in character portrayal, as opposed to the exterior, the spectatular and display of the culture of oppression, to the utmost in befuddlement (Ndebele 1986;144). The reference he makes to Dhlomo and the *Drum Magazine's* writings demonstrates the point. He notes the former's focus on the outward, obvious signs of individual or social behaviour, with less detail on motive and social process. The effect is that people and situations are either very good, or very bad. The latter has a similar penchant for the spectacular, with slightly different symbols. The focus is not much on oppression, but on the growth of sophisticated urban working and petit bourgeois classes. Ndebele emphasises that it is not sufficient to delve into the situation of oppression, but it is crucial that a writer goes beyond this, in order to explore ways of its redemptive transformation. The example referred to in this regard, is Michael Siluma's narrative, *The Conversion*, an analytical story that intentionally breaks down the barriers of the obvious, thereby revealing new possibilities. It is through this that Siluma rediscovers the ordinary, defined as the opposite of the spectacular. This rationality enables attention to necessary detail, with the result of significant growth in consciousness (Ndebele 1986:152).

In line with rediscovering of the ordinary and interiority, Mda unravels the divergent stories of the siblings Radisene and Dikosha. He traces this from their growing up in haSamane village and its environs, in the rural highland areas of Lesotho. According to a different approach from "displaying the spectacle of social absurdity" (Ndebele 1986:150), he focuses on the rediscovery of the ordinary. He tracks development of the siblings, their relation to each other and to the community. The latter refers to them as

twins, due to the fact that they were born on the same year, although they have different fathers. He uses an omniscient narrator, who shares with the reader all the details their growing up, experiences, community affairs featuring both haSamane and the lowlands. Although Mda introduces the narrator and explains role and processes in *Ways of Dying* (1995a), it similarly applies to *She plays with the Darkness* (1995b):

> We know everything about everybody. We even know things that happen when we are not there; things that happen behind people's closed doors deep in the middle of the night. We are the all-seeing eye of the village gossip. When in our orature the story teller begins the story, they say – "it once happened" We are the "they". No individual owns any story. The community is the owner of the story, and it can tell it the way it deems it (Mda, 1995a:12).

This helps to get deeper into the affairs of not just the community, but also into the lives of the characters. Due to this approach, the reader knows that Dikosha was conceived at a night dance, which is the key quality that defines her and her peculiarity throughout the novel. Ndebele (1986:145) emphasises the significance of language in narrative writing. He differentiates between two types, namely, the language of exposition, and the language for creative writing. The former is suitable for investigative journalism, which is used by the likes of Henry Nxumalo, for instance in his writing on the ugliness of economic exploitation in South Africa. It is also used covering incidents like strikes and political meetings, which require a journalistic approach to spectacle. On the other hand, creative writers entertain the readers with good and sometimes erudite narratives. In this regard, Mda blends his creative writing with a specific concern for authenticity. A narrative setting is case in point to this end, as Mda indicates in one of the interviews with him:

> Place is key to me. This is not just background for my cast of characters. The place is so important that my novels are suggested by place (Mda in Bell & Jacobs, 2009:6).

The concern with factual accuracy in Mda's work is evident in the original information he uses in *Ways of Dying* (1995), that is, newspaper reports from the *Sunday Times* and *City Press* in the early 1990s. It is also interesting to note that the character of Radisene

partly emerges from Mda's experience as an article clerk in Lesotho. Therefore, historicity and authenticity are significant qualities of his fiction.

Mda's characters are subject to historicism, magic realism, performative plots and orature, enabling the focus to be placed on ordinary concerns of people, while also elevating such ordinary people's agenda to the level of national political discourse (Ndebele, 1986; 156). In *She Plays with the Darkness* (1995b), Mda demonstrates the significance of social integration and the need to recreate and maintain cultural identity in the post-colony. Although Dikosha's reaction to her disenfranchisement leads to her private realm communion and identification with "the people of the cave" and their culture, she also eventually reintegrates into the community of Ha Samane, with its cultural practices. This is emphasised by MacDonald's (2009:144) argument that such a regenerative process, subject to underlying historical processes that are essential to postcolonial identity, is pivotal to continual cultural identities. For this reason, Dikosha's twofold role enables reflection of a generative postcolonial modernity, which is both communal, and features the past, as indicated in the article *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* (Hall 1994:394). Postcolonial modernity accordingly refers to an inter-epoch cultural identity formation, with subjects positioning themselves within the past, whilst also being positioned by it. Such a transcendence should, according to Ndebele (1986:157), be the basis upon which a new society can be built. This is consistent with the views expressed below in a conversation with Ndebele (2008:1-4).

> The South African of the future will live comfortably with uncertainty because uncertainty promises opportunity, but you have to be robust about it, you have to be thoughtful about it, you have to contemplate it to get the full richness of it, and I think that is the challenge of being South African: to run away from unidimensional and definitive characterisations of ourselves. If we master that skill, we are in a sense preparing ourselves adequately for the global world of the future, where to be a South African is to understand South Africa within Africa and within the world.

This is commensurate with Mda's condemnation of social stratification, and his elevation of people on periphery or fringes of society to the centre stage, in most of his writings, as analysis of his literary works indicates in this study.

3.5 POSTCOLONIAL AND DECOLONISATION IN *WAYS OF DYING* (1995a) AND *SHE PLAYS WITH THE DARKNESS* (1995b)

Although Zakes Mda's early writing is intensely political, from the early 1990s he adopted Lewis Nkosi's and Njabulo Ndebele's theoretical suggestions of "going beyond" a political challenge and contributing to redemptive transformation regarding a particular context. He, however, according to Bell and Jacobs (2009: 3), provides a context within which his writing is to be understood, and he attributes his approach to a symbiotic relationship between the artist and society, emphasising that an artist's work is primarily a response to his/her world, together with the changes it is subjected to since no social or political environment is static. Most writers on postcolonial and decolonisation theories propagate a style of writing that appeals to a broader mass audience. This is also Mda's approach in the two novels and his character portrayal in a changing society. In this regard, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2002: 28) probe the notion of the imperial-colonial dialectic. Postcolonial writing is determined through political, imaginative, and social control between the coloniser and the colonised. This raises other questions that include the decolonisation of culture and the means to deal with it. Ashcroft et al. (2002:28-29) refer to *Decolonising the Mind*, noting Ngugi's argument for the recuperation of pre-colonial languages and cultures. The motivation in this regard is that colonisation is a non-permanent feature, which can be overcome when complete independence (with socio-cultural development) is achieved. Cultural syncretism is also seen as not just a valuable, but inescapable characteristic feature of all postcolonial societies. This is what Mda does, namely, integrating cultures, past to present, and rural to urban, in both novels. Although Zakes Mda's early writing is intensely political, he later, as from the early 1990s, adopted Lewis Nkosi's and Njabulo Ndebele's theoretical suggestions of "going beyond" a political challenge and contribute to redemptive transformation regarding a particular context. In an apparent reference to Steve Biko's (1978:44) conception of acculturation and its negative version in the case of colonial South Africa, Ashcroft (2002: 209) points to a debate around Raymond Williams' (1989:311) distinction between culture as "art" and as "a way of life". He argues that postcolonial cultural discourse problematises this, as well as the concept of culture of

itself. He also reinforces Biko's observation that when decolonising countries appropriate imperial cultural discourse, they either appropriate its universal assumption that their own culture is unimportant or appropriate in way that confirms all intellectual and artistic discourse as dominating aspect of the way of life, strands of cultural texture, woven into the societal fabric. In his writings, Mda tries to ameliorate the relationship between African and Western cultures. He, for instance uses the character of Misti in *She Plays with the Darkness* (1995b), to not only bridge the divide between individual and community, past and present, but also between Africa and the West. This character achieves the highest level of Western education, and also successfully takes up her calling by the ancestors to be a traditional "lethuela" diviner.

Zakes Mda's discourse in the two novels, places women at the centre of reshaping and rebuilding a postcolonial, post-apartheid South Africa (Mazibuko, 2009:116). This is not only at the time of a nationalist discourse on the African Renaissance, but also when the country experiences extreme marginalisation of women against an excessive materialist and male-dominated discourse. Ashcroft (2002:172) concurs that women in many societies have been relegated to the "other", that is, they have been marginalised and, in a metaphorical sense, "colonised", and in this way, given no option but to pursue guerrilla warfare against imperial domination. It is this quality that they share with the colonised races and people's experience of the politics of oppression and repression. Mangena (2008:255), in his article, *The Black Consciousness Philosophy and the woman's Question in South Africa: 1970 – 1980*, similarly articulates the issue of gender. He argues that it is common fact that a man is elevated to a superior position, whilst a female is relegated to an inferior one, and this has been peddled into a stereotype that was brought down from one generation to the next, and therefore also difficult to eradicate. Mangena's argument is that this "gender problem" is a form of social construction, and therefore it is upon the society to mainstream and it address it appropriately. However, this means the society should itself undergo transformation. Mda makes a good start in this regard through his novels. Thus, the problem of female emancipation is a general human challenge. My understanding of Mangena and Mda is

that they agree that women's liberation is an inseparable part of the liberation of the entire human race. There won't be complete emancipation without women's liberation.

As reflected in the two novels, women in postcolonial countries have had to construct a language of their own (as indicated below), when their only available tools are those of the coloniser. For instance, Mda's key female characters in the two novels, for example, Noria, Noria's mother, "that Mountain Woman", Toloki's mother, Dikosha and Tampololo, inter alia, are all outspoken and assert themselves in a male dominated world, demonstrating "African renaissance", through giving women (formerly marginalized), their rightful place in the mainstream society. which is a sub-theme in most of Mda's post-1994 narrative writings. They don't pretend to fit into images of "calm", "decent" or "good women", propagated by a patriarchal value system (Mazibuko, 2009:118). Post-colonial language, "voice", concepts of speech and silence, as per Ashcroft's (2002:172) reference to Duras (1973), are significant in feminist theory,(affording women the necessary "voice" to talk for themselves) together with the connections between literature/language, political activity, and action for social change. The aesthetic value is not universal, but historically and culturally specific. Mda reflects these qualities in his writings.

Decolonisation theory asserts the notion of the temporality of colonisation. The proponents of this notion include Ngugi wa Thiongo's (1986:35) appeal for a return to writing, mainly in pre-colonial, indigenous languages. However, this is not universally supported due to inter-cultural relations and acculturation that transpire with progressive inter-mingling of cultures; to the extent that even a novel in Gikuyu is inevitably a cross-cultural hybrid, according to Ashcroft (2002: 29). Writing in indigenous languages will perhaps also need to be sensitive to regional perculiarities. It is notable in this regard, the way in which Mda succeeds in decolonising not only his writing, but also his readership is to fully contextualise his texts within African socio-cultural contexts and strongly features local languages. He, for instance uses the terms like "*papa*", "*lesiba*", "*Seanamarena*", "*qibi*", "*Lefitori* blanket" and "*sekgankula*" (Mda 1995b: 44, 99) to fully involve his local readership in *She Plays with the Darkness* (1995b). Similar local

expressions in *Ways of Dying* (1995a), include "*merry Kressie ou toppie*", "*morabaraba*", "*donga*", "*malayisha*", "*ndinxaniwe, Ek is dors, kenyoriloe*" (Mda 1995a: 8,61,73 and 103).

Frantz Fanon (1967:166) asserts that "each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfil or betray it." An analogy of a community at work to fulfil a generative mission, is notable in Mda's writings. Toloki and Noria in *Ways of Dying* (1995), and Dikosha in *She Plays with the Darkness* (1995) see to it that regardless of their social positions, they contribute significantly to social change and development of their respective communities. Noria, for instance, exerts her influence so as to change people's understanding of "informal settlements", and emphasises that these social structures are not "squatter camps" (1995a:53). Dikosha manages to turn people's thinking around on the issue of patriarchy. She ultimately provides a service in the community, where she helps men with confessions (1995b:178), which leave them relieved of the psychological and emotional burdens in their lives. The service quickly gains in popularity with men in haSamane, and attracts even those coming from far afield, including those from the city of gold. Mazibuko (2009:116) shares an interview in which Mda emphasising that his African Renaissance is not with a capital "R", as is instead is driven by ordinary people, on the margins of centres of power. This was reiterated in another interview held on the 5th Feb 2015, in Johannesburg:

> My African Renaissance is not 'with a capital R' as it is driven by ordinary people, on the margins of centres of power, such as government and cities. I see women as being central to this renaissance, in the community work they do, and in how they uphold the spiritual and material well-being of their families. This finds resonance in some of my novels (Mda, cited in Sicwebu, 2015).

Fanon's (2008:vi) concept of psychological colonisation bears similarity with Ngugi's notion of decolonisation of the mind. This underscores that the ultimate target for a colonization process is the mind of the oppressed. The reverse analogy in this regard is crucial to decolonisation discourses. Fanon (2008:148-150) shares the notion of cultural dispossession as a form of psychological colonisation, with Steve Biko's (1978:44-45)

writings on “acculturation”, as defined in Chapter Two above, namely that this concept refers to the fusion of cultures that come together, on equal footing, with the same status level, without domination of one by another. This discourse is reflected in Mda’s writings and particularly pronounced through his main characters, who are ordinary people from the sections of the community that are severely affected by poverty and other social crises, yet assertive enough to initiate and lead social change programmes towards a new society.

3.6 CONCLUSION

Chapter 3 is an evaluative analysis of character portrayal in Mda’s selected fictional works. A focus on African humanism necessitated a brief synopsis of theories that locate human aspects of a literary character at the centre. These include traditional structuralist theories. The human aspect is accordingly a significant part of literary character. An observation was made that although African humanism takes a different route from the western originated theories, and has significant impact on African writing, its proponents take their cue from E.M. Forster (1970: 52), whose theoretical point of view accentuates the human origin of a literary character. Forster justifies the dichotomy in structure of a character with both textual and real life aspects, upon the premise that literary texts are about people.

The dichotomy of literary character impacts on another bilateral formation in narrative writing, social reality, and imagination, which, according to Mphahlele, are both significant and should treated as such. The order of delineation pertaining the reader textual decodification is such that the reader remembers first the people in a narrative, then the story, human situations, setting, as well as the emotions. The concept of African humanism was traced from Mphahlele (1974), who deals with character representation in South African literature, from the colonial era to the apartheid period, all of which bear characteristics of racial segregation. His ideas on imagination regarding forces that shape African character within a specific social milieu, were evaluated and tested on the texts.

Using the background above as a starting point, character analysis was conducted first on *Ways of Dying* (1995a). Action in this novel is triggered by the death of Noria's child, but more specifically, the way the child encounters his death. This immediately introduces the significant role played by the nurse. The protagonist expresses his admiration of the nurse's role, whilst a scuffle ensues, that leads to the heckling of the nurse by the crowd, as well as between the hecklers themselves. Toloki, who by now has taken on the role of a professional mourner, feels "collegial" solidarity spirit. He takes stern offense to this heckling as he regards it, a sacrilege of a pious and solemn community ritual. He assigns much value on the role played by the nurse, as he has come to realise the big responsibility of being the last person to have seen the deceased alive, amongst the multitudes that assemble for a funeral. This makes the nurse the centre of focus on such occasions, as he/she becomes the fountain of fascinating information about ways of dying. They also play a mediative role in supporting the families and communities in ways of living.

Toloki is described as "ugly", "stinking", with the "saddest" eyes, "the face is a constant reminder of death" (Mda, 1995a:133). All of this leads to the concept of a professional mourner, used as a central figure to mediate cultural forms and expressions from the rural past to modernity. The performance act of mourning that he initiates and perfects as he gets more exposure and experience, is a resuscitated version from the African past used to re-conscientise the community on African values and help to ameliorate the effects of colonial domination. Bhabha (1994:113) argues that such would enable the "other denied knowledges" to be part of the dominant discourse.

The unfortunate circumstance in which the two main characters meet in the city as grownups for the first time since their youth in the village, was evaluated and contextualised. In spite of the previous hostile feelings against Noria when they were young, Toloki now sees her with a different eye and appreciation. In her 30s, and having become a little haggard, her beauty still stands out. Although it is discernible that she has gone through life challenges, as her plaintiff eyes gives away, she is certainly not a pitiful figure. She touches his hand, and her hand is warm and slightly damp, there and

then, something stirs in him. She exudes strength that he feels strongly. She looks at her again, and for the first time in his life, he sees her as a “woman” (Mda, 1995a:51). The relation they develop since this encounter, characterised by mutual respect, trust and egalitarianism, is used as a catalyst for social change.

The characters in *She plays with the Darkness* (1995) were also analysed in relation to the critique of African writing by Lewis Nkosi and Njabulo Ndebele. The “Jim comes to Joburg” theme was used as a Trojan horse by liberal writers in the 1950s, apparently to legitimise the ideology of separate development and the Bantustan policy. This stands as a veiled implication that Africans were destined to suffering when they left their rural homes to go to the cities, and therefore as psychological confirmation of them not belonging to these formerly white classified areas. The contrast created here was discussed and the observation made that operation of the mining industry and related economic activities require labour, the majority of which has always been Africans. The subsequent “evils” of the migrant labour system translated to creation of a mobile, unstable workforce (Ndebele, 1986:47), or economic migrants with no residential permanence. The casualties of the system include broken down marriages and family structures, which led to various sorts of social ills. Nkosi’s (1983: 4) views on Alan Paton’s novel, *Cry, The Beloved Country* (1959) were evaluated against the literary make-up in *She Plays with the Darkness* (1995). The quality of Paton’s protagonist, especially his naivety and simple minded good will, was contrasted with Mda’s characters, who are not only assertive, but also active participants in rebuilding the country and normalising society.

Ndebele’s (1986:143-157) assessment of South African literature, which focuses on the rediscovery of the ordinary, was analysed and used in studying Mda’s character approach in *She Plays with the Darkness* (1995). His notion that it is not sufficient for a writer to delve into and confine him or herself with a political context like oppression, and his caution against displaying the spectacle of social absurdity, were analysed and applied in assessing Mda’s style of characterisation. His unravelling of the divergent narratives of the siblings, Radisene and Dikosha, goes beyond a social or political level

of thinking, in exploring redemptive transformation of a complicated situation. The character of Dikosha (the protagonist), is developed through tumultuous relation with the church Fathers (who partly symbolise the colonial past), family (Radisene who adopts a cut-throat materialism and extreme modernity that alienate him from both his only sibling and the community, with its traditions, norms and values). Through her quest to transcend her disempowered position, including her escape to private communion with the past culture of the Barwa people, in their ancient cave. However, she ultimately succeeds in reintegrating into the haSamane community and goes on to play a constructive role in the life and development of the community. The novels also bear postcolonial qualities and therefore have been assessed against postcolonial and decolonisation theories. Similarly, Fanon explores the psycho-existential complex between the coloniser and the colonised, bringing to the fore as well as theorising the long term effects that white supremacy had on black psyche. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, in his book, *Decolonising the Mind* (1986), argues that alongside the physical, material, and cultural dispossession by colonisation, Africans experienced a deep-seated indoctrination, which he calls colonisation of the mind (1986:9). In section 2.3, this study discussed "acculturation" between colonial powers and the colonised, which according to Biko (1987: 44), robbed Africans of their indigenous culture and independent thinking, along with the inferiority indoctrination. In his novels, Zakes Mda, responds to all the challenges expressed by the writers cited above and suggests practical and progressive steps or direction for blacks to uplift themselves. The next chapter will deal with character analysis in *The Heart of Redness* (2000) and *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2002) with a focus on western based theories of character, with additional reference to Mda's autobiography, *Sometimes there is a Void* (2011).

CHAPTER FOUR

4. CHARACTER ANALYSIS IN THE NOVELS: *THE HEART OF REDNESS* (2000) AND *THE MADONNA OF EXCELSIOR* (2002), WITH A FOCUS ON WESTERN BASED THEORIES OF CHARACTER, AND AN ALTERNATE VIEW FROM SELECTED AFRICAN THEORISTS

The word “alternate” is used here with careful consideration of the fact that the distinction between the two theoretical perspectives is not symmetrical, and they do not necessarily oppose one another. They merely approach character from different contexts, which present different facets of character, as the study unfolds below.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

A broad differentiation was drawn between fiction and reality, providing a basis for the character analysis dealt with in the last chapter. This indicated that a “social space” or “setting” is a crucial “bedrock” for Mda’s literary writing. This approach was then explored in relation to his forerunner, Es’kia Mphahlele. The latter highlights the inevitable symbiosis between social reality and the imagination that informs literary writing. However, it was also noted that there are times when the two operate side-by-side, with less interaction, in spite of occasional acquiescence, which is equally significant.

A further post-colonial definition of literature was undertaken to give more context to the writings from the countries formerly colonised by European powers that include Britain, France, Portugal, and Spain. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin’s (1989:1) semantic definition of the term includes literary reflection on the society and the national after departure of the imperial powers from a former colony.

Diverse regional literature was further explored so as to identify countries with strong post-colonial movements. In addition to the majority of countries in the African continent, the following feature in this category; Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Caribbean countries, India, Malaysia, Malta, New Zealand, Pakistan, Singapore, South Pacific islands, and Sri-Lanka (Ashcroft et al.1989:2). The study made the observation that

these countries have strongly emerged out of colonisation and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, thereby emphasising their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre (Ashcroft et al.1989:2). It is in this context that the chapter examines human existence and development during and after the period of European imperial domination, including the apartheid era, and the effect on contemporary literature, as reflected in Zakes Mda's fiction.

In *The Heart of Redness* (2000), Zakes Mda investigates socio-cultural and developmental issues in post-apartheid South Africa, tracing these from colonial times. He engages his characters in a dialectic between retrospective evaluations and prospective visions in the analeptic recollection of the momentous event of the Xhosa cattle killing of 1856–57. The main character, Camagu, is portrayed as an individual through whom the intricate developments of the post-apartheid social revolution can be investigated and potentially reconciled. He is portrayed as a "secular intellectual". His character is portrayed in this way throughout the novel, but it is at some point specifically pronounced in the interaction between Bhonco, Zim and himself. Mda (2000:164–165) reflects on the particular instance when Bhonco, on his way to Blue Flamingo Hotel to confront some tourists who reportedly ridiculed his wife by asking her to sing and talk the "clicky" language whilst they recorded her through their video camera, catches a lift in Dalton's bakkie, and, still fuming, relates the incident to the latter. In an attempt to avert a potentially disastrous altercation with the tourists, Dalton invites him to come with him to his Vulindlela shop, so that they talk through the matter. This is where they meet Zim and Camagu, and immediately Bhonco accuses Camagu of 'flirting' with the Believers at the expense of Unbelievers. The situation becomes heated, as Camagu tries to clarify his stand point.

> It is not true Tat' uBhonco. I do not belong to the Believers, in the same way that I do not belong to the Unbelievers. I am just a person. My ancestors were not even here when these quarrels began with Prophetess Nongqawuse (Mda 2000: 165).

Bhonco is irritated by the mere intimation that Nongqwuse was a Prophetess, where according the Unbelievers, "[she was] a fake that was used by the colonisers":

> I want you to understand this, both of you. To me you are both respected elders. I do not care about your being Believers or Unbelievers. I respect you both in the same way. Please don't drag me into your quarrels. Neither of you must expect me not to be friends with the other (Mda 2000: 165).

Regarding the major controversial matter of building a tourist attraction that includes a casino, Bhonco continues a tirade against Camagu for not supporting such a "brilliant developmental initiative" aimed at creating employment for local people. They had pinned their hopes on him as an obvious supporter, with his high education and learning from abroad, and also as per his rumoured romantic relationship with Xoliswa Ximiya, Bhonco's daughter. However, Camagu sees the need to remain objective, and "judge" the matter on its merits, as he listens to both sides.

In his interaction with the characters representing different socio-cultural views and groups, Camagu finds himself playing the role of an invidious interpreter. Thrown into the midst of a society deeply divided along socio-cultural lines and developmental thought processes and pressures, he tries to grapple with the intellectual appreciation of his circumstances and formulates a course of action that he considers potentially beneficial for the majority of the people of Qolorha-by-Sea (this character will be studied alongside those of Qukezwa and Xoliswa Ximiya). Mead (1990:443) asserts that such characters as those referred to and outlined above are understood and recognised in the perspective that they represent social or ideological types. They embody certain philosophical thoughts and represent images of cultural codes.

The *Madonna of Excelsior* (2002) explores a multifaceted theme that features cultural and racial identity and a changing political "landscape" in the post-apartheid South Africa. It examines the lives of ordinary people as they move between apartheid and democracy. Fincham (2011:76) notes that the novel achieves dramatisation of a culture in transition by drawing extensively, both on popular media representations (the

newspaper coverage of the notorious miscegenation trial in the small town of Excelsior) and the expressionist paintings of the Jesuit priest, Frans Claerhout. The main fictional characters are Niki and Popi, the mother and daughter whose narrative dominates the novel. The analysis will however also include other characters, like Viliki, Tjaart Cronje, Johannes Smit and Adam de Vries, with reference to literary theories as indicated below.

4.2 FICTIONAL CHARACTERS THROUGH THE FRAMES OF REALITY

In his article *Virtual People: Fictional Characters through the frames of Reality*, Newman (2009:73) states that more than just "roles" of characters, writers write about human beings and human destinies. This article reflects on the artist's approach in the creation of the intentional content of his/her fiction. However, it is not the artifices of the artwork that ought to be the ultimate focus of his/her creative abilities, but the real-life subjects that inspired the fictional formation. Then, a crucial question becomes, "what function the formation of character serves in the articulation of human reality?" Newman (2009:73) asks this question for the benefit of the discourse, for exploring not just differences but also character linkages between fiction and reality. This is an important question for a character study and perspectives through which African philosophers view character. His claim is apposite in this regard, indicating that in spite of fictional characters' embeddedness in their discrete fictional contexts, their portrayal and intelligibility are enhanced by the framing principles whose complete depiction of character incorporates the understanding of real human beings. It is partly to answer this question that necessitates a character analysis of *The Heart of Redness* (2000).

The feud between the "believers" and "unbelievers" that Camagu discovers on arrival Qolorha-by-Sea threatens to permanently divide this community. The small seaside, Hamlet is named after the Qolorha River, which itself derives its name from the gorge it has carved to the sea. This is a poor village, whose residents begin to hope for a better future in the post-apartheid South Africa, at the time when Camagu comes in search of NomaRussia. The people's impressions, however, continue to reflect the acrimonious

legacy of the cattle killing episode in the history of this community. It is around this incident with analeptic reflections and the community's deliberations on the developmental process in the new order, that Camagu comes into conversations with a number of other characters that include Zim, Bhonco, John Dalton, Qukezwa, and Xoliswa Ximiya, amongst others. The point of convergence (and divergence) for these characters is first, Nongqawuse's prophecies of 1857, which some in the community believe, whilst others do not. In the second instance, the development of Qolorha-by-Sea into a tourist paradise, including building of a casino is a matter on which people's differences are associated with the past dividedness of the nation on Nongqawuse's and Nonkosi's prophecies (Mda 2000:190, 228). In the "Chronicles of belief and unbelief", Warnes (2009:159) notes that the historical believers in the prophecies express themselves as unbelievers in the suggested developmental project for change, while the historical unbelievers in the former, become believers in the modernisation project.

A character study of this nature necessitates investigation of the of the polarities of fiction and reality, each of which provides an enabling element for understanding crucial aspects of a fictional character. In this regard, Newman (2009:73) maintains that, whilst on the one hand, fictional characters are completely embedded in their discrete fictional contexts, on the other, intelligibility is enhanced by the application of framing principles shared with the readers understanding of real human beings. In his presentation of a historically sensitive narrative about people's experiences of political and social revolution in Qolorha-by-Sea, Mda creates and makes use of the protagonist Camagu, whose role and activites are juxtaposed with real events in the history of Qolorha. Through analeptic focalisation and proleptic dialectic amongst Qolorha inhabitants, with Camagu, as neutral participant, Mda re-establishes the historic event of cattle killing and destruction of subsistence crops by the Xhosa nation in 1857 (Mda 2000:60). In tracing the legacy of this homicidal event, the narrative evaluates its effect and the "hangover" on the present generation. Warnes (2009:153) notes that this imaginative synthesis of fictional reality and fictional creations enables Mda to present the reader with a clear scenario of post-apartheid transformation, with an underlying recognition and

acknowledgement of the constraining presence of the past, and hindering people's anticipations of a better life.

Presentation of Mda's characters through converging polarities of fiction and reality enhances reader identification with character experiences. The resemblances between Camagu and Mda's experiences bear this out. These reflect some close similarities between the novel, *The Heart of Redness* (2000) and the autobiography, *Sometimes there is a Void – Memoirs of an Outsider* (2011). For example, in terms of the former's arrival in Qolorha, the landscape and the beauty of this place takes him down memory lane to his blissful youth, up in the mountains and inland parts of the country:

> He remembers the fruit trees and graves of long departed relatives. He can see dimly through the mist of decades all the lush plants grew in his grandfather's garden, including aloes of different types. There are the beautiful houses too, the four-walled tin-roofed "ixande", the rondavels, the cattle kraal, the foul run, the tool shed. Then the government came and moved the people down to the flatlands, giving them only small plots and no compensation (Mda 2000: 65).

This is similar to Mda's own experience as he writes in *Sometimes there is a Void – Memoirs of an Outsider* (2011:2-3). In this book, Mda introduces the reader to his grandfather, Charles Gxumekelana Zenzile Mda, who, after being appointed headman of Qhoboshane Village in the lower Telle area, was given a large tract of Dyarhom Mountain land, where he planted vast orchards and built houses for his wife. These were followed by other families' homesteads, with their beauty, developing into being an elite area for the local community (Mda 2011:2). The orchards were a source of pride for Zenzile, and the people wondered how he had turned the rocky mountain into a "Garden of Eden". He remembers rows and rows of peach, apricot, quince, pear, apple, orange, and pomegranate trees. Zenzile also had vines that bore green and purple grapes, as well as cacti that produced red and green prickly pears (Mda 2011:5). The pink mountain, as it is later known, also had aloes, which bloomed into different pinkish colours in spring. He also talks about the *ixande*, which was the main house to host visitors in their homestead (Mda 2011:5). Later in life, he works with a group of rural

women in developing a Beekeeping project, with hives located in an enclosure of aloes between the graves of his grandfather and aunt (Mda 2011:11). The featuring of his protagonist in *The Heart of Redness* (2000) also confirms Newman's (2009:73) theory that characters are, on the one hand, embedded in their distinct fictional contexts, but their intelligibility is enhanced by the application of framing principles, which the reader understands of real human beings.

Implied above is that a literary work should be identified with balanced literary characterisation. Newman (2009:73) rejects any suggestion tying the character too closely, either to the author or to the narrative source of which it is part. Her conclusion is that fictional characters should not be completely "under the thumb of their artefactual source", but be allowed to be free from the constrains implied by their genetical and structural contexts. The character of NomaRussia is, for instance, created as close to the protagonist, Camagu and his first love interest, but remains forever elusive. At a wake at the top level of a twenty-story building in Hillbrow, which Camagu attends by chance, as he had already packed his belongings for emigration to the United States of America, his attention is captivated by a beautiful voice from a young woman of heartily beauty, in "the midst of shrivelled old fogies with shaky voices" (Mda 2000:27). Looking at her closely, he realises that she is probably a Makoti from an African cultural background. Her dressing spells it out: a respectful doek on her head, a shawl over her shoulder, and a dress that reaches a considerable length below the knees (Mda 2000:27).

Camagu's immediate interest in NomaRussia leads to his delaying or postponing his departure for the US in order to take a spontaneous trip to the rural Eastern Cape village of Qolorha-by-Sea, in search of her. He immediately dissociates her with the deceased, since, according to African cultures, she would be sitting on a mattress in a secluded room, weeping and being consoled and surrounded by elderly female relatives. According to him, her beauty is not in harmony with the Hillbrow wake, it is repulsive of death, but echoes and beacons only great life. This beauty however remains a mirage that Camagu never gets to enjoy, as per his initial hopes. He is

completely astounded when he ultimately meets the object of his affections towards the end of the novel in a complete state of disarray, with a terminal illness that has ravaged all beauty and life from this idol.

The nature of literary characters is such that they contribute to the reader's understanding of the physical world configurations through projecting back their prior cognitive simulation from actual world structures to their real-world prototypes (Newman 2009:73). A character's fictional habitant may be exotic in spite of his resemblance to real world. Newman (2009:73) further notes that, even as a strange creature, thriving in an environment finely attuned to its distinctive needs, each character inhibits a fictional world of its own. In *The Heart of Redness* (2000:48), Zim is introduced with such peculiarity when going to the shop for his "inkamnkam", he is resplendent, bright and dazzling, in his white "*ingqawa*" blanket tied around the waist and its length reaching the ankles. He also wears around his neck, various beads such as "*idiliza*", "*isidanga*" and around the head, the "*isiqweqwe*" head bands made of colourful beads. He puffs away at his pipe with pomp and ceremony (Mda, 2000:48).

In the midst of the feud between the "Believers" and "Unbelievers", Zim devises a unique identity for the former in accordance with prophetess Nonkosi's teachings. Arriving at Camagu's housewarming party, he looks so strange as if he does not belong to this world:

> He has shaved of his eyebrows, and cocooned himself inside a red blanket, without any of the beautiful ornaments, for which a he is known far and wide. There is not even a single strand of beads. His feet are bare, no shoes, no anklets (Mda, 2000:190).

Defending this "new look", he explains that it came to him through "the birds" that he had neglected some practices of the erstwhile believers. He even associates this to his lost son. Zim's new identity includes taking regular "enemas" and "emetics" to cleanse himself, as he would be coming into contact with Unbelievers like Bhonco on an ongoing basis. This ritual, which includes "*ukurhuda*", purging and vomiting, is part of basic teachings of the daughter of Kulwana (Nonkosi). Zim earnestly practices these

rituals, and appears content in this unique world, as Camagu observes when he comes to his homestead to make peace with the elder for the argument with his opponents at Camagu's cottage the previous night. His expectation to get Zim under "his tree" are met with Qukezwa's response that her father has gone to the "dongas" to purge himself of the contamination he got from mixing with the unbelievers at his party the previous night (Mda, 2000:195).

In the *Madonna of Excelsior* (2002), Popi is presented in a strange, fictional state in which she has no choice but to adapt. The first predicament is her being born out of not only an adulterous relationship, but also an interracial union, condemned by the apartheid regime through the Immorality Act. She then further suffers multiple discrimination, through what Zulu (2009:318) refers to as the strict apartheid laws, formulated to regulate cultural activities in fixed boundaries and identities. These include the Population Registration Act, which categorises people into ethnic and racial groups, the Mixed Amenities Act, meant to enforce separate public facilities, the Group Areas Act that legislated where blacks, whites, and other racial groups were to live, separately in different areas.

As an "African of mixed blood", Popi mainly suffers the "double edged sword" discrimination of societal level. On hearing that the government were tracking down, arresting all black women with nonblack kids or those with mixed blood, Niki makes every effort to hide Popi's racial identity. Using "lifebuoy" (bath soap) lather and a razor blade, she shaves off all the straight hair from the baby's pulsating head, so that no stranger would think that the hair from that bald head was not black and matted. However, as the baby is visibly light skinned or "yellow boned", she takes further steps:

> … she took the smoking brazier into the shack… she held a naked Popi above the fire, smoking the pinkness out of her. Both heat and smoke would surely brown her, and no-one would say she was a light skinned child again. The baby whooped, then yelled, as the heat of the brazier roasted her little body and the smoke stung her eyes and nostrils. Turning her round and round so that she would be browned on all sides, evenly (Mda, 2002:66).

Whilst Newman's argument on character embeddedness in a particular fictional world, are acknowledged, the study puts forth a strange case of "relativity" between a character and specific features of the world simulated in a narrative text. The reference to the character "Popi" above corroborates his view. She experiences the most despicable form of discrimination not only from the white side, but also from the black community. She is classified as mongrel by the former, which was illegitimate in the eyes of the law, and the Calvinist religion of the state church (Mda, 2002:29-30). On the other hand, black children see an unwelcome foreigner in her, with "shoutings" of "Boesman" whenever they see her, and would run away laughing, as if seeing a phantom. Her crying out on this discrimination doesn't help at all as she ends giving up playing in the streets (Mda 2002:110) but still getting alternate demeaning names, "a boesman" "hotnot" , "bastard", "*Morwa towe*", "you bushman" or a more polite name, "the coloured girl" (Mda 2002:113).

The extreme discrimination suffered by Popi, as outlined above determines particular habitant for the character away from the public spectra. In an attempt to avoid the daily verbal and non-verbal insults on her being, which is not her making, nor having had choices on its making, she, as a child with draws from public presence. Her glaring physical features condemns her to her private space in her mother's shack, where she feels more "secure". Looking at her mirrored freckled face in the morning, midday and at night, she prays that the freckles would join up and be diminished, so that she could look like other black children of Mahlatswetsa township. However, her withdrawal from the world, which includes keeping to herself at school, still generates backhanded remarks that she is too proud to mix with the other black kids due to her being a "Missis" (Mda, 2002:117). Her societally imposed private realm also sees her mostly keeping under cover, some of her "glaring" body parts, for example, wearing slags to hide the hair growing from her legs when reaching puberty, and as she grows further, as well as doek on her head all the time, to hide her God-given hair (Mda 2002:139).

4.3 CHARACTER DISTINCTIVE FEATURES THROUGH LENSES OF REALITY

This subject draws attention to what distinctively links a literacy character to a fictional world. Newman's (2009:74) view that the actions and events of a character's fictional life provide data through which a reader imagines and forms a mental picture of a character. This contingently reflects a convincing image that includes the person's psychological and moral character. The reader's role being significant in character depiction, citing events, thoughts, and actions in a "person's life" enables drawing up "characterological" conclusions about a particular fictional person. However, it appears that the "functional connection" implied above between the character and the particular world features is insufficient to defining a character. This is contrasted psychological and moral attributes, which encompass traits such as dispositions, attitudes, commitments, and preferences. Reference to "character" does not merely refer to a concatenation of events, preferences, or actions in a narrative or novel. This can be seen in the fact that Xoliswa Ximiya's "education" or enlightenment mindedness, her aloofness, and her beauty that is "cold and distant" (Mda, 2000:70-71), remain constant through various actions in the plot.

In clarifying the paradox that arises in character definition, Newman (2009:74) outlines two senses of character at play in a broader definition. The first is character as a general psychological and moral trait, which she identifies as *character*$_1$, and secondly its character as an individual person occupying a space in narrative, which in this instance, she refers to as *character*$_2$. The latter is equated with a set up sequence of events making up the narrative of the individual. However, the former (*character*$_1$) specifies a personal trait, where for instance, a talk about Camagu's character, would refer to the way he lives and conducts himself. A specifically focused and deliberate orthographic identity of the words, are used to refer to two different phenomena.

The crossing lines of character definition and its significance for characterisation has a bearing on the way the reader conceives of realistic fictional worlds, or any non-real world modelled on the actual world. According to Newman (2009:75) the individuals who inhabit the "worlds" referred to above, regard "character" as a term categorising a

set of personal attributes (*character*$_1$), rather than as a set of events on an individual person history. This remains this way whether it is the narrative of a real or fictional person (*character*$_2$). The more explicit version of this bi-dimensional character definition is that *character*$_1$ entails transworld applicability. This implies extension beyond a particular fictional world, where the same character can be portrayed through the frameworks exhibited by different worlds of events. In this context a character can live in approximately the same way, that is, morally and psychologically, through alternative sets of actions and conditions (Newman, 2009:75).

The fictional protagonists in the *Madonna of Excelsior* (2002), Niki and Popi (mother and daughter) feature in both character descriptions elaborated above. Niki is a domestic worker (sometimes called helper) for the white Afrikaans speaking, middle class burghers of Excelsior Township, where she resides. The beautiful Niki suffers a number of cruel and unfortunate experiences in the course of the novel, not because of her being an evil or bad character. She loses her mother before her teenage years, and this leaves her staying with her father, a drunk that does not care about providing basic necessities for the wellbeing of the child, and would even beat her when coming home and no food is prepared for him, without any consideration, or ensuring that there is something to cook in the first place (Mda, 2002:16). This would obviously make her vulnerable to predators like Johannes Smit. Also, in addition to being humiliated by her employer, who stripped her naked in full view of other workers, the Cronje men (father and son) of the family that employs her during a routine weighing of the workers (to ensure that they don't steal meat) (Mda, 2002:40-42). She is repeatedly raped by white men who overpower her through their masculinity, race, and economic power, without any recourse on her side (Mda, 2002:16, 50 and 53). Although deeply wounded internally, she manages to retain her calm and serene demeanour.

In an attempt to "bribe" the women involved in the case of "the Excelsior 19 accused for contravention of the Immorality Act" not to testify as state witnesses, the men, through their lawyer, negotiate and pay bail to free the women. When all the accused walk free, Niki remains in custody since her co-accused had committed suicide and no-one could

pay for her (Mda 2002:86). The fact that she is the only one remaining, with an extra burden of a young child, who clings close to her bosom, as is escorted back to the police truck, reflects more suffering by her and the baby, as well their proleptic plight. After the withdrawal of the case, Niki is chased by journalists, who pursue her like an animal. Running for refuge into a racially segregated toilet with a child on her back gives her a short-lived relief, only to be shocked more by her ransacked and now empty shack after "tiptoeing" home at dusk.

It can be deduced from the above that in sync with Newman's theory of character (2009:74), Niki's *character*$_2$ that constitute her experiences as reflected above is the basis of an informed *character*$_1$ depiction, which enables the reader to either identify with, or rejects her character. Niki's psychological and moral traits in this regard are reflected through fear, anger, revenge, forgiveness, and serenity. Johannes Smit's cracking of the whip in Niki's direction near the sunflower fields, where she together with the other girls – collect cow dung for fire making, instills fear in her. His grabbing and dragging her into the fields and raping her leads to more fear and resentment. Shocked and confused, she runs home after the incident, cover herself with blankets and crying for a long time until falling asleep (Mda, 2002:16). The fact that she can't report this to the police due to the Immorality Act, which may lead to her own arrest, makes her even more fearful. Her subsequent intense resentment of Smit stems mainly from the repeated rapes that lead to her losing her virginity, an even more painful experience. According to Zulu (2009: 304) her personal experiences reflect the psychological effects of racism.

Niki's anger becomes explosive, as she appears to be the target of all evil attacks. On the day of her release from prison, when she ends up sleeping on a bare mattress with both her kids in an empty shack, she contemplates this misfortune, and assesses everything and everyone affecting her life. The consequent daze from this reflection gradually changes to self-pity, and then to silent rage:

> …she was angry with Pule for deserting her. Angry with Mmampe for selling her out. Angry with Madam Cornelia for weighing her on the scale. Angry with Johannes Smit

> for raping her. Angry with Tjaart Cronje for seeing her naked… Angry with the people of Excelsior for pointing fingers at her. Angry with Stephanus Cronje for dying… (Mda, 2002:105).

The omniscient narrator fills the reader in on this anger issue. Its development into grudge and revenge is triggered by the oppression of one woman by another. Whilst for Cornelia “madam Cronje”, stripping Niki naked in public (including Madam’s own husband) and their son is a minor or trivial issue, anger, “storm” and motive for revenge builds up in Niki’s mind (Mda, 2002:42). This eventually leads her to sleep with madam’s husband, who, having seen Niki naked, was seized by lust. Whilst Stephanus plans to make her “padkos” (provision) and further convincing himself that she is “ready and willing”, Niki is in fact effecting revenge. At the moment of their sexual encounter, she sees him merely as Madam Cornelia’s husband and is happy that he is inside her. She is “gobbling him up”, and has him entirely in her power, chewing him to pieces (Mda, 2002:50). In the midst of hostilities following her revenge, she learns that vengeance is not an ideal solution, as it has a habit of bouncing back to haunt the originator.

4.4 CHARACTER ACCORDING TO URI MARGOLIN

In the midst of various approaches to character, Margolin (2007:66) defines it as any entity, individual, collective, human or human like, in a work of narrative fiction. As participants in the story world, which itself is comprised of the spheres of narration and the narrated, character can be equated to a narrative agent. A form in which a character is manifested in a text is significant insofar as it allows the reader to determine the level at which he/she relates or involved with the character. Margolin (2007: 66) identifies three kinds of “referring expressions” in this regard, that is, proper names, personal pronouns, and actual persons. Characters are also identified through elaborate descriptions, such as “Bhonco, son of Ximiya” (Mda, 2000: 4). In an African traditional and cultural environment, use of proper names is, most of the time, extended to family names, as is the case with some of Mda’s characters. For instance, Bhonco, the leader of the “Unbelievers” is not just called by his name, but is most often referred to as

“Bhonco, son of Ximiya” (Mda, 2000:1, 4, 8, 49). Similarly, his daughter is referred to by both his name and surname, but this is justified by the narrator, that it, is due to the important position she occupies at her work, but also recognised in the community (Mda, 2000:2-3). When Camagu’s recognition in Qholorha goes beyond being a stranger or a visitor, and is not only just accepted as a resident, but he is also about to become a married man, and is referred to by his clan name Camagu, son of Cesane (Mda, 2000:187), which symbolises recognition of good standing in the community. In this African tradition through which Mda approaches his narrative writing, with African settings, women are called by names indicating their status in the community. For example, “mamCirha” (Mda, 2000:197) connotes the respect she has within her community – as a (i) daughter in law, a sister, and a mother, who is a role model to young children. The name “Nogiant” (Mda, 2000:197) indicates her married status as a woman. Amongst a variety of character theories, Margolin (2007:66) identifies three major perspectives, namely: (i) character as literary figure, which also means an artistic product or artifice meant to demonstrate or represent a particular phenomenon; (ii) character as a non-actual but well-specified individual in a fictional or fictionalised environment; and (iii) character as a text-based construct, which also becomes a mental image in the reader’s mind.

4.4.1 CHARACTER AS ARTIFICE

Fictional characters are “born” or created when the literary text featuring them is written, and do not pre-exist the text. As textual material, characters occupy the reader’s imagination as an object of thought, and in the sphere of public communication as an object of discourse. For instance, Xoliswa Ximiya and the way she looks “like the mistress she is, in a navy-blue two-piece costume with a white frilly blouse. She has her father’s bone structure and is quite tall and well proportionated” (Mda, 2000:10). As a character, she came to life with the production of the novel, and will proceed to live as such:

> …as long as the text exist and readers continue reading it. Based on the contemporary aesthetic theory, character can be defined as a contingently created, abstract cultural

> entity that relies for existence on objects in space and time and on intellectual engagement between author and reader (Margolin, 2007:67).

Therefore, characters are created by a human mind and processed in particular cultural and historical circumstances, through literary artistic conventions. In this way, they become semiotic constructs, as well as socially and culturally define acts of the fictional narrativity that constitutes and contextualises them (Margolin, 2007:67). The social role of character is emphasised by Mda (1995c:38) in his article “Theater and Reconciliation in South Africa”, where he draws attention to the role that the arts play in transformation: “whether we like it or not, artists will always respond to the prevailing political and social conditions because they select their material from society”.

To the extent that characters are “created” or “invented”, Margolin (2007:68) argues that authors determine, rather than describe properties of their characters. It therefore becomes logical that the properties ascribed to characters need not form a consistent set, and not by any standard conform to actual world regularities. In *The Heart of Redness* (2000), Mda makes use of this style by killing some of his characters, only to bring them back to life thereafter, to illustrate some philosophical issues or societal divergent views.

The character Twin is the descendent of the great ancestor Xikixa, a patrician of the great place of King Sarhili (Mda, 2000:13). It is around the time of the war led by general Magoma that Twin meets and eventually marries the Khoikhoi woman, Quxu, who the amaXhosa guerrillas finds it easier to say Qukezwa (Mda, 2000:24-25). This couple gives birth to a son Heitsi, named after the saviour of the Khoikhoi people (Mda, 2000:87). These three are part of a generation that lives before the middle generations, but Mda resuscitates them later in the novel (Mda, 2000:42, 258 and 307). In this instance, literary practice allow authors to assign any properties to the rejuvenated characters. According to Margolin (2007:68), principles governing this process include selection, which ranges from life-likeness (verisimilitude), to ideological, thematic, aesthetic or inter-literary characterisation. The latter, which is also referred to as parody of either an earlier text or its characters, applies to the rejuvenation and intertwining of

the past and present, referred to above. However, this doesn't mean the same qualities between entwined characters. For instance, Qukezwa senior is characterised by her capacity to immerse herself in the natural environment, deep knowledge of nature and religion, her faith in the Khoikhoi gods and prophets she connects with through deeply-felt rituals. Her counterpart in the present invariably compares to former. She is also "different" – a woman does not conform, is deeply connected to the land, as well as nature and its marvels. She is by way of contrast sometimes rash, childish, and full of herself. In spite of her imperfect qualities, she fulfils her role as a mediator between nature and human beings, and thereby succeeds in drawing Camagu to support the cause of the protection of the natural environment from the threat of economic exploitation and neocolonial imperialism (Iannacaro, 2014:200).

4.4.2 CHARACTER AS NON-ACTUAL INDIVIDUAL

The view of character as simply as verbal artistic production and a "paper" person fashioned in some artistic-historical contexts appears reductive, in spite of its being close to the facts of the actual word. Readers mostly find issues like "time" and "space" more interesting and easier to understand. However, merely singling out these aspects creates a notion of characters leading a text-independent existence. Readers are willingly engage in a game of make-believe in which it is implied that there is a spatio-temporal domain in which characters like John Smit in the *Madonna of Excelsior* (2002) and his accomplices exist and act independently of and prior to any narrative about them. Use of proper names helps to refer to or pick out specific individuals through this approach. In summing up the qualities referred to above, the individualistic perspective of a character is evaluated in terms of Margolin's (2007:71) theory. As an individual, characters exist in some "world" where the individual and the world are seen as very close, and far from the actual world in terms of properties and regularities.

4.4.3 CHARACTER EXISTENCE

Similar to Mda's (1995c:38) view on writers use of social entities, objects and living beings in their writings, Margolin (2007:71) argues that, when the story world has been

established, the occupants can map out by answering the questions of “who” or “what” exist in this world and “in what form?” Amongst the different modes is the “fact domain” of the story world, which is comprised of the set of facts comprising an entity. Alternatively, the story world subdomains may consist of the beliefs, wishes, intentions, and imaginations of a character or a secondary embedded world, projected through stories involving one or more characters. It is also a fact that characters have mental images of other characters in the fact domain. However, the fact that all these domains characteristically add up to the “total population of a narrative” universe, is logically followed by the question of the sphere in which an individual character exists. Margolin’s (2007:71-72) response to this question does not seem to entirely address the problem. In spite of the significance of an authoritative discourse of an omniscient, impersonal narrating voice in this regard, it is not the only solution. An omniscient, collective, but not necessarily authoritative narrative voice in *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2002) achieves the same effect. Popi’s existence is given in this line: “these things leap at us in broad strokes. Just as they leapt at Popi twenty-five years ago” (Mda 2002:1). The fact that overlapping and sometimes disjuncture between characters’ mental images of the story world and its existents and the narrative facts of this influences the dynamics of the action and its consequences, as suggested by Margolin (2007: 72), is corroborated by Mda’s character, Niki, when she is arrested:

> Niki was living among them in the stuffy cell. Yet she felt isolated and lonely. She faced each one of the seven days in a daze. She saw things happening in her as if she had another life outside of her body. As if they were happening to someone else. As if she was living in someone else’s dream. Someone else’s nightmare (Mda, 2002:70).

Her thoughts also included Stephanus Cronje, who committing suicide, had taken easy way out, leaving her to face the wrath of the law alone. She even accuses him of having shirked his responsibility from the start, but this is different as he financially supported her before the case (Mda 2002: 55). Her individuality and mental image are foregrounded earlier in the novel. This is where Mda depicts the conditions of her existence as a servant of a white family, the Cronjes, and helping in raising their child. She, in this regard, has to tolerate being in the community that constantly reminds her

that she is not just different from them, but more specifically, inferior. This is actualized through the conditions that she gets subjected to. These include that she may not sit at the family's table (or have a meal with them). She may also not enter their church for worship, but should stand outside and listen to the proceedings. A specific incident is related by the narrator, where after a service one Sunday, Niki having attended the entire service – standing at the gate, she is asked by one of the members of the congregation if she enjoyed the service. Her response that "It was good my Baas" (Mda 2002:31) reflects her mental image that is cognizant of social forces around her.

4.4.4 CHARACTER IDENTITY

An individual in a story world or narrative is just that, but cannot be identified as a fully-fledged character prior to establishment of specific qualities. Complexity of this tract is such that Margolin (2007:72) organises into groups the kinds of properties a character can have. These range from physical, behavioural, communicative, and mental qualities. The latter feature is further subdivided into perceptual, emotive, volitional and cognitive. The trait "character" refers to one aspect of the mental facet, that is, dispositions to action or personality, which, despite its significance, is not always so or foregrounded. For instance, the portrayal of Mda's character, Johannes Smit foregrounds looks, behaviour, and modes of communication. He is known by the girls that he usually intersects with in the fields along his farm as "hairy buttocks" due to the hirsute nature of his body. He is also referred to as "the squat hairy gorilla", "the hirsute man with a beer belly" (Mda, 2002:15). He cracks the whip, smiles (or laughs) benevolently, and offer the girls few rand notes, in his communication with them. His fondness of the "great sporting event" of pursuing black girls and playing harrowing games with them, leads to him even being the host of the escapades by fellow farmers with the girls, in his barn (Mda, 2002:51-54). These qualities summarise Johannes Smit character as not just a sexual pervert, but also a model of the hypocrisy of the apartheid's policy condemnation of mongrelisation' between White and Black' as

enshrined in the era's notorious Immorality Act[6]. In the prototypical literary character, "human-like exteriority" and "internal mental state" are defined by prevailing cultural concepts. Whilst both components have transitory and permanent qualities, the exterior is perceptible by "co-agents" or the readers; while the interior realm is accessible only to narrators (Margolin, 2007:73). However, although according to the presupposition that characters or "non-actual" individuals may indeed be as complete in their world as in the real-world, only a limited subset of their qualities are specified. Narratives by nature involve change, where certain character qualities are susceptible to change over the narrative time. This in turn distinguishes between types of characters. What Margolin (2007:73) refers to a "static" and dynamic characters, compares to Forster's (1970:75) "flat" and "round" character typology, respectively. This is based on the non-occurrence of major changes or vice-versa in a character's central psychological features, and this determines the individual identity of a character.

Tracing and ascribing particular characteristics, specifying "endurance" or "temporality" produces secondary features, attached to different categories of characters. However, characters exist within story worlds in terms of more than the mere individuation to which they are subject from one another, which raises the question of singularity and uniqueness. Similar to the real world, there can be no two coexisting characters that are similar in every respect, according to Margolin (2007:74). In such a situation, where a character is cloned, the difference manifests in the form of space and time. The case of a thin line physically distinguishable between two individuals usually manifests along with acute mental or moral contrast. However, whilst physical contrast is readily accessible to readers and other characters, mental or psychological difference is directly accessible to only the narrator (Margolin 2007:74). The main characters in *The Heart of Redness* (2000) are portrayed along this approach. Bhonco, son of Ximiya is

[6] The Immorality Act in South Africa was first passed in 1927 to prohibit sex between whites and blacks. This was amended in 1957, as (Act no.23 of 1957), also known as Sexual Offences Act 1957. It at this stage had more prohibitions, that include sex between white people and all non whites, as well as brothel keeping. Another amendment was made to produce Act no. 57 of 1969, with further prohibitions including sex toys, and sex between men, amongst others (Milton 1988: 269 – 274).

presented as a tall and “wiry” man, with a deep chocolate face grooved with gullies (Mda 2000:2). He often finds himself crying, not because of pain or hurtful experience, but for beautiful things, and therefore always carrying a white handkerchief wherever he goes. Differently from other unbelievers, he does not believe in grieving, and has long accepted that whatever pain suffered by the ancestors happened in the past, and now is cast in “cold iron that does not accumulate rust” (Mda 2000:1). However, through the narrator, we know that, since the admonishing by the elders, he changed his stance on grieving. Although he still cries for beautiful things, he also laments the suffering of the middle generations (Mda 2000:104), which may be symmetrically compared to the suffering undergone by black people under apartheid. This helps unbelievers to prepare for the painful dance leading to a trance that takes them back to the past (Mda 2000:81), a ritual that prepares them for possible future happiness.

Zim, on the other hand, is described as a “yellow-coloured stocky man with the high cheek bones of the Khoikhoi” (Mda 2000:40). Having inherited Khoikhoi genes from his great-grand mother, he, together with his late wife NoEngland from amagqumuKhwebe clan (products of intermarriages between amaXhosa and Khoikhoi), passed these to their children. Whilst Bhonco and other unbelievers lament the sufferings of the middle generations, Zim celebrates the end of that suffering, and although they are descendants of the same ancestors, they never see eye-to-eye. This subtheme of “direct opposites” is manifested down to the next generation, where their daughters Xoliswa Ximiya and Qukezwa, who are described by the narrator as the best antidotes to one another (Mda 2000:195).

Margolin (2007:74) concludes that when a list of characteristics has been established for a specific character, a general macrostructure or intelligible pattern is created that organises such characters into a coherent whole. This implies existence of different classes or groups which an individual character may belong. Such is in turn the basis of categorisation, which enables “mapping” out of the narrative world according to character types of which it consists. This typology places initial significance on the fundamental categorisation that includes the physical, behavioural and mental levels.

Secondary categorisation, which is equally important, entails biological categories such as those pertinent to gender and age, culture, social factors, and psychology. Character categorisation in the two novels, *The Heart of Redness* (2000) and *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2002) range from gender, to cultural, social, and psychological classifications. The agency of female protagonists who are forceful and proactive in their communities is presented through characters that include Xoliswa Ximiya, Qukezwa, and Niki, Popi, respectively. Sociocultural conflict that leads to psychological stress on the characters also dominates the novels.

4.4.5 CHARACTER AS READERLY MENTAL CONTSTRUCT

The various forms of character creation or portrayal, which, as discussed above, produce either artefacts or non-actual individuals, originate from mental images. Margolin (2007:76) acknowledges the role the cognitive psychological approach in developing this character definition. This takes literary characters as text-based mental models of possible individuals, who the author implants in the mind of the envisaged reader. The conceptualisation of characters through this approach assumes complex readerly mental representations, formulated in constructs, portraits, and mental files.

Margolin (2007:76) identifies different levels and subtypes of the readerly mental construct characterisation. At the basic level is the formulation of a text-based first order characterisation, ascribing a particular quality to a character. This is referred to as indirect characterisation, since it rests on inference or deduction. The example in this regard given by Margolin (2007:76) indicates that although direct characterisation appears simpler than its opposite, it is the latter, the indirect character portrayal that writers prefer, especially Mda. This has the opportunity of significantly involving the reader. For instance, Margolin cites the example that “a man in a cowboy movie can be directly characterized [sic] as wearing a black hat and having a deep scar on the front (or side) of his face, as we perceive these features” (Margolin 2007:76-77). Based on these defined features, a reader can infer “moral” attributes and characterise the individual (indirectly) as a villain.

In *The Heart of Redness* (2000), Mda uses this type of character portrayal intensively, which enables him not only to capture attention and imagination of the readers, but also to invigorates his characters' actions. He also applies the highly effective approach of 'firing' the reader's interest via the love plot around Camagu and his quest for the 'right' woman in Qolorha-by-Sea (Dannenberg 2009: 174). This approach is first reflected in the novel when Camagu changes his route to a totally different direction. Seeing himself at a wake by chance (Mda, 2000:28), where he simply followed people to the top level of a Hillbrow sky-scraper flat, he decides to postpone his travel (emigration) to the USA. By this time, all his luggage bags are packed for the long trip that is due the following morning (Mda, 2000:29,38). However, he is very attracted to the young woman, wearing "a respectful doek on her head, a shawl over her shoulders, and a dress that reaches a considerable length below the knees" (Mda, 2000:27). From this characterisation detail, that includes a beautiful voice, as she leads singing hymns in the wake, he deduces that she is somebody's "*makoti*", who clearly has no relation with the present wake. He also emphatically infers that "her beauty is not in harmony with this wake. It does not speak of death. It shouts only of life" (Mda, 2000:27). This indirect characterisation, as Margolin (2007:7) refers to characterisation statements made by narrators and characters about themselves and/or others, ultimately leads him to totally abandoning his plans to emigrate, due to the "rejection" he experienced when trying to get a job when he came from exile. He is attracted to NomaRussia, and immediately decides to follow her to the Eastern Cape village of Qolorha-by-Sea, where he ends up staying and establishing a cooperative in which he involves local women. He even marries a woman to whom he is attracted by her waywardness and her embeddedness in culture or "redness of enlightenment" (Mda, 2000:79).

The example of characterisation elaborated above also accounts for textual database in reader-formulated characterisation statements, which are often made by a narrator as well as characters about themselves or others. Margolin (2007:77) also notes that whenever one individual characterises another, he/she gets indirectly characterised in "mental and communicative properties" such as knowledge, reliability and honesty. Xoliswa Ximiya in *The Heart of Redness* (2000) is introduced in the novel alongside

Camagu. However, it soon becomes clear that her relation with him does not really get close and intimate. Whilst Camagu is fascinated by her beauty, he notes that it is a kind of beauty that is cold and distant, and therefore un-African (Mda, 2000:70-71). She, on the other side, is fascinated by the United States and its western culture. In a discussion that touches on the history of the area, she freezes at the mere mention of Nongqawuse. She has very strong anti-Nongqawuse sentiment, noting "why can't they let that part of our shame rest in peace" (Mda, 2000:75). One evening, as Camagu and herself walk past "silvery" girls celebrating their local culture, singing and dancing, she expresses her shameful disgust at them frolicking about topless (Mda, 2000:172). She also reacts to the incident of Camagu's totem snake, uMajola, and asks him, "Don't you think you are reinforcing barbarism in this village?" and adds "You are an educated man Camagu, all the way from America, how do you expert simple peasants to give up their superstitions and join the modern world when they see educated people like you clinging to them?" (Mda, 2000:172). She calls all seemingly backward practices including, red ochre that women smear on their bodies, traditional clothing (that her mother – NoPetticoat likes very much) and Qukezwa's life style, "redness" (Mda, 2000:184). She believes that this "redness" ought to be stamped out in a quest to modernise their village, Qolorha-by-Sea. All this characterises her as being highly colonised, or having a colonised mind. As indicated above, she is fascinated only by Western life, and looks down upon (or feel embarrassed by) her own culture, which she thinks is shameful. This is reflected in Fanon's concept of psychological colonisation and consequent "neurosis of blackness". His publication, *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008), acclaimed as the first published text to investigate the psychology of colonialism, examines how colonialism is internalised by the colonised. This accordingly involves inculcation of inferiority complex, and through that, a mechanism of racism that lead to black people emulating their former oppressors (Fanon 2008:x). In advocating the concept further, he refers to Malek Bennabi's work "Vacation de l'Isalm", which concerns the Algerian revolution. This work, through its operational concept of Colonisibilite, argues that the process through which Algeria and other Muslim countries declined culturally and intellectually to a stage where colonialism became a necessity.

Bennabi's study distinguishes between a country simply conquered (and occupied), and a colonised one. The consequent is that the latter loses its own cultural bearings and internalises the inherent superiority of the colonising culture (Fanon, 2008:viii-ix).

The postcolonial theory that includes Fanon's ideology also deals with the coloniser–colonised divide. In this context, it refers to "white" as a generic term for the West or European civilization, and its representatives. In contrast, "black" is used to refer to the non-West, and particularly to the African. Fanon (2008:xiii) asserts that "whiteness" has become a symbol of purity, justice, truth, virginity, and what it means to be civilised and modern. Conversely, "blackness" represents the diametrically opposite, which includes ugliness, sin, darkness, immorality, wickedness, naivety, being primitive, as well as backwardness. These qualities are referred to as "redness" in *The Heart of Redness* (2000:79). The divide referred to above leads to a neurotic situation, according to Fanon (2008:xiv), where black people are not only physically colonised, but also psychologically colonised. This leads to his assertion that the mind of the colonised is central (or crucial) to the decolonisation discourse (Fanon, 2008:xiv). Biko (1978:74) affirms this observation, and conscientises Blacks regarding the fact that it is not helpful to merely complain and protest about the situation, but it is necessary that they emancipate their minds such that they can conceptualise viable solutions. Mda's confidence in not only Black ability in this regard, but in marginalised groups that include rural and less erudite women, is evident in his assigning of crucial emancipative role to the "red girl", Qukezwa, as opposed to the more educated Xoliswa Ximiya, who harbours a colonised mind. This partly demonstrates Africa's ability to deal effectively with her developmental challenges, as well as her potential to contribute meaningfully to the world peace and development.

4.5 SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT AND BIKO'S CONCEPT OF "THE HUMAN FACE"

The social value of literature is reflected in most of Mda's literary works. He himself accentuates his role as an artist and that of his works in society, as social commentator and social commentary, respectively (Holloway, 1988:83). He further defends his

approach by explicit reference to a symbiotic relationship between an artist and society, emphasising that any artist's work is a response to the world around him/her, and especially the changes it undergoes (Austen, 2005, referred to by Bell and Jacobs 2009:1).

A society, by nature, is comprised of people who share specific culture. As people from different nations tend to mingle, with national and international migration, culture amongst them evolves, resulting to a process of acculturation. This is what ought to have materialised in the fusion between the African culture and Anglo-Boer cultures since the colonial era and the arrival of Jan Van Riebeeck in the Cape in 1652. Biko (1987:45) attributes this to political power dynamics, as he equivocally associates culture with highly lethal political weapon. Biko decries the fact that in the "amalgamation" of the two cultures, it is African culture that has shed most of its value, structure, and essence. The Anglo-Boer culture, equipped with all the trappings of a colonialist culture, conquered by persuasion and flattery through exclusive religion that denounced the "other" and imposed a western lifestyle that encompassed particular clothing, education, ritual, and custom (Biko, 1987:45). Where converting was challenged by the indigenous people, physical weapons (firearms) were readily available and used to accomplish defeat. Colonial culture would simply bestow an inferior status on all cultural aspects of the indigenous people (Biko, 1987:45).

In *The Heart of Redness* (2000) the 19th century narrative is presented through Sir George Grey's prominence, the Governor of the Cape Colony, after Cathcart's death (the so-called Man who named Ten Rivers, so named by the amaXhosa), whilst fully aware of his intention to disadvantage them and steal their land. According to the narrator, he "battered" civilisation for land, as if the indeginous people wanted that. This ironically indicates, as the narrator remarks, that "civilisation is not cheap" (Mda, 2000:95). The naming of the rivers and the mountains is apparently part process of forcefully expropriating the land as it is neither consultative nor considers any prior naming by forebears from the time immemorial.

Fincham (2011:40) notes that in suppressing the indigenous people's views and imposing western civilisation, Grey's portrayal is that of a "systematic destroyer of Xhosa laws and customs". He even institutes a judicial system that ensures their total annihilation. In spite of the disagreement amongst the unbelievers about Grey's actual motives for the Cape (some insisting that he was a friend and great lover of amaXhosa nation), he was interested in their health and education, hence, he established schools and hospital (Mda, 2000:96). This, after the destruction of crops and livestock, causing thousands to die of starvation, and as a result of which many amaXhosa were forced to work as slaves in white settlements, being paid only in food rations. This gave effect to Grey's plan of changing them into "useful servants, consumers of western goods as well as contributors to the revenue of Grey's mother country".

In his article *A Human Face: Biko's conception of African culture and Humanism*, Oliphant (2008:214-215) makes reference to Biko's political philosophy, as based on a culturally specific humanist concept. This is encapsulated in one of Biko's essays: "Some African cultural concepts", which is summarised in three sentences:

> we have set out on a quest for true humanity and somewhere on the distant horizon we can see the glittering prize. Let us march forth with courage and determination drawing strength from our common plight and our brotherhood. In time we shall be in a position to bestow upon South African the greatest possible gift – a more human face (Biko 1987:51).

In contextualising these sentences, Oliphant (2008:214) explains that most significantly, the reward stated is not something that the oppressed will receive upon attainment of liberation, but something the liberated will give to or bestow on the nation. The "glittering prize", or the anticipated gift, is not to be received but something to give. It is also not just in respect of freedom from oppression, but also (more than just a colonial capital and African cheap labour outlook), a "more human face" and humanisation of the country.

In *The Heart of Redness* (2000) Mda's African Renaissance approach leads to his main characters seen as "larger than life women" dominating the novel. This is concept that

got popularised by the former president Thabo Mbeki, in the ushering in of democracy in South Africa around the mid-1990s. Although it was set in visionary language, it incorporates five crucial principles, namely: “encouragement of cultural exchange, emancipation of African women from racial oppression and patriarchy, mobilisation of youth, the broadening, deepening and sustenance of democracy, as well as initiation of sustainable economic development” (Vale & Maseko, 1998:274). Mda’s focus on community evolvement (which encompasses culture and traditions) is directed not just at socio-political change in Africa, but also towards the mind-shift on marginalisation of certain groups of people in society with more focus on women. For this reason, the African Renaissance as depicted by Mda encompasses the liberation of women from various forms of oppression. In *The Heart of Redness*, as well as most of his other writings, women protagonists are portrayed as assertive, creative, and proactive in their communities, with significant contribution to human development.

In his representation of conflict between the past and modernity, including colonial/African culture cohabitation, Mda foregrounds the development of peripheral areas with focus on the strength of women in these communities. This is reflected on both sides of the social “divide”, as in the portrayal of the “Unbelievers” and “Believers” in his novel. The former, represented by Bhonco’s line of family descent, have in their midst the type of strong women like Xoliswa Ximiya. She is presented a highly learned, with a BA in Education and a Certificate in English teaching from a college in America, at a time when it was considered a waste of time and money, to even send a girl to school. She is even promoted to the position of principal of Qolorho-by-Sea Secondary School (Mda, 2000:2). This is a highly respected position in society and has formerly been the preserve of the white men, and later also black men. She gets an even higher position with the Department of Education in Pretoria later in the novel (Mda, 2000:302).

The Believers are seen as stumbling blocks to development, particularly due to their lineage belief on Nongqawuse’s prophecies that are believed to have led to famine and death of amongst the amaXhosa. The fact that they oppose a developmental project that is seen as a catalyst, with the potential to take the community out of darkness of

their original redness, deepens the divisions. Instead of exploitative means of development like a casino project, the Believers prefer a project that would promote nature conservation, that would in turn stimulate cultural tourism (to promote African culture). Women in this line of descent (the Believers) are also presented positively, with greater potential and strength to lead socio-economic developments in their community despite their "redness". In spite of her waywardness, which initially puzzles Camagu (Mda, 2000:62), Qukezwa's assertiveness, pro-activeness and her willingness to do hard work including playing roles that were formally in men's domain, for example, riding a horse bareback and reign less (Mda, 2000:174) attract Camagu, and in the love triangle that involves Xoliswa, Camagu and herself, she ultimately wins his affection as he later ask her hand in marriage (Mda, 2000:278-279).

She is skilled in sea harvesting, and has practical knowledge of the ocean's economy, which enables her to wisely use this natural resource for both personal relaxation/revitalisation and as a means of subsistence. She, together with fellow village women that include No-giant and Mamcirha frequently harvest "*imbhaza*", "imbhatyisa" and "*amangquba*" (mussels, oysters, abalone or perlemoen), which are known for having a high protein content (Mda, 2000:139). Camagu, with his high level of education, is then taught by these (ordinary, village) women how to harvest the sea. He immediately sees a business opportunity in this, and forms a cooperative on seafood with them (Mda, 2000:159), and they become pivotal in sustaining the venture. The development involving Camagu, the cultural groups in Qolorha opposing each other, his attraction to the two different women – Xoliswa and Qukezwa, as well as, his ultimate settling down with Qukezwa, and working with the village women, is the part fulfilment of Biko's "bestowal of the greatest possible gift – a more human face" (Biko, 1978:51). Xoliswa's high level of education and her Western style beauty, including her exclusive valuing of Western culture (Mda 2000:70–71), do not help in winning Camagu's love. On the other hand, Qukezwa's beauty is African type, where she doesn't have a Western model's body, but instead, is "short and plump" (Mda 2000:62). She is also described as a "scatterbrained girl with a Standard Eight education, working as a cleaner" (Mda, 2000:118), but one that Camagu is falling in love with, as he learns a lot

from her. She fully embraces African culture, teaches him how to ride a horse (Gxagxa), bareback and reinless. He also enjoys her playing of "*umrhubhe*", the isiXhosa musical instrument that is made of a wooden bow and a single string. Mda writes, “Women play this instrument by stroking and sometimes plucking the string, using their mouths as an acoustic box" (2000:174). Moreover, Qukezwa is free-spirited (175), respectful and exudes all that is beautiful in an African sense. She is not only a hard worker, and self-reliant, but bright minded, hence she outwits people with high Western education, like Camagu and Xoliswa, and her ideas contribute to better development of Qolorha and its people. Oliphant (2008:215) observes that the central aspect of Biko’s political philosophy is based on a culturally specific humanist concept, which is also described as a form of African humanism. Qukezwa’s character and those around her are portrayed through this concept, and this in turn reflects efficacy of Mda’s “African renaissance”.

4.6 CHARACTER REPRESENTATION IN *THE MADONNA OF EXCELSIOR* AND AFRICAN LITERARY CRITICISM

Lewis Nkosi’s examination of creative writing in South Africa from the early 1950s was according to his publication, *Home and Exile and other Selections* (1983), motivated firstly by his generations perceptions and experience of injustice and racism. Secondly, he and his contemporaries were not the least impressed by the type literature produced on both sides of the racial divide. This generation was politically incensed by the blatant segregation that even permeated the battlefields of the Second World War. The South African side of the war was dominated by “white companies” followed by “coloured companies”, with advanced equipment. General Smuts had ensured that black soldiers were armed with only spears and “knobkerries” against the might of the German army, and in most cases, they were mere stretcher-bearers. Nkosi’s generation were angered by their forebears’ complicity in the patent hoax that they were helping to win freedom and democracy for all in the country (Nkosi, 1983:3).

On the literary front, their sense of outrage was sharpened, as a great deal of it was incubated and driven by missionary endeavours that were purposefully Christian and

aggressively crusading, and the rest considered eccentric. The question of identity was crucial for Nkosi, and since art by its nature is a social commentary, the identity crisis that characterised the 1950s would naturally filter through to literature, as indicated in his review of *The African Image* (1974) by Mphahlele. He indicates here that he became conscious of his African-ness not when he learnt or became aware of his skin colour being black, but when he learnt of the official classification of part of the population as "non-white", implicating him therein. He disliked particularly the negative connotation of this classification, which was also used to demarcate public amenities. He was in this way always reminded, through labels of the amenities, that he was or represented a negative quality, something "non" and therefore an assault on African personality and all what being African stands for.

The Madonna of Excelsior (2002) is based on the historical events that involve miscegenation that rocked the country with high rate of incidences in the Orange Free State town of Excelsior in the 1970s. The incidences reported in the local newspapers and the media were contravention of the Immorality Act. The national scandal of the Excelsior 19 case that involved arrest and charging of 19 people, that is five white men and 14 African women (Mda, 2002:102), that informs the novel. This case drew worldwide attention due to a series of Immorality Act trials that ensued, and the unexpected withdrawal of the case by the State.

> "Excelsior has become the best-known town in the world this week", said the BBC man talking into the microphone and facing the camera. "The small farming community – population seven hundred – was rocked a few weeks ago when some of its prominent citizens were arrested with their black maids for contravening the Immorality Act. The white accused include the secretary of the local branch of the National Party and some of the wealthiest farmers in the district. Mr. Adam de Vries is the lawyer representing the white men (Mda, 2002:72).

Cross-examined by a BBC journalist on the chances of his clients on the case, Mr. De Vries is confident that he would make a strong case that his clients were framed and therefore are innocent. In responding to even more probing questions like "what about

the babies? Surely those babies come from somewhere", the lawyer remains resolute that the children were not those of his clients (Mda, 2002:72). However, the whole world is surprised at the sudden unexpected withdrawal of the charges by the Attorney General, Dr. Percy Yutar, on the basis of the fact that state witnesses are no longer willing to give evidence. None is more baffled by the announcement as the prosecutor, Mr. Christian Calitz, who is undaunted that he has a strong case, which does not depend only on the evidence of state witnesses (Mda, 2002:96-97).

The unravelling of the plot reflects the fear from black offenders, segregation, the unequal treatment of black and white transgressors, separate trials, amenities and discriminatory sentences, in similar way that Nkosi (1983:30-32) critiques the South African society of the 1950s to the 1980s, and the way it is depicted by African writers. Bell and Jacobs (2009:281) in *Ways of Writing,* refer to this as the sordid and sorry human drama resulting from the perversion of morality of apartheid.

The essentialism and segregation of apartheid is reflected in the narrative voice's stereotypical representation of social reality. The community of Excelsior is presented as a racially divided society, and this is justified through religion as the unequivocal word of God. The local Dutch Reformed Church in a white area of Excelsior has the seal of Dr. J.G. Strydom (also known as the Lion of the North) who was the prime Minister of South Africa from 1954 to 1958. His name is therefore commemorated on the wall marble panel next to the front door of the church as follows:

> As a Calvinist people, we Afrikaners, in accordance with our faith in the word of God, developed a policy condemning all equality and mongrelisation between white and black. God's word teaches us, after all, that He willed into being separate nations, colours and languages (Mda, 2002:29-30).

The motivation and justification for segregated living, as noted by Nkosi (1983:31-32) comes from the religious creed, and this gives effects to systematic entrenchment of apartheid at all levels of society. This is corroborated by Zulu (2009:318) in his observation of the Excelsior's reflection of how apartheid constructed boundaries between town and township, white and black, in an attempt to maintain the assumption

of the white self as “civilized” and the other as “primitive”. It is against this background that laws were established to regulate social living in “compartmentalised” fashion. He mentions a host of legislation that includes the population Registration Act that categorised people into ethnic and racial groups, and the mixed Amenities Act that enforced separate public facilities, the Groups Areas Act and the Immorality Act, to maintain purity of the white race (Zulu, 2009:318).

Mimicking the apartheid social-political environment and demonstrating weaknesses (or ineffectiveness) of the Immorality Act, the novel singles out a group of conservative, sexually deprived Afrikaner men in Excelsior. Accused of raping black women and contravening the Act, are all men of good standing in the community. Jacobs (2009:283) cites the report from “The Friend” newspaper of the 4th November 1970, depicting the individuals from which Mda created his characters. For instance, J.M. Calitz, the butcher who committed suicide, had served on the Excelsior Town Council. The role of this individual is in the novel, played by the character Stephanus Cronje. Johan Christian Bornman of the farm Vergelegen charged with having relations with two African women, exchange roles with the novel’s Dutch Reformed minister Reverend Francois Bornman, who, not only tries to commit suicide (Mda, 2002:87) during the trial of the Excelsior 19 case, but continues with the sexual escapades with black women, especially Maria, after the trial. The seller of songs, Maria’s “mixed blood” child with the dominee, is much younger, indicating that she was born several years after the Excelsior 19 case (Ibid: 196).

Ndebele (1986:144) agrees with Nkosi on the limits to social absurdity that some black writers use as the main point of reference, which at times is devoid of creative imagination, due to simplistic plot. However, Mda uses this to achieve a rounded portrayal of his main characters. This starts with the “flat” characterisation or utilization of types to reflect exploitation of power dynamics propelled by racial bias. This quagmire is reflected in the irony that the men that are caught in the immoral activity and hire the services of a lawyer guilty in the past of the same crime, to defend them. As might be expected, De Vries, who knows very well that “his clients” are guilty as charged, insists

that they are innocent, but “framed” by the black women (Mda, 2002:72). The case is then seen as a “black conspiracy” (Zulu, 2009: 320) and all the blame is put on the black women involved in the case, hence the motif that is conveyed by the omniscient narrator: “All these things flow from the sins of our mothers” (Mda, 2002:1). This is the opening line of novel, and its rephrased version is the last sentence of the novel – “From the sins of our mothers all these things flow” (Mda, 2002:268).

The most ridiculous hypocrisy involving the case is the defence mechanism by the Reverend Francois Bornman. He declares his guilty conscience, as he lies at a hospital bed after attempting suicide. He knows he betrayed his people and the congregation. However, he attributes this to the work of the devil that sent black women to tempt him and turn away from the path of righteousness. The narrator sarcastically adds that the devil had always used the black women to tempt the Afrikaner men in this context. The battle that raged within individual Afrikaner man made them “covertly covet” the black woman, whilst loathing or hating her in public (Mda, 2002:87). Even Johannes Smith, who has severally raped black women, including Niki, in his sunflower field and barn, and who regards such assaults as “great” sport or a “game” (53), is said to have been led astray by the devil in the guise of black women.

However, in his critique of African writing, Nkosi (1998:133) lambasts those writers who pick on racial conflict theme for its own sake, reducing black activity to a reaction to white oppression. In this regard, he turns to the work of Ezekiel Mphahlele, noting it as exemplary. The latter changed his approach in the 1970s, to portraying black experience in a more positive light than as mere victims of white oppression. This is reflected in Zakes Mda’s writing, with his African renaissance approach, and position depiction of blacks, as well as the marginalised underclass people. Mda further categorises this in his response during an interview, noting that he sees women as being at the centre of the renaissance he describes, through different types of community work they do, and in how they uphold the spiritual and material well-being of their families (Mazibuko, 2009:116).

It is the approach sketched above that apparently informed portrayal of Niki's character, as a form of round characterisation. She gets subjected to many humiliating circumstances throughout the course of the novel, which all impact on her, physically, emotionally and psychologically. After the rape episodes by Johannes Smith, Niki is married by Pule in a beautiful wedding, which helps to fill the void left by incidents which Johannes Smith, as well as trying to bleach to away the stubborn stain (Mda, 2002:22).

The beautiful Niki and her husband are then blessed with a bouncing baby boy, promising a happy married life. However, such good times are not to last. In spite of his tremendous love for his wife, reflected in Niki's glowing and fancy clothing, Pule verbally and emotionally abuses her for not serving him a "proper" meal on a Sunday when she had to help her employers to look after their child. This is made worse by accusations of infidelity, despite Niki's loyalty and dedication to her marriage, assigning non-existent motives (Mda, 2002:34).

During her tenure at the Excelsior "*slaghuis*" (the Afrikaans word for "butchery"), Niki becomes a victim of hegemonic feminism, which, according to Zulu (2009:322), is based on the premise of the existence of rich white women owning the means of social production, and thus wielding socio-economic power to oppress the poor. Due to the nature of apartheid, this hegemony is historically defined by the hinging of class and race. The novel demonstrates this through Madam Cronje's decision to weigh her workers (all black) at the times of their daily clocking in and out, to ensure that that they don't steal meat (Mda, 2002:40). The rule is that weight should be the same on both weighing times in a day. On this day, Niki eats lunch late in the afternoon, due to a busy work schedule, and the scale shows one kilogram extra at the time of clocking out. This leads to Madam Cronje stripping Niki naked in front of everyone, including men, madam's husband, children and her co-workers (Mda, 2002:40). Madam Cronje doesn't see anything wrong with this act even when it ends up proving nothing. She instead laughs it out, as a joke. All other people also giggled "including Niki, but with no real laughter in her eyes" (Mda, 2002:42).

This humiliation leads to her seeking revenge, through sleeping with madam's husband, when this man begins to pursue her after seeing her naked (Mda, 2002:50). As indicated earlier, Niki's sleeping with Stephanus Cronje and later bearing a mixed-blood child lead to her incarceration under the Immorality Act. She then suffers the worst possible treatment, especially after Cronje committed suicide so as to avoid an embarrassing trial, leaving Niki to "face the music" alone. She is deserted not only by her husband, but also by her family, due to the shame they feel because of this incident (Mda, 2002:64,124).

Niki's allowance from Pule stopped even before the child was born. On hearing rumours of his wife's pregnancy after a year that he hasn't been coming home, Pule demanded answers from her without success, and therefore stopped sending money. Ultimately coming home to a coloured baby exacerbates the grief that Pule felt to the marrow of his bones. The fact that there were other families in the location with a similar problem didn't make it any better. Instead, going back to work (in Welkom) sees him exile himself into a world of silence, and to heavy drinking. During this time his wife and child are erased from his mind (Mda, 2002:60-61). Her family members also distance themselves from her, saying, they would have nothing to do with a woman who brought so much shame to their family (Mda, 2002:124).

The excruciating experience suffered by Niki include an attempt to "brown" her coloured baby in a smoking brazier, and shaving the baby's head with a razor to hide the texture of her hair from the public (Mda, 2002:66). The painful arrest and treatment by the prison authorities, the legal defence of the accused men who paint a devilish picture of a black women (Mda, 2002:72), as well as the media which leads Niki to hide in a non-white toilet on the day of her release, and finding her shack ransacked and emptied devastates her. She develops self-pity and then anger at everyone and everything, that seems to have contributed to her misfortune. Despite the promises given for not testifying against the men, (which include financial support for her and the child) she finds herself "free and hungry" after the trial, and all the promises whispered to her in prison, become empty shells (Mda, 2002:106). She then finds herself (with her baby)

surviving mostly on bones and leftovers from the white families' parties and functions (Mda, 2002:9).

Although she wants to keep to herself after all her tribulations, her children make this impossible as they grow, becoming active in different societal (as well as political) organisations. These range from the church's Young Women Union that Popi grows into, to the Movement Under Ground that Viliki has joined. This meant that people from the church and from other societal organisations would not only visit her home from time to time, but also "take" or lure Niki's kids away from her, which has always been her great fear. This is aggravated by Popi's joining of the political movement, The Young Lions (Mda, 2002:161, 167).

When Viliki becomes the first black Mayor of Excelsior, and Popi a member of the council at the time of transformation and the new order, Niki's home becomes a hive of activity, especially from the time when Viliki Pule's photograph – barefoot, sitting on a chair outside the shack, wearing the mayoral chain, graced the front pages of major national newspapers (Mda, 2002:174). In spite all of this, she remains humble and shy, away from the public spectacle. She doesn't take advantage of the situation, and uses it to change her socio-economic status for the better and live a high-class life, like most people would have done. She continues living at her shack, even when Viliki and some of his comrades allocated themselves RDP house. Popi also refuses an RDP house and continues staying at her home-shack with her mother. She openly challenges member of the movement, who feel that they sacrificed enough when they fought for liberation, and that now is their time to enjoy the fruits of their labour. She criticises it as immoral for the councillors to allocate themselves houses whilst there are still many people on the list desperately waiting for the government subsidised houses. She is more critical to those who even unethically allocated house to their girlfriends, mothers, and grandmothers. She feels that they as leaders of the struggle should lead by example (and have their names on the waiting list like everyone else). She uses her meagre stipend (from the Town Council) to dig a foundation and purchase bricks with which she plans to build herself and her mother a better house (Mda, 2002:176-177).

In keeping with Mda's African renaissance being driven by ordinary people, away from the centres of power (those not in Government, state institutions, or corporate organisations), as noted by Mazibuko (2009:116), Niki and Popi are totally against any form of corruption. Hence, Niki doesn't look for any undeserved favours from the municipality or the town council on the basis of her son being a mayor and/or daughter, council member. She even supports her kids when they step down from their positions in the town council. She is content that this humbling experience strengthens their character and affords them closer association with their roots, and is happy that even though Viliki has his two RDP houses and sells songs, he still finds time to visit the old shack to sit around the fire with them (Mda, 2002:242).

Niki's reasoning sits in stark contrast with her friends Mampe and Maria, who do not waste time in indulging in corrupt activities for self-gain, as soon as Maria's brother, Sikatle, becomes a mayor. As soon as he assumes duty, he employs his sister as a clerk at the registry. Regardless of her being barely literate, which means that the old Afrikaner lady who worked there for decade, was now just waiting for retirement, and would do all the work for her. To Niki's amazement and disappointment, they see nothing wrong in this; instead they would brag about their "jobs" to her and offer to organise one for her. In her humility, most of the time she just listens to them talking to each other, and offering one another a billycan of honey before they leave (Mda, 2002:249).

In spite of her being an ordinary person, she becomes a "hero" who comes to the rescue of the "*stadsaal*" (the "city hall" in Afrikaans) from invasion by the swarming bees. Clustered around their new queen, they hung under the eaves of the building near the entrance, where the workers and clients couldn't walk in and out of the building. Although Popi had offered to help, their actual location was complicated for Popi, who therefore "needed assistance of a greater expert". Niki's expert knowledge of using cow dung smoke to calm the bees works perfectly, and she successfully rescues the officials. She even gives them advice that bees are sensitive to alcohol and therefore those smelling alcohol are at more risk of getting stung. She smells alcohol on some of

those looking on as she works on the bees). This is a lesson for the officials (black and white), and those that are “guilty as charged”, who were required to tiptoe away into the building to avoid provoking the bees (Mda, 2002:183-184). She then takes the bees to start her own hive, from which she produces honey that she generously shares with the community. Through the hive, she feels connected with the ancestors, and even resists persuasion by Adam de Vries to convert her to apiary or beekeeping into viable business and join the newly formed Excelsior Development Trust (Mda, 2002:250).

She feels this would divert, dilute, and probably highjack her own community development initiative. Although the Trust is presented as a nation-building scheme and an attempt to close economic gap between white and black, its secondary aim is self-serving. The venture would benefit a partnership with black farmers. Some affirmative action contracts and tenders would advantage De Vries and his cronies and protégés (Mda, 2002:254). Niki is however committed on her community development work through her bee project.

It is remarkable that Niki develops into a totally independent and self-sufficient individual without any support from any centre of power. She instead experienced oppression and persecution from the powers that be, harbours no anger against these powerful individuals and societal institutions (perhaps, having learnt from her own lesson). She gets to this tranquillity after learning that anger, hatred, and vengeance has a “habit of bouncing against the wall, like a ricocheting bullet and hit the originator” (Mda, 2002:143). She saw what happened to her when wielded sex for revenge. It was due to that vengeance that Popi was born coloured and became a “prisoner” of the perpetual "doek" on her head, blue eyes, and hairy legs (Mda, 2002:143). She even teaches Popi about the dangers of harbouring anger (Mda, 2002:231). This seems to be a lesson that Mda conveys to the immerging society after apartheid, namely that those who do not want to embrace change, through going beyond past divisions will be caught up in such anger, which may develop into self-pity and ultimately lead to self-destruction.

In sync with Nkosi’s (1983:133) critique that warns against portraying black characters as mere victims' racial prejudice, Niki’s contribution to social transformation and

development is not constrained by the low-status position she occupies. Being oppressed under apartheid and African patriarchy, Zulu (2009:32) sees her position as that of a black woman suffering a double-blow (of oppression), a subaltern female who occupies the lowest social position and is denied the capacity and possibility of upward mobility. This portrayal, of the black woman as mute, sad, pathetic, and passive victim of colonial and male domination, who "speaks" through her silence, is highly restrictive as it perpetually casts her as the absolute other. However, also portrayed as Mda's African renaissance hero or heroine (the ordinary, and marginalised) significantly contributes to social transformation, confession, and development.

4.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter is the central focus of the study, presenting character analysis in the novels *The Heart of Redness* (2000) and *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2002). It used different but complementary theories, that is, Western and African originated thought processes, to do so. The scenario was sketched through outlining key points that are seen as Mda's teachings from the novels. One sub-theme he investigates through *The Heart of Redness* (2000) is culture dynamics. Camagu's observations include cultural divisions and binary polarisation that are not just a consequence of external influence, but mostly an implosion that has internal roots, which continue to sustain sociocultural differences. The differences between the "Believers" and "Unbelievers" emanate from the different cultural beliefs involving ancestral messages through Prophetesses (Nongqawuse, Nombanda and Nonkosi), more than a century ago, and spiral to differences on developmental strategies in the 21st century. As a backbone of societal existence, culture is quite a complex phenomenon, depending on how it is used, it can both unite as well divide people. It can also be used to oppress other people, as in the case of colonisation. Making reference to Steve Biko's writings, Oliphant (2009:213) defines culture as a society's composite answer to varied problems of life. However, culture abuse can even lead to people dying, as was the case with Ruwandan genocide in 1994 (*The Toronto Star*, 2009). According to Dannenberg (2009:166), local cultures tend to get irrevocably changed and become casualties when they come into contact with such hegemonic cultures such as like colonialism and forces of economic

globalisation. These purport the neo-colonial perspective according to which cultures are ranked in a hierarchy around a western driven concept of universal civilisation (Dannenberg, 2009:170).

In *The Heart of Redness* (2000) Mda challenges the cultural imperialistic narratives by the powering colonial and neo-colonial forces portrayed in the novel. Fincham (2009:197) reflects on Sir George Grey's role in the inculcation of Western culture on Africans. This is what is conveyed by the trader Dalton, when, as the Governor's interpreter, he points out that what Grey only wanted was to "spread British civilisation and bring peace to the area" (Mda 2000:141). However, The Man Who Named Ten Rivers, as was his moniker amongst the amaXhosa, is later revealed as a systematic destroyer of Xhosa laws and customs. This is evident through the judicial system that suppresses these traditions. After the cattle killing, when thousands were dying of famine, he forced those who were still alive to work as slaves on white farms and settlements, where they were paid in food rations (Mda, 2000:296). He shows a sense of gratification that his imperialistic mission was being achieved easier and quicker through the cattle killing effects:

> We are achieving what we sat out to do. The Xhosa are becoming useful servants, consumers of our goods and contributors to our revenue (Mda, 2000:296).

Mda (2000) provides a counter-cultural narrative to the hegemonic colonial and ne-colonial cultural approaches. The novel critiques a complex network of inter-cultural dynamics, which mostly carefully navigate the notion of "us" and "them", and according to Dannenberg (2009:170), it demonstrates how individual human beings and cultural narratives relate through intercultural means. Providing a "fort" against colonial cultures, the novel vividly presents the cultures of the amaXhosa and the Khoikhoi peoples and life stories of the main characters within these cultures. The emphasis on colour, knowledge and wisdom concerning the local cultures are presented to counter the colonial idea that African culture represents darkness, and the approach of presenting it as an antithesis of European culture (op cit).

In The Madonna of Excelsior (2002), Mda examines the lives and experiences of ordinary people in the new society that emerges from the ashes of apartheid and colonial past. In this novel, he succeeds to purposefully dramatise culture in transition by drawing extensively from the popular media representations and the expressionist or symbolist paintings of the Jesuit priest, Frans Claerhout, the “trinity”. The chapter is then concluded with through evaluation of character analysis in the novels through Africa-based theories from Biko, Nkosi, and Ndebele.

An observation was made at the beginning of this chapter about Mda’s motivation and approach to writing. His belief in the social relevance of art and writing is central to his approach. His literary work reflects an alertness to his role as a social commentator, and there his work can be seen as social commentary. This puts him at the same level as the African literary theorists that include Nkosi, Ndebele, as well Biko. Nkosi’s affirmative response to this literary approach has been reflected on, as evidenced by his criticism of the type of literature that was produced from the late 1940s to 1960s. The hindsight of the second world war and its discriminatory processes has also had an impact on literary work. He and his contemporaries were outraged at the type of writing that was stimulated by missionary endeavour. Most writings were evangelical. The rest were simply eccentric or unacceptably romantic. The large proportion of this literature was therefore not socially compatible. Nkosi’s advocacy against stereotype characters is evident in his criticism of Alan Paton’s character Stephen Khumalo, discussed herein previously. This character is, according to Nkosi, easy to repudiate, and had been no more than a figment of the white liberal imagination (Nkosi, 1983:5).

Nkosi’s (1983:31) support for literary writing that is assertive about Africanism, was discussed with a stern warning against a writing that merely uses racial conflict as the only and singular point of reference. Both novels, *The Heart of Redness* (2000) and *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2002) exemplify these principles. They neither have capricious African characters, nor do they capitulate to easy stereotypes as main characters. The protagonist of the former, Camagu, is a character that represents strong African values. Despite his high level of education, he is well-rooted in African culture, and is proud of

his heritage. He even acknowledges uMajola, his clan's totem snake (2002:112). In keeping with Mda's theme of the African renaissance, and using marginalised people to drive a developmental agenda, Camagu doesn't look only to Government, for a job, but ends up working with rural women to establish a cooperative that becomes a support structure for the unemployed people in the village. Mda effectively demonstrates that the marginalised people (mostly Africans), who often seem weak, desolate, and poverty stricken, do have great potential, and if this is properly tapped into, they can do wonders and contribute immensely to their development and that of others. For instance, it is the rural women who teach Camagu the about nutritional, as well as income-generating value of mussels and oysters, whose isiXhosa names are "imbhaza", "imbhatyisa", (Mda, 2002:116). It is Qukezwa, the "red girl" (Mda, 2002:257) who ultimately saves Qolorha's environmental conservation from the destructive weeds (inkberry, lantana and wattle trees) (Mda, 2002:248), as well as from economic suffocation of the local economy by hegemonic capitalist ventures (tour operators, water sports providers and casino) (Mda, 2002:117). In spite of occasional quarrels with John Dalton, he relates well with him, and even asks him to facilitate *lobolo* negotiations, when he asks Qukezwa for her hand in marriage later in the novel. John, himself a white character, is also a well-rounded character, who has even undergone the initiation custom of Black people. He is therefore a man in the real African sense.

The main characters in *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2002) are generally presented in a fair and balanced manner. Other than the two key characters (Niki and Popi, as well as their family members), the rest are drawn from the newspaper reports that deal with an 'outbreak' of miscegenation in the small Free State town of Excelsior in the 1970s. The author depicts the trial processes, which reflect the social challenges of the time, including unequal treatment of white and black transgressors, their separate trials and the discriminatory processes. The public disgrace and suicides are also featured due to the high profile of the accused in their community (Farmers, lawyers, business men, and the reverend of a local church) (Mda, 2002:52–54). In keeping with his keen interest in the marginalised, especially women, and their potential to develop themselves and others around them, Mda devotes focus to Niki and Popi. Zulu (2009:323) notes that

Niki's situation under apartheid, and African patriarchy, reflects a black woman suffering a double oppression as the subaltern female, who occupies the lowest social position and is denied capacity and possibility of moving to higher social strata. She is even subjected to hegemonic feminism, perpetrated by rich white women against black women. Focus is given to a black woman as a mute, sad, pathetic, and passive victim of colonial and male domination, who speaks through her silence, and is negative, as she is perpetually cast as the absolute other (Zulu (2009:323). However, she develops positively, and later contributes to development of others and community around her. Popi suffers much greater denigration from birth, despised not only by people of a different race from her family, but also by the children she attends school with, and those she plays with in the street. In the midst of racial slurs, that include "boesman", "hotnot", "bastard", and "coloured" that are thrown at her, she gives up playing with girls of her age, either at school or at home. At some point, she even becomes a "prisoner" of the perpetual doek on her head (due to her flowing locks), as well as of blue eyes, and hairy legs (Mda 2002:150). However, through her quest for liberation, she personally take steps deal with the matter, including travelling to Thaba Nchu to scrutinise Father Claerhout's painting, tracing her history so that this might give her some closure on the matter that haunted her through her youthful years.

Similar to Nkosi (1983), Njabulo Ndebele's work in *Rediscovery of the Ordinary* (1991), challenges the aesthetics of liberation in the mid-1980s, the era that reflected imminence of liberation in South Africa. As indicated in 4.6, his critique is against continued political writing without any positive solution. He refers to such as "literature of spectacle" (Ndebele, 1991:158), from which our writing ought to retreat, so as to focus people's potential and initiatives in rebuilding themselves and others for the benefit of the community at large. Zakes Mda doesn't only meet this criterion, but also succeeds in positive portrayal of African culture, as propounded by Steve Biko. For instance, the apartheid period has only been referred to obliquely in *The Heart of Redness,* through the phrase; "the suffering of the middle generations" (Mda 2000:1), and the focus placed on Africans, their ability to overcome setbacks caused by past suffering, the development of Africans as strong pillars of society, as well Africanism in general. As

reflected on by Woodward (2003:173-4), in “Jim comes from Jo’burg”, Mda doesn’t only transcend the “Jim comes to Jo’burg” theme, but also successfully deconstructs Western dualism, whilst reconstructing a traditional Xhosa worldview, grounded in the contemporary issues of post-1994 South Africa. In the next chapter, the study will focus on *Black Diamond* (2009) and *Little Suns (2015)*, with reference to his philosophy in *Justify the Enemy* (2018) and *Sometimes there is a Void: Memoirs of an Outsider* (2011).

CHAPTER FIVE

5. ZAKES MDA'S PHILOSOPHICAL IDEAS IN *JUSTIFY THE ENEMY – BECOMING HUMAN IN SOUTH AFRICA (2018)* AND *SOMETIMES THERE IS A VOID (2011) ANALYSED* IN *BLACK DIAMOND (2009)* AND *LITTLE SUNS* (2015)

5.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter focused on character analysis in the novels *The Heart of Redness* (2000) and *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2002), using Western-based character theories and the African originated theories. The former novel was read and analysed through Zakes Mda's approach to socio-cultural and developmental issues characterising former colonial South Africa, rather than post-apartheid developments. It was noted that, in this novel, Mda engages his characters in a dialectic between retrospective analysis of socio-political and developmental factors. The main character, Camagu, was presented as the central point through which the colonial past socio-political differences (or dialogues) and developments of the post-apartheid social revolution could be investigated and reconciled. This character was analysed as an invidious figure, whose balanced interaction with characters from different societal dialogues (or social cells/divisions) is crucial.

Two chronotypes form the gist of the novel, namely, the nineteenth-century colonial domination under Sir George Grey, as well as the cattle-killing saga that led to famine and the breaking of amaXhosa nation, instigated by Nongqawuse's visions and ancestral messages. Secondly, the contemporary chronotype focuses on developmental challenges in Qholorha-by-Sea in the new South Africa, that are subjected to societal divisions. Finding himself amid these divisions, Camagu had to grapple with his circumstance's intellectual appreciation, and carve a course of action that most people from both sides would find reprieve.

The *Madonna of Excelsior* (2002) was approached in a multifaceted theme featuring cultural and racial identity and the changing political landscape. Fincham's (2011:76) point of view was examined on the dramatisation of a culture in transition, using both

media representation and the expressionist paintings of the Jesuit priest, Frans Claerhout. The analysis included Niki and Popi, the main characters; and those in the background, Stephanus Cronje, Viliki, Tjaart Cronje, Johannes Smit, and Adam de Vries.

Overall, the scenario was sketched by outlining critical points, seen as Mda's teachings from the novels. He mainly investigates culture dynamics through *The Heart of Redness* (2000). As a support structure of societal existence, culture is quite a complex phenomenon. Depending on how it is used, it can unite as well divide people. It can also be used to oppress the so-called "others", as in the case of colonisation. This theme will be investigated further in this chapter, focusing on the novels *Black Diamond* (2009) and *Little Suns* (2015).

5.2. CHRONOLOGY AND INTERTEXTUAL LINKS BETWEEN THE THREE TEXTS

One of the outstanding qualities of Zakes Mda's writing is its embracing of African aesthetics. As indicated in the first chapter, he emphasises the social functionality of his art and literacy work. In his admission of the political nature of his work, especially his pre-1994 theatrical work, he speaks to the symbiotic relationship between the artist and society, noting that the artist's work interacts with what takes place in his/her world (Bell & Jacobs, 2019:3).

In *Justify the Enemy* (2018), and a number of his South African based novels, Mda's focuses on the present-day issues at the time of writing through the spectacles of authentic historic events. This non-fictional work was published about twenty-four years after the first democratic elections in South Africa. This is nine years after the publication of *Black Diamond* (2009), and three years after the release of *Little Suns* (2015). The autobiography, *Sometimes there is a Void*, was published in 2011. The time perspective of these texts seems to contradict the notion that ideas in the non-fictional, philosophical, and autobiographical texts have a bearing on the fictional texts to be discussed in this chapter.

However, Mda's approach to literature and his character preferences are traceable partly to the interviews with different interviewers, which pre-date the texts. For instance, an interview with Myles Holloway in 1987 reflects his inclination regarding social aspects of his art and literary work (Holloway 1988:83). In another interview with Nokuthula Mazibuko in 2002, he outlined and motivated his exploration of the African renaissance theme, and the type of characters he deploys for this theme, that is, ordinary people on the margins of societal power structures, most of whom are African village women (Mazibuko, 2009:116). Although Zakes Mda is an enthusiast about place and landscape in his narrative writings, as will be demonstrated in the forthcoming sections, he is also an ardent supporter of the African renaissance, as propagated by the former South African President, Thabo Mbeki (Mbeki 1998:31), as well as the concept of "Vukuzenzele", which means, "wake up and do it for yourself". He further emphasises the view that, contrary to the popular belief that change and development are led by the enlightened, educated, upper and middle-class people in the society, ordinary, marginalised, as well as lower-class people also have enormous potential to bring about change in society, and those who take the initiative in this regard succeed significantly. This is often not about having money and material possessions, but about positive thinking and initiative. These are the qualities required of a person with transformative abilities. Mda's protagonists are primarily down-to-earth people, where the renaissance he writes about is located within a discourse of love that acknowledges the spirit's needs and privileges, and where freedom of the spirit is rooted in art and creativity that anyone can access. Following his embrace of the African renaissance, it is not surprising that his main characters are ordinary people in remote places that nevertheless tend to have potential to grow due to their beautiful, agriculturally friendly environment.

5.3. ZAKES MDA'S APPROACH TO LITERATURE AS REFLECTED IN *JUSTIFY THE ENEMY* (2018) AND *SOMETIMES THERE IS A VOID* (2011)

The significance and centrality of the novel in Mda's writing career are evident in the fact that, ever since he embarked on this genre, he didn't dwell on the past, and has also personally justified this choice or development in some of his writings and

interviews. Essential to the social relevance of his writing is place and character (Holloway, 1988:83). Place, in his literature, is not just background for a cast of players, characters or even setting. He indicates in some interviews that his writing mainly emerges from his interaction with the place. This is the "pedestal" on which his characters are developed and interwoven with the story. Jacobs (2018:6) draws similarities between Mda and writers like Thomas Mofolo (author of *Chaka*, *Moeti oa bachabela* and *Pitseng*), J.J Machobane (author of *Mahaheng a Matsó*), and Sebolai Matlosa of *Mopheme*, all of whose writings bear sensory details of place. These writers regard such a "setting" as not just a place for action, but as a "mirror" of their characters' world and source of rich imagery (Jacobs 2018:6).

The significance of the environmental cannot be overemphasised, and Mda singles out the natural landscape as of paramount importance in his construction of both narrative and characters. Jacobs (2018:2) refers to Mda's interview with Zoë Wicomb in 2014, where he explains that landscape determines his characters' emotional and spiritual development, which in turn reflect their sense of identity. The link between the characters and the environment does not create a complete "picture" for Mda's narratives. His novels often track the historical past of the area and the inhabitants featuring successive generations. According to the African way of living, communities of the present owe their being from those of the past, hence the significance of ancestors (or past generations). He points to this connection in the article about the launch of *The Sculptors of Mapungubwe* in 2013. He indicates here that one of his aims in his novels is to demonstrate that the past has a strong presence in people's everyday living or existence. He sees the past as part creation of the present, reflected in most narratives, including oral tradition, from which his narrative writing skills were nurtured. The approach in such narratives often involves looking back on the past and reshaping it to reflect the present.

This was partially demonstrated in the analysis of *She plays with the darkness* (1995b) and *The Heart of Redness* (2000) in chapters Three and Four, respectively. In the former novel, the author uses art as the focal point to connect with the past. Dikosha's

fascination with “ditema” patterns on the villagers’ walls find its utmost expression in the Barwa caves, a “stone’s throw” from the ha-Samane Village. This home of the former inhabitants, Barwa, whose generations occupied the place for centuries before they were displaced by their conquerors that include Basotho and other nationalities, is used by Mda to introduce and sustain Dikosha’s narrative (Mda 1995b:16). He, in this instance, utilises the landscape as memory repository and the crucial “domain perdu”. Jacobs (2018:4) defines this element as that deep myth that often drives the artist to delve into the lost domains of childhood, a world of sensual beauty and visual pleasures, to boost his artistic endeavours, empowering him/her to create appealing sensory prose or art.

The time perspective of the second novel mentioned above, *The Heart of Redness* (2000), renders it a post-apartheid South African novel and a post-colonial text. This two-time level novel is initially set in the mid-nineteenth century, amid the invasion of the “Xhosa land” by the British, the present-day Eastern Cape. The conquering and defeat of the Xhosa in the political, physical, and psychological war led to total colonisation of the land by the western country. The contemporary time perspective of the 1990s is depicted through the new form of invasion of Qolorha-by-Sea, with the imposition of a casino, thinly disguised as a job creation venture. However, according to local perception, this would intensify the local economy's precarity, and squeeze the people of Qolorha into worse poverty and degradation.

Landscape, physical, and social contexts are critical determinants in Mda’s writing and characterisation, as he demonstrates in his book, *Sometimes there is a Void* (2011), which opens with the words:

> The smell of life is back on the pink mountain. Human life, that is, for often forms have always thrived here even after we had left. Before our return shrubs and bushes flourished, but their fused aromas highlighted an absence (Mda 2011:1).

This reflects the value he attaches to this piece of land, the people, and the implicitly rich narrative of the former inhabitants. He describes the “Pink Mountain”, whose original and real name is “Dyarhom” Mountain, and human life that adds a sparkle to

this living landscape. He reflects on the place's natural beauty as worth writing about and assesses how the custodians (the people to whom it belonged) made use of and developed it. The different species of aloes that bloom in Spring, into different colours (from whence the pinkness emanates), and are central to the beauty and the productive capacity of the place, for example, the production of honey he deals with later in the book. Reviewing the ruins of his grandfather's estate that only a few decades prior had sprawled throughout the mountainside, brings about feelings of nostalgia, as he recalls childhood memories of the place, and particularly the landscape that had contributed to shaping people's lives, as well as the people who had worked tirelessly in reshaping their environment. This is indicated in the statement: "I call them ruins, through nothing is left of the buildings. The stones have long since become part of the landscape" (Mda 2011:2). This can invoke a feeling of déjà vu, making it easy for the reader to connect the past with the present. The memories also induce some proleptic imagination of how the place would look like in future, considering human activity and development, like the bee project (Mda 2011:1).

The significance of landscape for Mda's narratives and characters is also demonstrated in Jacob's (2018:14) reference to Cedric Nunn's photographic record of Eastern Cape landscapes in *Unsettled*, *One hundred years war of resistance by Xhosas against the Boer and British* (2015). In the introduction to this publication, Mda elaborates on his philosophical view of the landscape as a receptable of memory:

> Embedded in these rocks, these dongas, these trees, these hills, these rivers, these valleys, these ruins, these monuments, these cities, these cairns, are generations of narratives that continue to haunt the present. Behind each image […] lurks tales of heroism and villainy, of romance and betrayal (Mda 2015, quoted in Jacobs 2018: 4).

As headman of Qoboshane Village, which sprawled through the Dyarhom mountainside, Charles Gxumekelana Zenzile Mda (Zakes Mda's grandfather) worked hard in developing the landscape in the area, including planting vast orchards and vineyards (Mda 2011:2, 5). This led to other families building their homesteads on the mountain, a sort of an elite settlement named "Good well". People's admiration of his

hard work is reflected in their wonderment and awe of how he had turned the rocky mountain into a “Garden of Eden”.

5.4 CHARACTER REPRESENTATION, SOCIO – POLITICAL AND PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT IN *BLACK DIAMOND* (2009) AND *LITTLE SUNS* (2015)

This section will focus on the crucial role characters of the two novels concerning their dealings with the socio-political and physical environment. It will pay close attention to Mda’s association of characters with a place, environment, and being embedded in the memories contained in the landscape (Mda 2018:2). The theoretical base determining environmental factors of characters’ emotional and spiritual development and their consequent sense of identity will be explored in the context of deeper meaning pertaining to the two texts. Precise attention will be paid to Mda’s critique of the Black Empowerment policy, materialism, and “empowered” Blacks’ penchant for material things in the novel *Black Diamond* (2009). This will include his critique of the concept, and how its abuse contradicts African Humanism. Pristine landscape of the 19th century on the wild coast of the Eastern Cape in *Little Suns* (2015) will also be analysed through the socio-political discourse in the novel.

5.4.1 CONTEXT AND CHARACTER BACKGROUND IN THE TWO NOVELS

In this novel, Mda explores social stereotypes that embellish and exaggerate sociocultural differences between racial and ethnic groups in South Africa. This is clear from the beginning of the novel, with the introduction of one of the main characters, Kristin Uys. She is here presented through the clothing that categorises her socially, racially and geographically. This is reflected in the narrator’s description of her, as indicated below:

> No one will blame you if you think Kristin Uys is dressed for a funeral. Not the black folks’ kind of funeral where women give the dead a glorious send off in the same Versaces, Sun Goddesses and Givenchys that are a staple at such horseracing events as the Durban July Handicap or the J & B Met. Not the joyful events where the living crack jokes about the dead, and get sloshed and dance to loud music at

> those marathon parties known as “after tears”. But the sad and sombre affairs that pass for funerals in white communities (Mda, 2009:1).

The black court regalia and her outfit are a point of reference in this differentiation. Her sad and sombre outlook, coupled with the solemnity of her magistrate’s job, require this dark coloured clothing, which is associated with a funeral elsewhere. However, the narrator specifies here that this is a reference to the type of funeral common in Kristin’s “world” as a white person, leading to the contrast implied with the description of a black kind of a funeral.

A secondary contrast emerges as the narrator goes on with the description of blacks’ behavioural attitudes in funerals. The behaviour described above applies more to urban, affluent black people, who are casual and regard funerals as merely any other event. Here, they take the opportunity to display their wealth through material possessions like the kind of expensive clothing described above, big imported cars, and highly-priced liqueurs that they guzzle in the “after tears” marathon parties after funerals. Such disorderly behaviour is alien to those blacks that stay in rural areas, who are relatively poor and meek.

Although women are the showiest when it comes to clothing, especially at a glamourous events as referred to by the author (Mda 2009:1), a generation of black men, mostly those that personally benefitted from state transformative programmes like Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) in South Africa post-1994, also tend to feel “bloated” with money, to the extent of self-indulgence and flaunting their sudden or instant wealth. These men and women are known as “Black Diamonds” in popular parlance. They are represented in the novel by Molotov Mbungane, who earned the name “Comrade Capitalist” from his former comrades, with whom he had been a freedom fighter in apartheid times (Mda, 2009:8). Partly contributing to this stereotype is Don Mateza, who, although he had been a leading commander in the trenches, fighting for freedom during the “struggle” against apartheid, but gets overlooked when it comes to BEE

deals, and who annoys and frustrates Tumi, his girlfriend. Being a former model and now a prosperous businesswoman, she is determined to support and develop him to become a “Black Diamond”, whatever it takes. Such an obsession leads to abuse of the concept, as reflected through Molotov Mbungane (Mda 2009:8-9). Mda challenges this through Don’s resistance, promoting humane and honest ways of development.

Little Suns (2015) is a historical novel that weaves historical events about the colonial domination of black tribes in Cape Colony. It mainly deals with the events that led to the assassination of Hamilton Hope, a British magistrate that played a critical role in the governing of the Colony in the 19th century (Mda 2015:162). This is narrated alongside Malangana’s fictional love story.

The novel starts with the introduction of Malangana, the character who plays a prominent role of an interpreter for King Mhlontlo. This is in addition to his role as the king’s aide and councillor. In family lineage, he is a half-brother to the king from the “iQadi” house; his mother was Matiwane’s junior house, and therefore fits well to provide a support structure for Mhlontlo. In 1903, the lame and frail Malangana came back to the country, searching for his beloved girlfriend that he left 20 years ago, when he, together with the king (and a large number of ama-Mpondomise), had to flee to Basotholand after the assassination of the Magistrate. According to Her Majesty’s Government, this was a heinous crime, and all involved, especially the King, as head of the tribe that committed the offence, had to be brought to book. Therefore, the only option for the King and his subjects was to flee to the nearest country. He was lured back into the country twenty years later and then incarcerated (Mda 2015:247). Then Malangana traced back their footsteps. Alongside Malangana and Mthwakazi’s love story, Mda traces back to the 19th-century history of the Cape Colony under British rule, conflicts that led to Hope’s murder and its aftermath.

The study will focus on the systemic undermining of African cultures and traditions by the colonial power, adverse effects for both sides, and implications for African humanism. For instance, when there is death in the family, Africans undergo moaning

for a specified time. This happens to Mhlontlo, the King of amaMpondomise, a title which Hope is determined to 'stamp out' amongst the natives. According to him and his administration, there could be only one sovereign, Her Majesty Queen Victoria. Natives could never be kings or queens; they could at best be paramount chiefs if they had – like Mhlontlo, had other chiefs owing allegiance to them (Mda 2015:49). Hope instructs that Mhlontlo leads his men to a war that the former declared against another African Chief Magwayi of Matatiele, for refusing to pay taxes (Mda 2015:59). When Mhlontlo declines this and delegates this task to his uncle Gxumisa, due to him mourning the death of his senior wife, Hope objects, and emphasises that Mhlontlo ought to follow his instruction, where the "British Empire could not be kept waiting on account of heathen customs" (Mda 2015:120). Mhlontlo does not just suffer the humiliation of being stripped of his rightful title. His traditional African rites are undermined when Hope dismisses his mourning rites as superstition. This corroborates Biko's notion of the superior culture's contempt towards indigenous cultures (Biko 1978:45). The fallout between the two leads to Hope's assassination and upheaval of his magistracy due to the familiar feeling of humiliation amongst Mhlontlo's subjects about the denigration of their culture and undermining African humanism.

5.4.2 PLACE AND LANDSCAPE IN ZAKES MDA'S LITERARY WORKS

Mda (2018:41) accentuates the role played by the landscape in his writing. He, in this context, does not put emphasis on the theme or the context of the subject matter underpinning the narrative he writes at a particular point in time. Seminal to his thought process regarding the intended narrative would be the landscape, where his concern for the authenticity of his fiction centres on historicity and place. Bell and Jacobs (2009:6) elaborate on Mda's "place" as his narrative nucleus. They refer to his specific response to an interview about his work. He accordingly regards "place" as not just a setting or background for his cast of characters. The centrality of this feature is such that his novels are conceived through an "intercourse" with a "place". For instance, *The Heart of Redness* (2000) was born from two merged seedlings. First was Mda's fascination with the place, and second his interest and curiosity with Nongqawuse's legend. Qolorha-by-

Sea is a small, picturesque seaside hamlet with vast, raging recreation facilities and business opportunities. It is nestled against a wild coast that is raw, wild, and sprawling. The surrounding villages rest on endless rolling hills that tumble to the wild ocean waters below, with a strong base from the equally breath-taking beaches. The lagoon that is sometimes referred to as “Nongqawuse’s Pool” is ideal for swimming, fishing and harvesting of “lmbaza” and “lmbatyisa” (mussels and oysters) that Qukezwa, in the novel, teaches Camagu about (Mda 200:116). From reading this novel, it emerges clearly that although Mda’s other focus is on the historical past of the area, which he explores from Nongqawuse’s legend, his first and key attraction is the landscape. In Jacobs (2018:72), he indicates that he sees a place (with its landscape) first and decides that it is so beautiful or so ugly that it deserves a write up in the form of a novel. For instance, Mda describes the place and landscape that form the background to *Black Diamond* (2009), which includes Soweto, North Riding, and Welteverden Park. This includes much more for *Little Suns*: the town – Qumbu, Sulenkama, Tsolo, Maclear, Chevy Chase, Matatiele, rivers – Gqukunqa iTsitsa, Tina, uMzimvubu, the escarpment and the majestic Drakensberg mountains. The novels feature pristine, natural landscapes and include architectural designs of physical structures and buildings embedded within a socio-political discourse and affected by human communities. This is elaborated on in the analysis below. It leads him to what sort of characters would live in such a place and memories associated with past generations that contributed to shaping the landscape.

The literary landscape vision outlined above that characterises Zakes Mda’s approach to his writings is analogous to Loflin’s (1998:1) literary landscape descriptions in her book, *African Horizons - The landscapes of African Fiction*. She sees the landscape as providing the geographic, cultural, political, and social boundaries of the text, including the spaces within which a text signifies. For instance, the antecedents and contemporary references creating specific intertextual matrices around the texts (Loflin’s (1998:4). The application of the term ‘landscape’ includes the so-called natural landscapes, which are always embedded within a social discourse, but also those which

are affected by the human communities which build and sustain them, “the landscape of rural life, villages and cities”. This is the view shared by Mda in his book, *Sometimes there is a void – Memoirs of an Outsider*, with particular reference to how his grandfather “turned the rocky mountain into a garden of Eden” (Mda 2011:5). This concept is dealt with in the detailed analysis of the novels in the forthcoming sections.

5.4.2.1 PLACE – LANDSCAPE FOCUS IN BLACK DIAMOND (2009)

Black Diamond (2009) is set around three key places, namely, Weltevreden Park, where Kristin Uys’s house is located, Don and Tumi’s Three Oaks townhouse in North Riding, and their parents’ homes in Soweto.

Although the places above are significant, as places abode for the main characters, their description is not as detailed as the third. Mda (2009:5) describes Kristin Uys’s residence as an average suburban house that in the past blended well into white middle-class suburban standards, but which in the present reflects signs of neglect and dilapidation. The narrator expands the description to the suburb itself, Weltevreden Park He observes that the place, which translates to well-satisfied, is known to have been a paradise for the Afrikaner white-collar workers in the good old days of apartheid before it was “invaded” by (or bequeathed to) black professional class residents, middle management apparatchiks or large corporations and chief executives of smaller corporations (Fincham 2011:148). Therefore, it is “now” completely non-racial, although this is not easily noticeable due to high-security walls around the houses, the feature that is not part of black townships, but which one finds in formerly white suburbs that have become non-racial. The narrator also notes that the only visible signal of the Afrikaner past is the street names that still selectively glorify Afrikaner illuminates, like the former and now deceased presidents and prime ministers that include Fouché, Vorster, and Strydom (Mda 2009:5).

Loflin (1998:4) also argues for recognising the significance of interior domestic landscapes, especially for female characters. In this regard, the narrator reveals that the interior of Kristin’s townhouse lacks unique distinguishing features such as paintings

and other decorative objects (Fincham 2011:149). The lounge is filled with old furniture, complemented by papers, files, and other items strewn untidily on the couches, the floor, and the coffee table. The narrator points to the stark décor differences between her lounge and her bedroom, in an apparent hint about her personality demeanours. The latter is much more personally decorated and cosy than the living room (Mda 2009:6). The narrator shares private information to foreground the differences between the two personal spaces, and how these relate to her personality and dealings with the external world. The predominant white lace complements the garish pink and black décor on curtains, lampshade, and the dressing table. The delicate frilly nighty she wears in the bedroom contrasts with the tough exterior character of the courtroom. The fact that we catch her reading a book on "The happy hooker" in the private realm contradicts her determination to stamp out prostitution and pimping in Roodepoort, and possibly countrywide. Later in the novel, this is revealed as the effect of challenges in her relationship with her ex-husband. The latter loved hookers for their appearance and sex appeal, and demanded his wife fulfil such desires. As indicated earlier in this chapter, Loflin regards interior descriptions as a continuum of the fictional landscape embedded on social, political, economic, and religious platforms. In this regard, she cites Matshoba in his short story "A Son of the First Generation" in *Call Me not a Man* (Matshoba 1979: 74):

> "Mind the wall girls", the general manager warned from behind an acre of gleaming mahogany with gilded ballpens jutting out of a cobalt blue stand, scarlet and cream-white telephones and a brown leather table mat on top. The off-white walls of the spacious room would embarrass a fly, and the ankle-deep ocean-green carpet appeared not to have been made with a view to being trodden under foot (quoted in Loflin 1998: 74).

A glance at this description gives the impression that the office materials referred to are not meant for the usual human usage, but instead to intimidate and repel the girls. This space is not designed to mark their presence, and the carpet not provided for anyone to walk on. The luxurious space is reserved for a particular class of people. The space in Kristin's house is similarly reserved or secluded, perhaps for a different reason; hence, Don is initially not welcomed.

In line with Tumi's concept of Black Diamond, and her determination to support her fiancé to attain that status, the couple stays in one of the affluent suburbs mainly occupied by the black middle class and entrepreneurs that have newly attained their riches mainly through the government's Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment policy (BBBEE). The suburb North Riding developed rapidly after 1996, in both residential and business sectors. In the not so distant past, the area was prominent in horse riding and a stable stronghold, which has since shifted to Kyalami and Honeydew.

Although the narrator is not explicit on the exact location of the Three Oaks townhouse complex, a visit to North Riding reveals a luxurious complex at the foot of the majestic Magaliesberg Mountains, with tranquil scenery overlooking the Hartbeespoort area. The inside of their apartment, especially the living room, reflects extravagance and expensive households acquired through the "new money". Wall sgraffito by an accomplished artist, as well as charcoals and acrylics of township art reflect Tumi's expensive "taste", and her identification with high standards as well as her "drive" to have Don attain Black Diamond status. Although the townhouse lacks distinguishing features, according to Fincham (2011:149), she pushes for higher standards and tries to inculcate a mantra of "positive thinking" on Don for higher success.

The Orlando West township in Soweto is viewed by Fincham (2011:149) as the novels "heart". The main characters, Tumi and Don, were born and bred here. This is one of the areas in South Africa, which, during apartheid, was used as a black labour reserve, that is, accommodated blacks in a place where they were neither too close nor very far from the city, and industrial areas in order to avail labour (mostly low-skilled) for the benefit of industrialists most of whom were white.

The lifestyle in Soweto, reflected through the main characters, resemble that of Pretoria and its then townships, Marabastad and Lady Selbourne, as noted by Mda (2009:25-26). The latter was created as a consequence of Marabastad's removal. Similar to the way Soweto developed from its origins in Sophiatown, Marabastad was originally a diverse community, first under the local Ndebele Chief Maraba in the early 1800s. It was called Maraba's village and then later under the Transvaal "Boer Republic in the late

1800s". During the second Anglo Boer War, many Africans streamed into Pretoria and lived in squatter camps. The increasing number of migrants in the area resulted in developing a new Marabastad in the area between the original Marabastad and the Asiatic Bazar, led by the British military authorities. The settlement was characterised by a cosmopolitan, non-segregated population that included Africans, Asians and coloured people. When Marabastad was moved, the residents became separated along racial lines. Blacks were relocated to Lady Selborne (and Atteridgeville), the coloured people to Eersterus, and Indians to Laudium (Mphahlele (1959:157-158).

Orlando West and its environs are the epicentres of Black economic (and political) development. This is where Don and Tumi frequently come for nostalgic. Soweto was established from the forced removals of the former residents of Sophiatown in the 1950s. The initially mixed population was moved to racially segregated areas, that is, coloured people to Eldorado Park, the Indian Community to Lenasia, and Black people to Soweto. This was preceded by a voluntary move of white residents to areas like Vrededorp, Brixton, and Mayfair (Callinicos, 1987:180).

The two Soweto aborigines' nostalgic attraction and the "magic" they derive in their home environment is rooted in the past. Part of this is due to their school days, when they would meet at the Mokgetla supermarket for *amagwinya* (*vetkoek*) often served with snoek or French polony, Russian sausages and potato chips. Being the only child of the staff nurse Mateza, Don always had lunch money to buy these "delicacies" that he shared with the then-awkward "forward" girl from Mooki Street (Mda 2009:23-24). The other nostalgic focus is the young, shapely image of Tumi that often appeared in Drum, Bona and other magazines and billboards. The *modlara* image remains a good impression in the minds of young, growing Sowetans, who react with frenzied excitement when they see her in the same place with them, and also knowing that her home is in the same street or township as theirs (Mda 2009:22).

Consistent with his narrative style, he introduces the novels "heart" Soweto with a detailed landscape and architecture description. He notes that whilst there is a noticeable change over the years on the architecture of houses in Soweto, nothing

much has changed in Tumi's home, where the couple goes home to when visiting Soweto:

> Except for a blue owning over the "stoep" and the fence of concrete slabs known as "stop nonsense" the red brick four roomed house has not changed from the time Tumi was a little girl. Most of the houses in the neighbourhood look different (Mda 2009:25).

The difference in the houses in various parts of the township is attributed to the people's efforts in improving their lives. The narrator notes that most homeowners in the vicinity have extended their houses from the past "match-box" design to the different shapes and sizes, some of which resemble suburban mansions. Those whose elaborate structures seem to be only hindered by the small sizes of township sites, whose modelling and design was "born" out of the apartheid spatial planning and "separate amenities" legislation. The developments include multi-coloured tiled roofs, instead of corrugated iron sheets or asbestos of the past. A few top it up by high brick walls of the suburb types (Mda 2009:25). The architecture of the houses at one level indicates the people's lifestyle, age, or wealth. Fincham (2011:150) confirms this by referencing an article titled "millionaires in the ghetto South Africa's upwardly mobile townships", an inflight magazine, in one of his flights to OR Tambo airport. Although the article by Joost Bos and Allard de Witte focuses on the successes of a 31-year-old Sibusiso Nkosi, who develops into a black diamond. It starts by sketching South African townships under-development, which includes poverty and violence. It then points to the fast turnaround of Soweto development reflected in the decreasing number of shacks and the new generation of rich black South Africans who build mansions in the township. The article expands this view to a black middle and upper class *nouveau riche* who are rapidly emerging in the new South Africa. Most of these black diamonds prove their newly found status through owning big houses in Johannesburg's wealthier suburbs. However, this view is expressed with some caveat that not all migrate to the suburbs, but some continue staying in the townships, which they regard as more sociable, more people-friendly and with caring neighbourhood (Fincham 2011:151).

Despite their iconic status and deep pockets, some celebrities regarded the dusty township as their lovely home, which they will never part with, as this interview response from Sipho Mabuse indicates:

> Despite the dust, I'd far rather live here than in a boring suburb of Johannesburg. Soweto is where we all started out together… we were all oppressed and none of us had money. The house where I grew up had one bedroom. My father and mother slept there. I slept with my three brothers under the dining table in the living room. The past binds the people of Soweto, whether they are rich or poor now (quoted in Fincham 2011:151).

The township's struggle history reflected in memorials and monuments includes the Hector Peterson and Kliptown museums and memorials and Tutu and Mandela houses. The latter are complemented by Vilakazi Street, famous for being the only street in the world that has ever produced two Nobel Prize winners (Mda 2009: 30). These, together with the vibrant township life (rubbing shoulders with the luminaries and international tourists at the struggle memorials, restaurants and taverns, traditional food (ting, tripe, dumplings and *amagwinya*) (Mda 2009:28), soccer and homeliness, keep the Sowetan "die-hards" coming back to Soweto. One other nostalgic attraction is the jazz culture, from the lines of Malombo Jazzman, followed by Morolong, Victor Ndlazilwana, the Jazz Ministers, Jazz Epistles, Hugh Masekela, and Abdullah Ibrahim. More impressive for Don was his father in law's frequent visits to Lady Selbourne, the Jazz capital of South Africa in those days, and to come back to Soweto boasting of its jazz sophistication (Mda 2009:27). Mda's use of Soweto as the novel's "heart" (Fincham 2011:149) is consistent with the concept of Black Diamond, which is the by-product of the BEE policy, which is the central theme he explores in the narrative.

5.4.2.2. PLACE - LANDSCAPE FOCUS IN *LITTLE SUNS* (2015)

Contrary to the perception of some western critics, who view the African novel or narrative as an immature version of European literature, devoid of pure landscape descriptions that include geographic, cultural, political, and social dimensions, Loflin (1998:2-3) asserts that African writing features significant landscape portrayals.

However, they are often judged in double standards by the West. For instance, if African writers described the landscape in detail, they are seen to be indulging in “local colour”, but if they did not, they failed to produce quality according to western standards, and authentic landscape could not be found in African fiction. The critics further expect descriptions of Africa that continue the European representation of Africa as the so-called dark continent. This is clearly reflected by writers that include William Burchell, David Livingstone, and Mary Kingsly (as elaborated below), on their respective missionary travels in the interior of Southern Africa and in West Africa, where their descriptions of African landscape reflect stark differences from the European landscape. They accentuate the isolation of their European sensibilities within an almost inhuman landscape, exotic, and unmistakably other (Loflin 1998:2). The place and landscape were primarily isolated from human communities and social discourse in Burchell’s writings, where they described the inhabitants as wandering, nomadic, and primitive (Burchell 1824:517). According to this description, the inhabitants would never be affected or moulded by the environment, and conversely, would not effectively contribute to the development and shaping of the landscape around them. This notion is challenged by Zakes Mda in his narrative writings, as reflected in the analysis of two texts *Black Diamond* (2009) and *Little Suns* (2015). The latter opens up with the frail Malangana, “hobbling on twisted crutches’’ (Mda 2015:7) down the escapement among the rocks and shrubs, on an epic journey and quest for his lover, Mthwakazi, that he was separated from when he went to exile 23 years ago. The terrain features the southern Drakensberg, locally known as *ukhahlamba*, which forms a ‘divide’ between KwaZulu-Natal Province and Lesotho. The majestic range also has the name *dithaba tsa Maloti*’’ in seSotho, and *iintaba zo uLundi* referring in isiXhosa to the part forming the border between Lesotho and Eastern Cape. This part stretches over 1000 kilometres, depending on which direction one takes, which is either (travelling from Lesotho), via Tele bridge through Sterkspruit, or KwaZulu-Natal through the Southern Drakensberg, or Qacha’s Nek through Matatiele.

The journey is long and seems endless, as searching or looking for a particular person in Qumbu and surrounding villages (with no traceable leads) is like searching for a

needle in a haystack. However, this does not deter him from striving to achieve his goal. His “long walk” takes him to several “little” destinations that do not seem to have any positive finality but enchant him to an ever pleasant and attractive landscape. His supposed first destination is a mission station as he casts his eyes across the valley, a stream and up the hill, where he sees a whitewashed building and smoke billowing from the educated people’s houses surrounding the mission campus (Mda 2015:8). Loflin’s (1998:4) concept of landscape is not limited to pristine, natural landforms and topography, but also explores how these and other manmade structures are embedded within a social discourse. This is in addition to the human condition in which these forms/structures are built and sustained.

Mda’s (2015:8) description of the physical formation around the mission campus attests to social “engineering” embedded in physical structuring. The surrounding campus with the educated people’s houses (comprised of tin-roofed, four-walled houses known as *amaxande*) (Mda 2015:13) deliberately and strategically forms a buffer between the missionaries and the “Red people”, that is, the “hordes who are apt to cut a white man’s throat without any provocation” (Mda 2015:8). This fear and the “need” for protection of the missionaries, the issuing of a decree by a senior, regional magistrate that only natives who conform to the rules of the mission and who do not practice immoral, heathenish customs could be granted land near the mission centres. The order resulted in the educated government officials and business people’s houses forming larger-style settlements with their houses, gardens, and kraals around the mission centres (Mda 2015:8).

It is not until he is picked up by one woman of the “amakhumsha” (the educated group of people) who persuades him to agree to her lift offer on her mule that he realises that his real first destination is the home that the woman shares with her husband and children. Darkness falls, as they cross the river that the women feared Malangana would be stranded on. She insists on giving her a lift, but to Malangana, this is just a stream, as he is used to crossing vast rivers, like the *Senqu* or the *iGqili* (that was renamed to Orange River by the colonialists) and Telle in the Northern side of

Sterkspruit. They ultimately enter the village under stars and moonlight (Mda 2015:11). This act of assisting Malangana in time of need is consistent with Mda's assigning significant roles to women characters, in line with his renaissance approach (as referred to in Chapter 3, section 3.5 of this study). His use of landscape in this instance brings back to Malanga both good and bad memories. In the first place, it brings to mind the majestic rivers mentioned above. Secondly, although Malanga's hosts are good and "nice" to him, the fact that they are amaMfengu reminds him of the role this group of people played in Mhlontho's defeat at the battle of iTsitsa Gorge (Mda 2015:13). He even confirms in his mind that they are of the amaKhumsha (educated people, most of whom were amaMfengu, through the type of house in which they live, that is, "*ixande*" the four-walled tin-roofed house (Mda 2015:11). He does not like them for the role they played in Mhlontho's downfall.

The Tsitsa Gorge and Tsitsa River are prominent land features in Malangana's memory of Mhlontho's great place, his role in it, and his relationship with Mthwakazi. This gorge is a beautiful terrain with natural mountains and surrounding cliffs, with the river running through the gorge. The river is adorned by the Tsitsa Falls in the upper river course amidst this nature's rendezvous area. It further bends and flows southwards to the eastern side of Maclear, and finally empties into the uMzimvubu River after passing through deep river gorges about 36 km Southeast of Qumbu. When the King of amaMpondomise arrives in Maclear, the narrator speaks about the condition of the horses. They look fresh and energetic, despite the hilly terrain, and having spent two days on the road. This is due to freshwater streams and the greenery of the mountainous landscape on their way, as they rested at each stream, so that the beasts could drink and graze, whilst they nibble on their "*iinkobe* and sun dried beef" provision (Mda 2015:48). The Tsitsa River is a significant landscape feature in the novel, with several activities taking place near or around it. For instance, when Mhlontlo's wife dies, her passing away is signalled "through wails and sounds that are echoed by the hills, cliffs and the caves across the streams throughout Qumbu and across iTsitsa river to Tsolo" (Mda 2015:75).

The gorge and the pristine landscape portrayed above is presented along with Malangana's role as Gcazimbane's (Mhlontlo's horse) groomer and his romantic relationship with Mthwakazi. The gorge was the favourable grazing place for the horse. He would often, without notice, take-off at full gallop, neighing and swishing his tail from side to side, disappear in the side of the gorge. He would then play "hide and seek" with his groom, as Malangana would struggle to get him from the vast gorge with giant boulders. This being the rebuke for Malangana through the king's annoyance, when he needed the horse does not stop the practice. Gcazimbane would only whine back to his groom's whistle when he reckoned that it was time to be found (Mda 2015:20). He enjoyed grazing in the perennially green valleys of the gorge.

Mhlontho, accompanied by his royal council members, Gxumisa and Malangana, rides through the pristine landscape of steep hills, mountains and rivers, from Sulenkama to Maclear, to attend the *imbizo* convened by the three magistrates; Welsh, Hope and Thompson, from Tsolo, Qumbu and Maclear, respectively. The good nature of the land is proof that the horses still looks fresh after almost two days on the hilly terrain. The delegation rested at each stream they crossed so that the beasts could drink and graze, whilst they nibbled on the provision in their rock-rabbit skin bags (Mda 2015:48-49).

The river and bushes below the gorge became a favourable place for Malangana and the love of his life for a tryst in the serene beauty of Mother Nature. They would meet at the confluence of the Sulenkana and Ngqukunqa rivers, with Gcazimbane grazing at a short distance. The natural tranquillity and seductive breeze from rivers would stimulate sensual motion within their bodies, which at one time leads to the best intercrural pleasure Malangana had ever had (Mda, 2015:146). This results in a sense of inner conflict. One is the "urge to take the whole thing with him, the whole organ, the whole person and the whole experience with him to his ''*egumbini*'' (sleeping quarters). The other realises that they had broken the law is that his culture requires that he takes her to his home and place her behind the door, whilst his family sends a delegation to report the matter to the maidens' family. The latter would then determine appropriate penalties

and, as this also indicates the man's request for the maidens' hand in marriages and both families' blessings, proper negotiations for marriage would ensue (Mda 2015:147).

In contemplating the sin that they just committed, and whilst taking comfort and inspiration in the beauty of nature and landscape around them, Malangana and Mthwakazi start deliberating about the possibility of marriage. This brings them even closer to one another. They sit silently on the river banks, the water splashing their feet as it rushes on its long journey down the Gqukunga River to join the Itsitsa, which itself meandered through valleys and mountains on its way to join Tina. The latter connects to the great uMzimvubu River, which, in a relay-style, takes up the "raise and roars" for further countless miles until it spews into the "great ocean" (Mda 2015:149).

However, this picture-perfect scenario is interrupted by their different views on the subject, which Malangana sees to be the result of the different worlds they come from, with different customs. She accentuates that the aBathwa are not homogeneous groups of people and have different customs and traditions. They have diverse languages, pray to different spirits, and espouse different values. The Abathwa's courtship style is also different from amaMpondomise's as she explains, "Among my people we marry first and woo later" (Mda 2015:148). His understanding and interpretation of this emphasis on the differences and rejection of his marriage proposal make him desperate. Such differences between individuals represent a broader perspective of ethnic and national dichotomies and territoriality. Loflin (1998:8) argues that this emanates from the fact that African nations found themselves within boundaries drawn up by European powers, reflecting something inherently artificial about the landscape of nationalism in Africa. In her study on people and national boundaries, she observes that a nation should not be defined in terms of a particular territory that had been historically acquired through dynastic alliance or conquest, despite people's claim to particular ancient roots. It can be deduced from her argument that ethnicity and nationality are geographical and imply temporal spaces. The political unity of a nation is sometimes subject to a continual displacement of its irredeemably plural modern space bounded by different and sometimes hostile nations. This signifies archaic and mythical space, paradoxically

translating to the nations' eventual territoriality, in a patriotic and atavistic temporality of traditionalism (Bhabha 1990:300). Malangana and Mthwakazi's romantic and culturally antagonistic relation reflects Homi Bhabha's ideas on the territoriality and temporality of space, as indicated above. Although the two are madly in love (and even have a sexual relationship), their cultural differences prohibit them from getting married until other socio-political circumstances separate them permanently. The notion of temporal spaces for the different racial and ethnic groups has significant implications for people's displacement, especially indigenous groups. The aBathwa is a case-in-point in Mda's writings, with the malicious reference to them as "*iinzalwamhlaba*" or "autochthon" in *Little Suns* (2015), implying a lack or non-existence of a physical space to which they claim to belong. This despite the high regard Mda has for this group of people. They feature strongly in the amaMpondomise Royal genealogy, whence the praise "Thole loMthwakazi" emanates (Mda 2015:51). They are also reputed to be the best trackers in the world. They are able to see the trail, where no one else can. Even on the grass or on the most luxuriant foliage, dead leaves or rocky terrain, they can see footprint as if they were left on soft, wet sand (Mda 2015:25). In addition to giving the Xam Branch of abaThwa the accolade of inventing the sun (Mda 2015:25), he acknowledges them as good painters, referred to in Chapter 3, section 3.2.2 study, where their cave paintings of animals and people are discussed and analysed.

The duo's intimate moment at the conflux of the Gqukunqa and Itsitsa Rivers and courtship chart is "crowned" by their common imaginative attachment to nature and the sprawling landscape, and from where they are, to as far as their eyes can see. Mda (2015:150) vividly describes their gaze on the distant North-East mountains, which look like "blotch of black mountains by night", but the daytime view reflects green rolling hills, according to the narrator. Having arrived in full daylight, they spend the whole night. They looked again at the stars that "touched the mountain top, before they spread to the rest of the heavens" and think:

> We can reach the stars… if we walk that way. If we walk and walk, and walk, and walk right to the top of that mountain. Yes, we can touch the stars on

> top of that mountain… some are partially sitting on it. We can climb from star to star. We can live in the stars together (Mda 2015:150).

Agreeable to marrying the love of his heart, according to the Abathwa ways, Malangana nods to the idea that he can do this, the courting and the hunting (to woo the mother-in-law, better among the stars. Mthwakazi affirmatively fantasises that she probably has a star mother there, that can accept the animals and quarry that Malangana would bring for the purpose. Eager to start the journey right away, they stand up and fall into each other arms. It is at this moment that they are interrupted by four horsemen sent by the king to fetch Malangana to the great place, and then due to the ensuing "war" with Hope, they are separated, both from each other, as well from the beautiful nature and the landscapes, as they both disappear into the uncertain world, Malangana to exile and Mthwakazi to where she does not want to be found.

5.4.3. DECOLONISATION AND THE AFTERMATH OF DEMOCRACY

In *I Write What I Like* (1987), Biko states "the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed" (Biko 1987:35). Central to this view is the "call" he propagated under Black Consciousness for the psychological and cultural liberation of the black mind, as a sine-qua-non for political freedom. Hook (2004a or b:105) states Biko's exact words "mental emancipation as a precondition to political emancipation". Like Fanon's (2008:vi) ideology, Biko's key argument on the liberation struggle conundrum was the psychological battle for the minds of black people. They, in the first instance, were externally oppressed, through the institutionalised machinery, that is, segregationary legislation, moreover, a state of alienation had developed in the black person's mind, which led to self-rejection, as he/she attached more significant value to the "white and western world, including religion, culture, and social life". In this instance, the challenge for Biko was to reverse years (counting to decades and centuries) of negative self-image to a more confident, affirmative, and positive form of identity by Black people (Hook 2004a or b:105).

Biko's propagation of "self-love" included solidarity among Blacks, emphasising rallying against the oppression they commonly suffered, and the advancement of the liberation

of struggle based on identification with themselves. This is what drives Malangana, as a cadre determined to decolonise the lives and land of the amaMpondomise people from the Western hegemony. He starts defying the colonial rule as a young man, fresh from the mountain school, where African boys are initiated to manhood, and taught how to be strong, resourceful, patriotic, and a man of character or virtue, among others. In this instance, he challenges Hope's ruling that banned drinking on Sundays, which undermined the amaMpondomise culture of hosting feasts or traditional ceremonies on any day of the week. Sorghum beer is customarily a central part of those ceremonies, as it is used to connect to the ancestors. More than being "*Ifa nankosi*" (one who dies with the king), Mda (2015:44) presents this character as a paragon of virtue pertaining to the amaMpondomise culture and its defence against western hegemony. In a traditional ceremony hosted by Gxumisa (Mhlontlo's uncle), he becomes openly incensed at a team of policemen (black men led by a coloured or "Qheya" sergeant) for being so disrespectful that they "gate-crash" in order to compel Gxumisa to stop the ceremony, stating that it was unlawful:

> It is an insult to uTat' uGxumisa, the king's uncle, to come to his homestead and tell him that he cannot hold a feast… I am a Mpondomise man, I refuse to obey laws that do not come from my king (Mda 2015: 44).

As the law enforcers managed to chase the rest of the people from the feast, "they walked away from Gxumisa's homestead, their heads bowed down in shame", Malangana stands up to them, protesting against such a blatant violation of the Mpondomise culture. The narrator shares the policemen's reaction to this, that "the man is indeed drunk to think that he could stand in defiance of the Queen of England". Since the ceremony is completely disrupted, the "pass outs or graduates", in their new loincloths of many colours cower near the kraal, Malangana gets arrested, and Hope takes more punitive action against him.

Malangana's patriotism is evident even in his reaction to Mohlontlo's omission in his rendition of his great family's genealogy. Mamani, Phahlo's daughter, took over the throne upon her father's death, against the family's traditional way of thinking. This was

because she was a woman, but she successfully contested the position. She had refused to marry, and turned down several suitors, but instead, declared herself king and married a woman she impregnated through her younger brother. The family had since distanced itself from her, and all her royal processes. Mamani had, since the incident, been excluded from the family's genealogy. According to Malangana, this exclusion was unjustified. She lived and existed as king, therefore, she must be included in the genealogy. He himself, would as a consequence, always include her when rendering the genealogy and/or the family tree (Mda 2015:52-53).

Although Malangana became notorious as the first Mpondomise man to experience Hope's "*kati*" due to his defiance, his real revolution begins when he, together with other Mpondomise men led by Mhlontlo, are instructed to take up arms on behalf of the colonial state against a fellow African, a Basotho chief. This for refusing to pay taxes and non-surrendering of guns and ammunition to the government. Malangana's obstinacy against the colonial rule becomes more palpable at the *imbizo* (public meeting) convened for traditional rulers and their councils, by the Maclear Magistrate, Mr. Thompson. He, together with the two other magistrates, Messrs Welsh from Tsolo and Hamilton Hope from Qumbu, constitute the white authority to lead the *imbizo*. Colonial oppression and racial segregation are on the open display at this meeting, much to the displeasure and offensive by the likes of Malangana and Mahlangeni (Mda 2015:49). The antagonist, Hope, objects to Mhlontlo being referred to as King, when the police and other members of the public do so. According to him, no native could be a King or Queen. There was only one sovereign, Her majesty the Queen of England. They could only be chiefs, or at most, paramount chiefs. The native elders and chiefs are ushered to sit on the ground, in front of the magistrates and their aides, whilst the latter are seated on chairs and a group of white men standing behind them. The magistrates' impatience and interruption as Mhlontlo recites his genealogy, as per the African protocol, infuriates Malangana, who shook his head, with the words "White man never learns" (Mda 2015:51). This is supported by Sunduza (the white man who grew amongst the amaMpondomise and new their culture), that each name in the genealogy, connected to a story of heroism or villainy, and this helped the men to link to their own

ancestries, which translates to the way history was taught and passed from one generation to the next, amongst the African communities.

The key and the breaking point of the meeting is the announcement by Hope that they (as magistrates) want the natives to join them in the war against the Basotho chief, Magwayi of Matatiele. This divisive moot point leads to even the Basotho attending the *imbizo,* like Legingoana and some under him, turning against their fellow Mosotho and agreeing to fight against Magwayi. Amid all this, Malangana is incensed, more by Mhlontlo's indecisiveness and indifference towards taking up the fight against the colonial/racial oppression and defence of African (Mpondomise) culture. The first instance of this is when Mhlonthlo refused to pay a fine for his release when he was flogged and arrested for protesting against the government violation of amaMpondomise traditional ceremonies. After this, he wanted to abandon him to seek asylum across the iTsitsa River at Chief Mditshwa's area, who was leading a rival branch of amaMpondonise, but later made peace with it, especially when he thought about Gcazimbane (Mda 2015:46-47). He moreover, continues to defend Mhlontlo when Hope tries to force them to the war against fellow Africans:

> Our king is not a boy. He is the king of amaMpondonmise. If he says he does not want his people to be dragged into a war that has nothing to do with them, who will force him (Mda 2015:69).

Gxumisa's rationalisation in this regard is that they had closed themselves into a corner by accepting to be under British protection, and therefore, held a slim chance of escaping this pressure, but both Malangana and Mahlangeni reject this. The former emphasises the point that they have an option to fight and defeat Hope. However, by the time Mhlontlo decides that they will participate in the war, on condition that the government gives them weapons, Malangana had veered away from the group, sulking over Mhlontlo's words that he always allows his blood to "boil", which leads to his head not thinking correctly. His shock at the decision to take part in the war leads to more hot-headedness on the part of Malangana and two other young men leading them to protest further, action-thrusting their assegais through the window of the holding room

for the magistrates. The consequential blind panic by the magistrates and their aides leads to the flogging of these young men on their buttocks by Hope, in one of the rooms. The two other young men (with Malangana) are heard screaming in pain and begging for mercy (Mda 2015:64-65). However, Malangana is now reputed to take the pain “like a man” as he has been taught at the initiation school. According to the narrator, he would not even flinch so that he does not give Hope the pleasure of his screams or signs of feeling pain . Hope reddens as he tries to lash out with more vigour, so that he does not let the impertinent native destroy his reputation, which preceded his arrival in Qumbu (Mda 2015:46).

Although Malangana vows that he would not forgive Mhlontlo, as well as Gxumisa, for having been subjected to Hope’s “kati” due to them being spineless and indecisive about the war against Magwayi, it becomes clear, through their conversation, that Mhlontlo has applied his mind strategically and diplomatically to the matter. His consent for the amaMpondonmise to join the war is based on the condition that Hope gives them weapons, but that would contravene the Disarmament Act, so it would not happen. Therefore, technically, they would not join the war, so he convinces Gxumisa. This is what he meant when he urged Malangana not to allow his emotions or his “blood to boil”, but ought to calm himself, and instead think strategically. This also reflects Mhlontlo’s maturity and development as a political strategist, different from when he was a radical, as reflected in *Hope’s War* (Paris 2017:5).

It is at the time of going to war that Malangana becomes proud of his king. Mhlontlo and his council thought Hope would not give them arms and, therefore, that this would exonerate them from the war against their own kind, but this was thwarted by the fact that Hope kept his promise. However, the other way out came in handy, though it was painful. His wife, the queen, had just passed away, and therefore he had to mourn her passing. In the meantime, Hope and his men assembled caravans and wagons, loaded with the promised weapons of war, as well as technical and food supplies. They camped with tents in Sulenkana, near Mhlontlo’s Great Place, to confer and strategise war plans with him and his council, whilst also enticing the young amaMpondomise men

to take part in the war. However, as per Mpondomise tradition and customs on mourning, Mhlontlo had to stay in seclusion and observe certain rituals for the duration of the mourning period, with which the war coincided. He ought not to even touch weapons during this time (Mda 2015:120). However, Hope responds to this by flexing colonial muscle, in total disregard of the Mpondomise customs:

> The British empire could not be kept waiting on account of heathen customs. The war would be fought and the Mpondomise warriors would be led by none other than Umhlontlo (Mda 2015:120).

The running of messengers between the king's great place and Hope's tent reflects a stalement until the king agrees to meet Hope in his tent, although still adamant that his customs should not be undermined. His emphatic, ''Ndi-zi-li-le" ("I am in mourning"), when he meets Hope, already spells out the riot act. However, the latter "couldn't quickly read between the lines". He chooses to ignore what is said by Mhlontlo (despite the fact he can see the man's expression) at his peril, as it later transpires. Although the war plan is all drawn up by Hope, because Mhlontlo agreed to spend the night in Hope's tent (and that he was himself armed), if appears to Malangana as he agreed to participate in the war, he agreed to participate in the war his surprise and disgust. Nevertheless, he wonders how Gxumisa and other councillors could agree to this whilst the king is mourning (Mda 2015:155). He was not with the king that night, otherwise, he would not have agreed to that misjudgement.

A puzzle that Malangana could not determine in his mind is that he knew that "hot-blooded" young men like Nzuze and Mahlangeni would never allow such a decision, even in his absence. It is then a question as to, where were they at that time and what was their take on the matter. He was blaming himself for the night he spent by the river with Mthwakazi, which seemed to have brought about disastrous changes to the lives of amaMpondomise. He again cautions against devaluing Mpondomise customs by emphasising that, in addition to his non-appearance in public, the king is not supposed to touch weapons of war, let alone being involved directly in war himself. However, Davis tries to play this down so as not to offend his "boss", Mr. Hope. Little did he know

that Mhlontlo's strategic thinking and manoeuvring would once more win the battle between amaMpondonmise and Hope. The thoroughly planned assassination of Hope during his address to enforce amaMpondomise's participation in the war against fellow Africans takes most people by surprise, including Malangana. He realises that his like-minded men, Mahlangeni and Nzuze, were the leaders of this expedition. It had to be kept secret for it to be successful. Even at this late hour, that is, after the assassination, Malangana's excitement lies beyond explanation, and his regret for not being part of the "scheme" is palpable. He nonetheless cannot let anyone deny him the opportunity to kill Hamilton Hope. So, although Hope is already dead when he comes to the scene, he immediately takes his assegai and stabs him over and over again, so as to satisfy what he has been yearning for a long time (Mda 2015: 162). More than just an assassination of a despotic ruler, this foregrounds the negative consequences of colonisation on both the part of the colonising power and the colonised. Both sides suffer war casualties, which go beyond the loss of human life, but the consequent strife, disunity and antagonism affecting all. This is characterised by subsequent social unrest, with dire human consequences. Warren and Henman are killed at the same time as Hope; their families suffer as they try to escape the horrific incident. This is accompanied by looting and panic by police and other government people (Mda 2015: 163). The aftermath of the war led Mhlontlo, Malangana, and several amaMpondomise to exile in Lesotho, where he suffered depression (Mda 2015: 227). He was, in the process, lured into a trap, and was arrested in Palmietfontein, Herschel, across the Tele River, in the Eastern Cape (Mda 2015: 246-247). This was the end of amaMpondomise Royalty being recognised by the successive colonial and apartheid governments. The colonial negatives represented by Mda in *Little Suns* (between 1880 and 1903) and the despondency that leads to adverse reaction by the colonised continues into the post-colonial and democratic South Africa..

5.4.4 BLACK ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND "BLACK DIAMONDS"

In the years before South Africa accomplished formal democracy in 1994, the erstwhile governments systematically excluded non-white people (coloureds, Indians and black

Africans) from meaningful participation in the country's economy. The labour market was similarly segregated, with the latter group bearing the brunt of employment hardships (Pillay 2014:1). For this reason, South Africa's first democratic government was elected in 1994, with a clear mandate to redress the inequalities of the past. In implementing this mammoth task, the government embarked on a comprehensive programme to provide a legislative framework for transforming the national economy in 2003. This was termed the Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment Strategy, which was published as a precursor to the B-BBEE Act (Act No.53 of) 2003.[7] The Act was then targeted at advancing economic transformation and enhancing the economic participation of black Africans in the South African economy.

In Black Diamond (2009), Mda questions the seemingly erratic or corrupt implementation of the Act, noting that some programmes intended to implement the Act do not reach intended beneficiaries. In the novel Don Mateza, whose role as a former freedom fighter is indisputable, finds himself unable to meaningfully participate in the country's economy, in spite of his former comrades being individually well-compensated.

Having been raised by a single parent (staff nurse Mateza, who was also tortured to death due to her son's role in the struggle) (Mda 2009:23), Don was recruited into the "struggle" even before he could complete matric (Mda 2009:24). His excellent performance and track record as a freedom fighter earned him the nom de guerre "AK Bazooka". The name lives not only in Comrade songs that the youth sing at parades on big national days like Freedom Day, Human Rights Day and Youth Day, amongst others (Mda 2009:9). Although he got some compensation from the government, when they returned as ex-combatants, he spent this on legal fights for his mother's four-roomed house, as it was taken after her death and acquired by other people. After losing the case and attempting to "drink away" his problems, he is lucky to get a job as a security

[7] One of the objectives of this legislation, is not only narrowing the gap between rich and poor, but also distributing the wealth of the nation across all races and gender divides (Government Gazette No. 25899: 4-5).

guard at VIP protection services (Mda 2009:13). At this time of “new South Africa”, the likes of Don can connect with top decision-makers in government so as to enure that they become beneficiaries of such empowerment programmes. Through rubbing shoulders with “the cream of the country’s leadership” referred to as “networking”, even the lousy and laziest non-achievers can get a slice of BEE deals. However, first, the diligent Don’s only training is that of a guerrilla fighter, where, after returning, there was no place for him in government. Secondly, he never got to rub shoulders with the “top guys”, and therefore never acquired any political capital. It is not his way of doing things to “operate the necessary way”, but he hopes to get his just rewards by proving his worth, and now he looks at developing this through the ranks of the security firm he works for, that is, to rise to the CEO position through merit. However, Tumi is dismissive of this line of thinking.

Don has much more worth than he thinks, according to girlfriend Tumi. If he gathers the courage to establish a BEE consortium, he would be able to attract funding from the government and the white corporate world. This would put him in line to be a “Black Diamond”, or “fat cat”. It has always been a sore point for her to see Don’s former comrades being successful BEE beneficiaries while working for a security company. She wondered how they forgot him when it was time for them to “reap the fruits of their labour” when they reached paradise (Mda 2015:13, 68).

Mda’s critique of the irony of BEE implementation are reflected in the antagonist, Dr. Molotov Mbungane, who served under Don ‘back in the bush’. Due to his ineptitude, he bungled a mission to bomb a power station in Pretoria, which landed him in prison, on Robben Island. In a twist of fate, in his arrest “comrade” Molotov got to rub shoulders with leaders of the “struggle” who guided him towards university education, whilst his commander, Don, “soldiers” on in guerrilla camps and leading successful expeditions against the “enemy”. Molotov then takes advantage of the situation and builds himself “political capital” (Mda, 2009:12). The narrator traces his experiences and fortunes from a poor kid growing up in the village to a “Marxist guerrilla”, a political prisoner, and further “networks” himself into a member of parliament and a cabinet minister. He

ensures that he accumulates political capital in the last stages of his political career to convert to financial capital and equity and in some large corporations as soon as he leaves the government service. Banks warm to him as he continues to put together consortia to acquire considerable stakes in the mining industry. In a short time, he becomes the owner of some lucrative diamond, gold, and platinum mines.

Molotov Mbungane further strengthens his wealth acquisitions through marrying an Afrikaner woman (Mda, 2009:13). As he becomes an overnight “dollar millionaire”, his popularity and progress earn him some honorary doctorates from some local universities, and he acquires the title of Dr. Molotov Mbungwane. His focus on capital accumulation earns him the name “comrade capitalist” from his former comrades. However, through all this wealth accumulation through BEE deals, he does not empower any other person, including his former comrades. He instead becomes more arrogant and aloof, with the mantra that “accumulation cannon be democratised, comrades” (Mda 2009:31). This reflects the failures and challenges that the government faces in the implementation of the B-BBEE policy. The prefix “Broad-Based” means its application has to be universal and focus on economic empowerment of all deserving citizens, but as reflected through “Comrade Capital“, only a few people benefit from the system. A few connected individuals accumulate capital and become too rich, whilst the rest become poorer and more disadvantaged.

Comrade Capital’s focus on generating more personal wealth estranges him further and further from the poor and the marginalised, including his former comrades. Fontyo and Bova fellow ex-combatants, spend most of their time in taverns (and Fontyo even partial to marijuana), with no work nor any productive activity (13 and 192), and he (Comrade Capital) cares less and less. This even leads to them masterminding a heist against VIP cash transit vehicles carrying Molotov’s money (Mda 2009:206).

Don’s move from the ranks of unemployment to a clean, fresh and urbane man (rehabilitation to productive life) is enabled by his rediscovery and reconnection with his childhood sweetheart, Tumi. Although this helps him get a job at a security company, Tumi hopes to push Don’s development to a Black Diamond, as she sees his former

comrades in this line of development and looking at opportunities brought about by new Government policy developments. However, her innocent determination and “love competition” with Don’s cat put a strain on their relationship. The Black Diamond image that Tumi has for Don expressly excludes some characteristics that constitute the core of his personality. His love for cooking (as per his bringing up by staff nurse Mateza) and the cat are outside the scope, as far as Tumi is concerned. A surprise meal that Don prepares to impress Tumi achieves the opposite. The traditional meal he has cooked include “Ting”, which Tumi thinks smells foul and therefore does not want in their North Riding house, so she discredits everything around this meal:

> Let’s rather get Chinese takeaways… Give it to the cat. Here, as far as everyone knows, we eat sushi and the like. Plus, you know, Don, I don’t like my man to stand in an apron, in the kitchen cooking… I guess it was okay when you were in the townships. But you’re going to be a Black Diamond now, Don. You must learn to behave like one. Cultivate more class (Mda 2009:45).

A pet, like a cat, is not one of the fitting accessories for a Black Diamond and is a source of disgruntlement and arguments for the two. Whenever Don had a difficult day or when things get tense between the two of them, he takes refuge in his pet, mostly “stroking its fluffy fur with one hand while holding it to his bosom with other”. This is the biggest offence to Tumi, as she shouts at him, “it's either me or the cat, Don” (Mda 2009:45).

Initially, Kristin is determined to remain opaque about both her fight with and threats from Stevo Visagie in jail, and she feels her privacy is violated when the Chief Magistrate organises a private security company to post a guard at her house for her safety (Mda 2009:57). Although this makes her a closed person and protective of her turf, she initially strictly does not want to be watched over (which makes Don’s job difficult), she ultimately loosens, as she later realises that they have some qualities in common. They share a love of cooking and cats, as each owns one. They get even closer when Don accidentally sees her vulnerability whilst doing her private dance in her bedroom (Mda 2009:117). She suggests that he can bring his cat over, and it can stay

for the duration of the time he renders the services of guarding her. This gets the latter to learn more about cats and more cooking variations and other social aspects of life. This is accompanied by less pressure on “networking” for success to become a “Black Diamond”, and no differences about keeping his beloved cat, the two (Kristin and Don) get close, and deep love develops between them (Mda 2009:159-160). They both learn that a person’s happiness in life does not always depend on someone else’s goals and desires. This reflects and confirms the dismal failure on the part of the Government to implement the Black Economic Empowerment policy and appropriately dealing with the effects of post-colonial and post-apartheid society on the lives of ordinary people. Mda (2009) portrays this by turning upside-down the usual stereotypes. The Visagie brothers are found to be on the wrong side of the law, and Kristin’s harsh sentencing of Stevo drives them to terrorist tactics. Their attempts at challenging the magistrate are strengthened by “Aunty” Magda’s lobbying of support for “her boys” with, amongst others, placards: “Free the Visagie Brothers!”, and “Release Shortie and Stevo” (Mda 2009:3). In some instances, public protests (that include prostitutes – which are part of the social decay that Kristin intends fighting with all her might) display placards that read, “An injury to one is an injury to all” (Mda 2009:17). These are tactics that were typically associated with black liberation movements under the pre-1994 governments in South Africa. Kristin Uys, from a consecutive background, “a well brought up Afrikaner *meisie*, with all Old Testament values, Leviticus values”, finds herself first in an unorthodox sexual relationship with her former husband, who (due to his inclination for whores or prostitutes), compels her to imitate, in her way of dress and sex appeal (Mda 2009:158); and secondly, in an inter-racial love relation, finding solace in a “person” that she in her youth learnt to detest and an underclass, who, typically cannot match her standards. This novel contributes to the post-colonial and post-apartheid socio-political discourse that continue to reshape people’s lives in the context of a changing society.

5.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter initially examined the synchronisation of Mda's fictional teachings conveyed through characters and fictional settings, with his philosophical ideas in his non-fictional texts. As per his own account, a significant thread that goes through most of his books is the social focus of his literary work. Mda (2011:551) admits to his earlier political writing and to the inspiration he got from Frantz Fanon, whom he regards as having been "their prophet" (Mda (2011:551). Another encounter is with Nokuthula Mazibuko in 2002, where he also outlined and motivated his writings on the African renaissance and the type of characters he deploys for this theme, the ordinary people on the margins of societal power structures, most of whom are African village women (Mazibuko 2009:116). Part of his revolutionary social spirit comes from his father, and he emphasises that "like him, I work with peasants in the villages" (Mda 2011:552).

In addition to social writing, Mda foregrounds landscape and physical contexts in his writings, which he regards as critical, as he demonstrates in his book, *Sometimes there is a Void* (2011). It opens with the words:

> The smell of life is back on the pink mountain. Human life, that is, for often forms have always thrived here even after we had left. Before our return shrubs and bushes flourished, but their fused aromas highlighted an absence. The air was too crisp. Too clean and fresh. In spring aloes bloomed – hence the pinkness (Mda 2011:1).

All the value he attaches to this landscape is reflected in the few words quoted above; hence it forms the basis of this autobiographic text, and it continues to be the central reference point through several chapters in the text. This reverberates through most of his fictional writings. This includes the people and the implicitly rich narrative of the former inhabitants. The narrative describes the pinkness of the Mountain, whose original and real name is "Dyarhom" Mountain, and human life that add a sparkle to this living landscape. He reflects on the place's natural beauty as worth writing about and assesses how the custodians (the people to whom it belonged) made use of and developed it further. The different species of aloes bloom in spring into different colours

(from where the pinkness emanates) and are central to the place's beauty and productive capacity. This is where he has initiated a honey project, working with the village women. Reviewing the "ruins" of his grandfather's estate that a few decades ago, sprawled throughout the mountainside, brings feelings of nostalgia for him. This is indicated in the statement that "I call them ruins, through nothing is left of the buildings. The stones have long since became part of the landscape" (Mda 2011:2).

In strengthening the theoretical base on writing about landscape, a reference was made to Loflin (1998), who confirms the African writers who significantly feature landscape in their writings, contrary to the view of some European critics. However, the latter is challenged through an extensive analysis of Mda's use of place and landscape in sections 5.4.2.1 and 5.4.2.2. She notes that African writers describe the African landscape, and that characters in African fiction are mostly carefully situated within that environment. She demonstrates this using J. P. Clark's poem, *Ibadan* (Loflin 1998:3). In relation to this theoretical background and other observations, the critical analysis of the two novels, Black Diamond (2009) and Little Suns (2015), focused on the featuring of landscape and physical environment and how characters interact with these basic features.

In discussing Malangana's character and his quest for the decolonisation of the lives and the land of amaMpondomise, a reference was made to Steve Biko on "the liberation of the black mind". Biko stated that "the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed" (Biko 1978:35). Central to this view is the call for the psychological and cultural liberation of the black mind as a sine-qua-non for political freedom. It was argued that Malangana is a good example of a person with a liberated mind, hence his push for the total decolonisation of his people and their land. In line with this, Zakes Mda advises on how individuals can contribute to the liberation of the mind, community development, and self-reliance. In the Steve Biko Memorial Lecture, 12 September 2001 (Hook 2014c:129), he cautions against dwelling on philosophies far from the practical relevance to the lives of the people. He adds, "that's how Steve and his comrades cracked 'self-reliance' mind set in communities" (Hook

2014c:129). He further argues that all black people in South Africa link to some village; one can go to that village and facilitate community development dialogue. He encourages everyone to be a catalyst for a “people-centred development”. He points to the fact that rural development is the answer to many developmental challenges South Africa faces (Hook 2014c:129).

In the analysis of *Black Diamond* (2009), a critical evaluation of the Government failures in implementing the BEE legislation and policy was performed, complementing Mda’s demonstration of these policy failures. Instead of its “Broad-Based” implementation, so that all eligible citizens benefit, to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor, only a few connected individuals have real channels to tap into the system, like Dr. Molotov, Mbungane. Even his former commander (back in the bush), Don, does not get to benefit, and the now connected Molotov does not make any effort to at least assist his former comrades. Instead, worsening the plight of others, he removes the ladder to obstruct others from development, so that he can “enjoy the cake” without any competition. He only responds to them through mantras like: “accumulation cannot be democratised comrades”, and “the fruits of liberation are not for the foot soldiers” (Mda 2009:31). The failures in this regard are also caused by the fact that some of the beneficiaries use their earnings on frivolous things like luxury clothes, cars, expensive liquor, parties, even on “after tears” parties in funerals, mainly black people, as Mda reflects in the comparison he makes between whites (represented by Kristin) and blacks (represented by Tumi and partly Don) (Mda 2009:1). Ultimately he suggests that the poor’s economic plight will result from adequately planned implementation of distributive policies, like BB-BEE. The beneficiaries should be trained to reinvest their earnings to benefit both the individual and several other people, resulting in real economic growth and increased employment or self-employment.

The analysis of Mda’s use of place and landscape was used to demonstrate Biko’s concept of self-reliance, the way in which people’s lives continue to be shaped by these natural environmental features and their valued contribution to environmental development. The novels were further analysed in the context of their contribution to the

post-colonial and post-apartheid socio-political discourse that continue to reshape people's lives in the currency of a changing society.

CHAPTER SIX

6. UBUNTU PHILOSOPHY AS IT RELATES TO MDA'S LITERARY WORK - *LITTLE SUNS* (2015) AND *SHE PLAYS WITH THE DARKNESS* (1995)

6.1. INTRODUCTION

In the last chapter, an analytical comparison was made between Zakes Mda's philosophical ideas in *Justify the Enemy – Becoming Human in South Africa* (2018) and *Sometimes there is a Void* (2011), and his fiction in selected novels. In this context, chronology and intertextual links between the three texts were taken into account. The logical sequence would have had the non-fictional texts predating the fictional texts' publication. This would fulfil the notion that the philosophical ideas in the former had a bearing in the shaping of discourse in the fictional texts.

However, it emerged from the interviews that included Holloway (1988:83), with whom he discussed social function/relevance of his writing, and Wicomb (Mda 2018:2), with whom he shared the role played by "place" in determining his characters, that some of his philosophical ideas indeed predate his fictional texts, and were based either on his general approach and writing style, or on a published fictional work preceding a particular interview. It can then be deduced that this process nevertheless reflects a logical flow of Zakes Mda's philosophical ideas into his fiction.

The study of these philosophical texts reflects him as having a deep interest in "place" and "landscape" in his writings, as he admits that these are some of the features that play a critical role in the content of his narratives. He was also identified as a passionate advocate for the African renaissance, and the concept of "*vuku zenzele*" (meaning "wake up and do it for yourself") in his literary campaign to conscientise his readers that progressive change in society is not a "preserve" of the upper -and middle-class or the so-called educated and "connected" elite. These (the philosophical concepts of African renaissance and "*vuku zenzele*") depict his writings as mobilising the ordinary people, the marginalised and downtrodden, as taking the initiative to better their lives and others. This is reflected in his preference for women and subjugated men amongst his

protagonists. For instance, in the interview he had in 2002 with Nokuthula Mazibuko, he defines women's role in his literary writings as a central manifestation of the African renaissance, which he believes, should primarily be driven by ordinary people (Mazibuko 2009:116). These are the people whose worth is not defined by or ascribed to power derived from being connected, either through political affiliations, government top jobs or wealth accumulation. His protagonists include men like Toloki in *The Ways of Dying* (1995), whose role reflects the dehumanising experience of migrant labourer and the rite of passage from a poverty-stricken rural life to the even more critical conditions of urban quiddity or harsh survivalist environment. Despite his harrowing experience, including having to beg for food and money, doing odd jobs, on some of which he got paid only in food (Mda 1995a:59 – 66), he survives the city challenges and ultimately gets into fulfilling a love relation with Noria. They are both ordinary people on the margins of society, who significantly contribute to human development in their respective environments through their love and societal commitment.

In the background outlined above, the chapter dealt with the vital role characters in *Black Diamond* (2009) and *Little Suns* (2015). The initial focus in the former was on the author's surveying of social stereotypes that exaggerate socio-cultural differences between racial and ethnic groups in South Africa. The narrator's description of Kristin Uys's black regalia resembles a funeral outfit, specifically contrasting it with the black kinds of funerals that have become like horse racing spectaculars or fashion parades, where "moneyed Blacks" or "black diamonds" show off their wealth. This contrast was followed through Kristin' Uys's relationship with Don Mateza, which begins with a tumultuous interaction, but later becomes intimate. She is a magistrate who drives a battered Fiat Uno and stays in an ordinary suburban house (Mda, 2009:5). Her guard, Don Mateza, on the other hand, drives an SAAB convertible, and his girlfriend Tumi, a Jaguar X-type (Mda 2009: 5). This was reflected as part of Mda's criticism of the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) policy, where he argues that most intended beneficiaries use the opportunity to amass and flaunt personal wealth instead of developing and uplifting other formerly disadvantaged fellow citizens. This was demonstrated through Molotov Mbungane, who, due to his focus on wealth

accumulation, whilst exploiting his former comrades, got the name “Comrade Capitalist” (Mda, 2009: 8).

The theme is further developed through Tumi, working hard to ensure that her boyfriend from their school days, Don, develops to become a “black diamond”. It is emphasised how she would go to any lengths to set his mind to attaining this goal; pushing, encouraging and even helping him network with the BEE dealmakers. He presumably could use his leverage as an ex-guerrilla to outmanoeuvre any competition on any BEE deal. Mda’s condemnation of BEE policy “high-jacking” was also highlighted in Kristin’s response to Don’s excitement about his pending promotion at the VIP Protection Services, giving him access to the BEE opportunities. Her response, “that’s how you people gauge success of the new South Africa by the number of millionaires you create” (Mda, 2009:171), strikes a chord, not only with Don, but also with the readers about this policy’s efficacy to uplift the plight of formerly disadvantaged people.

The novel *Little Suns* (2015) was analysed, focusing on the systemic undermining of African cultures and traditions by the colonial power. The authority leading this campaign, a limping but stern magistrate of Qumbu District, was determined to maintain his reputation of putting Black people in “their place” and “whipping” them into toeing the line as determined by the colonial government. The first step was to strip off all native Royal houses or “Great Places”, including the title “King”. He inculcated in the minds of all people under his administration, the notion that there could be only one sovereign, her Majesty the Queen. The native so-called kings, those with other chiefs within their Jurisdiction, who pledge allegiance to them, could at best be called paramount chiefs under his administration. His focus on subverting African traditions and customs, labelling them as a form of superstition, was dealt with as a crucial dehumanisation of African people. Hope’s wielding of the last straw “to break the camel’s back” was discussed at length. It was demonstrated how his “trashing” of Mhlontlo’s traditional mourning rites led to his assassination, with disastrous effects for both the colonial government and the amaMpondomise tribe.

This chapter deals with the ubuntu philosophy as it relates to Mda's literary work. The analysis will trace the concept from African Humanism as propagated by Es'kia Mphahlele in his philosophical text *The African Image* (1974:13). As this concept seems to be derived from a form of humanism (which is implicitly universal), the two will be defined alongside each other in order to distill the African version of humanism. The investigation will proceed to the hybrid concept of African humanism and *ubuntu*, which will then be applied to the selected novels. The analysis will also trace *ubuntu* as a theme in Mda's writings from Steve Biko's philosophy followed by his personal experiences and philosophical background, as reflected in his fictional narrative writings. These will be applied in the *ubuntu* study pertaining to the novels *Little Suns* (2015) and *She Plays with the Darkness* (1995). The former focuses on colonial subversion of African culture, customs and traditions, which are the essence of African humanism and *ubuntu*. The antagonist is Hamilton Hope, who, as the stern epitome of colonial oppression, does not hide his contempt or scorn for such customs, or anything that is African, as well as the people themselves. His response to Mhlontlo's seclusion in observance of death rituals (mourning his wife's passing away), according to the latter's culture, reflects such a disdain, viz: "the British Empire could not be kept waiting on account of heathen customs" (Mda 2015:120). The latter novel, which is based on "twinship", foregrounds postcolonial discord and divided or fractionated identities. The twinship concept has a connotation of Humanism, as it subverts the perception of split identities. This, in turn, highlights the significance of *ubuntu*, indicating that people, especially Africans, are interconnected and interdependent. This is demonstrated by the kind of relation between the Father-of-the-Daughters' family and that of the Mother-of-twins, which helped sustain the latter family's lives. This translates to the Father-of-the-Daughters, giving some tasks to the young Radisene to do, like tending his cattle after school and Saturdays to exchange grain and milk for supporting the family (Mda 1995b:14-15).

6.2. MDA AND MPHAHLELE

In the introduction to the collection of essays on Mda's writing's, *Ways of Writing*, Bell and Jacobs (2009:1) compare Mda's writing style in his novels to Andre P. Brink and

Njabulo S. Ndebele. This is as far as his literary social theory are concerned. However, Mda also developed through his writings a theoretical framework that foregrounds the struggles of ordinary people towards more meaningful freedom and humanity (Bell & Jacobs, 2009:4). This closely relates to *African Humanism,* as propounded by Es'kia Mphahlele in The African Image (1974:13). This is elaborated on below.

This text being a modified version of his MA dissertation *The Non-European character in South African English Fiction,* was the precursor to his writing on African Humanism. In his study of the concept and the extent to which the values associated with *ubuntu* are embodied in the work of black South African writers, Gaylard (2007:265) finds positive indication with Es'kia Mphahlele, who refers to himself as an African humanist. In *The African Image* (1974), Mphahlele explores the possibility of humanistic images in South African literature. This was induced by his questioning and criticism of the representation of the non-white character in the country's literature from the colonial era to the 1980s. Despite the idealism, he started with the political movement of the 1950s that advocated a non-racial society, thwarted in the Treason Trial, Rivonia Trial and Sharpeville Massacre on the 21st March 1960 (Mphahlele 1981:1). He argued for the portrayal of characters free from racial stereotypes, for example, depiction of Africans as outright savage and Afrikaners defined through exclusive Calvinism (Mphahlele, 1981:2), portrayed as a symbol of power, prosperity and privilege (Mphahlele, 1974:15). In dealing with such flat characterisation, he tried to turn around the stereotypes but experienced challenges with white characterisation as he lacked sufficient knowledge of white ways of living. However, his pursuit of images of Africans proves to have been a way of getting closer to the writer's intention in the context of social milieu and forces that shape African characters (Mphahlele, 1974:13).

One crucial characteristic that links the two writers is the premise that literature for the sake of it is an outright "anathema" (Mphahlele, 2002:XXI). As indicated earlier in this study (Chapter Two), Mda espouses this concept as well. They both command a course of literature that (predominantly featuring lyricism and dramatic enactment) uses an aesthetic to develop and empower the human mind (Mphahlele, 2002: XXI). It is also

noteworthy that the two also share the notion that literature should have a social function.

The philosophical foundation on which Mphahlele bases his concept of African Humanism is culture. In line with Steve Biko's (1987:35) African cultural concepts of collectivity, sharing, mutual respect and the restitution of the human being at the centre of the cosmos (Biko, 1987:35), Mphahlele advocates for the portrayal of African characters within the realms of *ubuntu.* In his article, *A Human Face: Biko's conception of African culture and Humanism* (2008:215), Andries Oliphant relates Steve Biko's idea of culture to Fanon and Cabral's concepts that anti-colonial struggles are acts of culture, trust, cooperativeness, sharing and respect for one another (Oliphant 2008:215). He also denounces the depiction of characters through stereotypes, but encourages cultural considerations that allow rounded portrayal and full character depiction pertaining to his or her personality and potential. The two novels *Little Suns* (2015) and *She Plays with the Darkness* (1995) will be evaluated against the characterisation approach that reflects the concept of *ubuntu* as described by Gaylard (2004:265-282).

6. 3. AFRICAN HUMANISM AND UBUNTU IN THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

6.3.1. HUMANISM

The term "humanism" provides a central descriptive function in the concept of African Humanism. It is used by various users, often from different viewpoints and backgrounds, rendering it a protean term. This makes it imperative to place it into the proper context of this study. The wider context of the term gives it a rather nebulous and ambiguous meaning. This is due to its fundamental nature pertaining to human existence being the object of various ideological studies. It therefore becomes necessary to subject it to ideological definition, although that may on another side present a self-obstruction, as it "factionalises the interpretation and application", according to Igwe (2002:190). The inherent shortcoming in a diversified definition paradoxically affects its universal quality, which, according to Eleojo (2014:300), gives the concept its popular reach.

The diverse ideological definitions of “humanism” are held together by a common thread of human interest, welfare, and fulfilment (Eleojo, 2014:300). Human dignity may also be an overarching concern. However, Eleojo (2014:300) argues that humanism often ideologically gets classified in relation to goals and mindset. Madigan et al. (1990:327) identify five varieties of humanism in the West, that is: (i) Renaissance; (ii) Enlightenment; (iii) Romantic; (iv) religious; and (v) secular. This is complemented by Edword’s list, that defines humanism from a wider perspective, that replaces some but includes additional varieties, such as: literary, cultural, philosophical, Christian and modern versions of humanism (Balogun 2013:106).

Although Eleojo (2014:301) provides a list of eight ideological varieties of humanism, some dovetail into each other, resulting in similar emphasis points. Secular humanism, for instance, shares with Renaissance humanism the inclination for learning and advocacy of free inquiry. Having developed out of the 18th-century enlightenment rationalism and 19th-century free-thought, this form of humanism also draws upon the other three categories, viz: enlightenment, romantic, and religious humanism (Eleogo 2014:301). Its founding theory reflects scepticism regarding mystical beliefs, as it is based on religion. Madigan (1990:330) notes commonality with Enlightenment theorists use of “reason” towards common understanding of the concepts. However, secular humanism does not embrace the “near deification” of rationality that Enlightenment humanism espouses, but instead affirms the romantic stress on the significance of human emotions. It can then be deduced that the five forms of humanism dealt with above strive to chart forward and achieve common moral decency through the various faculties of humankind.

The other three forms of humanism that complete Edword’s framework (cited in Balogun 2002:106) bear similarities that make it logical to deal with unison. Literary humanism involves literature, history, and philosophy, whilst modern humanism embraces the different nomenclatures that include natural, scientific, ethical, and democratic humanism. Balogun (2002:106) identifies a common thread between all these, that is, their rejection of supernaturalism, with exclusive reliance on reason, science,

democracy, and human compassion. This humanism has secular and religious roots, which gives it a contrastive and a dialectical nature. The other significant component of the broad concept of humanism is the cultural form which Balogun (2002:106) notes to have a mythical origin. One significant observation in the brief history of humanism outlined above is a rebuttal of organised religion, which seems to be common across humanisms, which instead place emphasis on human welfare, fulfilment, ethics, moral system and freedom devoid of divine intervention.

6.3.2. AFRICAN HUMANISM

Although this concept popularised in the South African literary context through Mphahlele's writings is neither confined within this country's borders, nor to the historical time when most of his writings were published. Like other forms of humanism outlined above, African humanism has the well-being of persons as its core value. However, in contrast to the anti-religious character of some other approaches, it is not all humanists that are atheistic and iconoclastic (Eleojo 2014:302). In this regard, the interpretation by Hinnels in *The Penguin Dictionary of Religions* reflects a contradiction. He accordingly traces the term humanism to a 16th-century interpretation that applied to persons "with a set of entirely non-religious beliefs and values" (Hinnells 1995:225). This is contrary to the worldwide acknowledgement of Africans as "notoriously religious", and their "traditional religions permeating all components" of their social lives (Mbiti, 1969:2). One of the critical qualities of African humanism is identified by Eleojo (2014:302) as ordinary people's recognition as "incurably religious" and at the centre of the universe. It combines the African people's religious worldview or ontology and the ordinary people's central position that renders African humanism primarily anthropocentric. The centrality of the humans in the universe and the entire creation's raison d'être as a service for human purpose is in itself religious. This notion is endorsed by Mbiti (1982:38) in his observation that "it is as if the whole world exists for the sake of mankind". This, in turn, accentuates how African communities traditionally held the universe in high regard and in relation to humanity. Further endorsement is expressed by Ikenga-Metuh (1990: 167) in the observation that a human person in the African worldview is considered the

"Crown of God's creation". This places religion in a significant position to enhance human existence.

Es'kia Mphahlele uses the concept of African humanism in contemporary context of South Africa, tracing it from colonial and apartheid eras. In partly defining the concept of humanism in a public lecture delivered in 1984, entitled *Poetry and Humanism – Oral Beginnings,* Mphahlele quotes Jacques Maritain that "humanism aims to render man more truly human" (Mphahlele, 1986:7). One essential quality of African humanism involves the way people relate to one another. In this regard, Gaylard (2004:273) notes that, for Mphahlele, "it is a way life" embedded in African proverbs, aphorisms and oral poetry, and the way elders spoke to younger members of the community, and vice versa. The ethic of such a relationship is based on respect for and acknowledgement of other human beings, as Mphahlele demonstrates:

> Right and wrong depends on what you have done for or to your fellow being, not on any abstract notion of sin against God… when you have wronged someone… you talk to the wronged person, often through a mediator: you ask the ancestors to restore harmony (Mphahlele, 1986:9).

This is crucial, because it reflects Mda's views about life, which in turn embody his approach to writing, as the study of his novels in this chapter will augment the reflections from the novels dealt with earlier. In contrast to the western lifestyle, which is seen as individualistic, Mphahlele (2002:147) argues that the African way of living is defined in terms of the community and the collective, which determine the individuals' place and role in relation to the community. In this context, the human person finds fulfilment not as an isolated individual, but within family and community. African humanism is therefore a communal concept. In his analysis, Richard Bell (2002:40) differentiates between western humanism and African humanism. His observations include the fact that whilst the former accentuates individual's freedom and self-wealth, the latter is rooted in traditional values of mutual development, as well as respect for one's fellow human being, with a conscious consideration of position and place in the large order of things in society. This involves one's social order, natural order, as well as

cosmic order. He concludes that African humanism is rooted in lived dependencies (Bell, 2002:40).

The interdependence and communalism that seem to be the hallmark of African humanism are expressed as follows in Mbiti's (1969:108) position statement:

> The individual owes his existence to other people. He is simply part of the whole, whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the group happens to the individual. The individual can only say "I am because we are, and since we are, I am (Mbiti, 1969:108).

He argues that the aphorism referred to above is the critical factor for a holistic understanding of the African view of a human person. Although this seems to contrast with enlightenment ideology, which views a human being as a morally responsible individual with complete rationality, self-sufficient, and therefore entitled to high-level autonomy, the difference is mainly an interpretation and emphasis on different concepts (Gaylard, 2004:269). Post-enlightenment propagators accentuate individual autonomy, whilst African ideologists emphasise a person's communal responsibilities and obligations. According to Gyekye (1997:37), this radical communitarianism, in *Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African experience*, defines identity or personhood as "wholly constituted by the community to which one belongs".

6.3.3. UBUNTU AS A BROAD, GLOBAL CONCEPT

The linguistic form of the term *ubuntu*, as a pan-African concept, and its phonological variation embedded across African languages, was partly dealt with in Chapter 2. The discussion of the concept in this chapter will therefore focus on its global appeal, that is, the different contexts in which it is used and its utilisation alongside African humanism and as it is applied in Zakes Mda's fiction, particularly the two novels, *Little Suns* (2015) and *She Plays with the Darkness* (1995).

The view on *ubuntu* that is reflected in social contexts of many traditional African societies is shared by Gaylard (2004:270) in his observation that the term *ubuntu* or Botho is used to characterise the norms and values which make up the African society.

The term variations amongst most African languages commonly translate to "personhood" and "humanness" (Kamwangamalu, 1999:25). The complex meaning of this translation can be summarised as follows:

> Socio-linguistically, ubuntu is a multidimensional concept which represents the core values of African ontologies; respect for any human being, for human dignity and for human life, collective sharing, obedience, humility, solidarity, caring, hospitality, interdependence, and communalism (Kamwangamalu, 1999:25-26).

This is further abridged to the concept "radical communitarianism", which Kamwangamalu (1999:27) defines as a value according to which the interest of an individual is subordinate to group interests. The commonly used adage "a human being is human through others, and interaction with other people"[8] expresses the "radical" recognition that humanness, with the emphasis on people's comprehension of themselves as human beings with dignity and value, mainly depends on both giving the recognition to others and receiving it from them (Gaylard, 2004:270).

The image of wholeness implied in using the term *ubuntu* is crucial for an inclusive understanding of the concept in application. Ramose (2001:1) highlights the significance of the morphological structure of the term in this regard. The word is made up of the prefix *ubu*-, reflecting a general state of being, the stem and suffix -*ntu*, which stands for 'person' and this is the nodal point at which being assumes a concrete form. Therefore, *ubu*- and -*ntu* are mutually founding in the sense that they are bi-aspects of being, completing an indivisible wholeness. Although the "state of being" may seem like a westernised means of description, it helps in understanding the anatomy of the word *ubuntu*. This in a social context is defined by Schutte (2001:56) as "the whole-hearted identification of self with the other, so that self-determination can only be achieved through dependence on the power of another". A more socially applicable version of this idea is expressed by Ngubane (1979:64), that the *ubuntu* context dictates that the

[8] The community is only as it is continuously brought into being by those who 'make it up' … In a dynamic process the individual and community are always in the process of coming into being (Cornell and Van Marle, 2005:196).

person (*umntu*) cannot exist of himself. The emphasis is that he comes from a social cluster and exists within this formation.

The social inextricability between the self and the other is demonstrated by Ngcoya (2009:2-3) through proverbs, idioms, and aphorisms that are commonly used by various African nationalities. This includes Sierra Leone – *Tooko yila ee kpaj*, which means one hand can never clap; *ngulu yila ee woola*, or one tree can never form a forest, and *tooka yika tayekpe maawa*, or one hand can never wash itself. These idioms demonstrate the way in which *ubuntu* functions conceptually as a denial of the reduction of a human being to a singular, autonomous self. The other explicit view on this matter is the argument by Cornell and Van Marle (2005:196) that the individual and the community are not in competition.[3] The definition of *ubuntu* from this perspective has been therapeutic for a society ravaged and fatigued by a divisive apartheid ideology. From this viewpoint, the significance of the community, its wholeness, and the role of human persons within it, regardless of race, social class, gender, and ethnic background, are examined below in Zakes Mda's selected novels.

6.4 UBUNTU IN *LITTLE SUNS* (2015)

Although not a focus for this chapter, the novel *Ways of Dying* (1995), Mda's first narrative text that was published just a year after South Africa's first democratic elections and the swearing-in of the so-called "peoples government", indirectly poses serious questions about *ubuntu* and indigenous African cultures in the country. It was for about 342 years that South Africa had been subjected to colonial rule and cultural domination by the west, particularly Anglo-Boer culture. The first western nation to occupy South Africa was the Netherlands, through the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck in Cape Town. Although the initial aim was merely to establish a refreshment or provisioning station for the Dutch East India Company (VOC) ships travelling to East, the Dutch local administrator motivated, not only for an extended stay, but even for more Dutch nationals (the Free Burghers), to come work on agricultural projects to produce more fresh and healthy products for the voyagers (John 2005:13-30). It is, however, the British, through the Empire's occupation in 1795 and again the re-

annexation of South Africa in 1806, that a more vicious, colonial government was established in the country (Owen 1997:202). In order to exert its power and influence, the British imposed its political, economic, social and cultural systems in governing the "colony". This included the replacement of Dutch with English as a language of administration. The British pound sterling had to be used instead of the Dutch rix-dollar. Alongside establishing a "proper" form of education, through an Education Department founded in 1839, was a systematic attempt to Anglicise the colony. The missionary movement that was set to expedite the introduction of education would also be an agency for both the Anglicisation project and cultural imposition through the then newly built institutions, including Lovedale teachers' college and Fort-hare University. Although the Dutch (later, Afrikaans speaking population) were initially offended and reacted to such oppression, they were appeased by the Treaty of Vereeniging, whose terms included the use of Dutch (later Afrikaans) alongside English in schools and law courts (Davenport and Saunders 2000:233). This, together with more concessions that were later concluded, leading to the so-called Union of South in 1910, meant that two powerbrokers (English and Afrikaners) would, since then, co-govern the country, with the apparent urge to exert their respective languages and cultural influence (or dominance) on the African and indigenous population. Therefore, having been armed for conquest, and with all the accoutrements of a colonialist culture, the dominant power's objective to impose inferior status on indigenous cultural aspects, resulted in a "battered" African culture, only suitable to serve colonial interests (Biko 1978:45).

Despite the "internal wounds" sustained by the African culture of the pre-Van Riebeeck era, the *ubuntu* way of living re-emerged in what Biko (1978:45) refers to as "the modern African culture". The suppression of this culture (indigenous knowledge and systems) through labelling it as primitive and antiquated in pre-democratic South African society, seems to be one reason why *ubuntu* gained prominence as a concept in post-apartheid South Africa.

Socio-cultural institutions, like religion, being the proverbial "glue" that keep communities together, became a battle site in colonial times for the black soul. Using

religion to permeate African culture is referred to by Biko (1978:45) as conquering by persuasion, but this imposed a highly exclusive religion that denounced all other gods, while demanding the adoption of a particular code of living, including worship, clothing, education, customs, and specific determined days of worship. The conquering objective is emphasised in the statement, “where it was impossible to convert, firearms were a readily available and used advantage” (Biko 1978:45).

In *Little Suns* (2015), Mda demonstrates and surveys the colonial domination that involved erosion of the *ubuntu* culture and the aftermath in the country, specifically the Eastern Cape. On his epic journey to track his love object (Mthakwazi), Malangana is led by Umkhondo to a cornfield that previously belonged to his mother. He finds here five women, which he identifies as amaMfengu, hoeing weeds between immature maize shoots. After talking with them, a horseman in a black suit comes cracking a whip at their heels. As they run off helter-skelter, the man admonishes them: “it is the day of the Lord, you heathens” (Mda, 2015:28). Then, brandishing a Bible, he chats with Malangana, noting that they should respect the Sabbath; no work is permitted on this day as it is reserved only for praising the Lord. Malangana thinks to himself, what a vain man this Lord must be, that everyone should reserve a whole day in a week he/she does nothing else but praise him. The use of religion for coercion and as a control tool on people is highly criticised by Zakes Mda in this text and his other writings. Through being a church member and attending its services, Mhlontho, the king of amaMpondomise, gets arrested whilst in exile (in Basotho-land, later known as Lesotho) extradited to the Cape colony to be tried for his role in the killing Hamilton Hope. Malangana, his younger brother and Royal assistant, places the blame squarely on the church “you see this church of his”, “Ebebungene ngantoni ubugqobhoka” (isiXhosa utterance)… “what did he want with Christianity” (Mda, 2015:247).

The criticism regarding the colonial style of enforcing western religion on African indigenous people is shared by Mphahlele (2002:143), who emphasised that such coercion drew people away from their traditional and *ubuntu* based religion. He argues that African peoples always had a supreme being that they believed in, long before the

arrival of other religions (including Christianity and Islam) on the continent. This “creator of all things” had different names, according to the various African languages, which include Modimo, Thixo, Nkulunkulu (in South Africa), Mulungu (East Africa), Ngewo, Mawu, Amma, Olorum-Yoruba and Chukwu-Igbo (West Africa) (Mphahlele, 2002:143). The African god had always been an overarching authority and a vital force amongst people (who connect with him through the ancestors), activating and producing life, making the stars, planets, and other cosmic bodies move according to a definite pattern (Mphahlele, 2002:144). The omniscient god, who encompasses everything is known for his benevolence and is not the symbol of fear threatening people with eternal damnation in hell after death for the sins committed on earth. The worship of gods in African religion was not rigidly structured, and reduced to a weekly or daily routine, as it is in western religion. According to pre-colonial African thought, god is too great to be contained (or confined) in a house (or church building). He was mainly referred to in a personal manner, as if he were flesh, often with a wife and family (Mphahlele, 2002:143), which inspired *ubuntu* culture amongst Africans. It is right from the beginning of his epic journey that Malangana experiences *ubuntu* amongst the people he comes across, as he traverses the escarpment tracing Mhlontlo’s and amaMpondomise’s took steps back to their country and area of origin (the Eastern Cape). As per Mda’s (2015:15) description of *ubuntu* amongst African communities, viz. “people generally open their doors to strangers; hospitality is an obligation of each household”, Malangana encounters individuals, families, as well as community members reflecting these qualities. The confrontation he has with five goats on the way to the mission station, his first destination on his search for Mthwakazi, leads to him losing balance and falling flat on the ground, face-first. An act of kindness immediately intercepts his predicament, in the form of a man (on horseback) who coincidentally come across and witnesses the incident. The man dismounts, helps Malangana to his feet, and offers him a ride on his horse as he realises they are heading in the same direction (Mda, 2015:9). However, this *ubuntu* gesture is rejected by Malangana, who, despite his physical challenge, feels that he is not a charity case. He can do whatever he wants to do, unaided, especially when related to the search for his beloved Mthwakazi.

Although he is cognisant of the indigenous value systems that include respect for any human being (especially the elderly), solidarity, caring, hospitality, interdependence and communalism (Kamwangalu, 1999:26), he does not accommodate such help offers as he regards them as patronising. It is in this regard that he rejects being called “old man” or “khehla”, “ukhehla ngunyoko!” translated as (“don’t you dare call me an old man, rather give that label to your own mother”) (Mda, 2015:9). Twenty-three years back, Malangana is a young man, a new mountain school graduate, muscular and defiant of the colonial authority in the land of amaMpondomise (Qumbu) that he now traverses in search of Mthwakazi. Not yet that old, his physique is ravaged by the harsh conditions he experienced in exile; hence his initial rejection of people calling him “ixhego” or “old man” is somehow justified.

He behaves similarly when he next meets a woman offering to help him. Riding a pony most modestly, astride like a man, and pulling a bridled mule with another hand, is identified by Malangana as one of the “amaKhumsha”, or educated people. However, he realises that she nevertheless defies the amaKhumsha’s decorum for women to ride with both legs hanging on the same side of the horse, with the skirt covering the legs down to the angles, as per British etiquette. This is enough for him to discredit her as one of the people (amaMfengu) that were bequeathed with the land of amaMpondomise for being loyal to the colonialist government. He blames these people for the plight suffered by his clan (amaMpondomise) when they were outlawed by the government, had to leave their beloved country and give up their land.

The woman meets Malangana towards sunset, and realising the difficultly he experiences, walking (or hobbling) on twisted crutches (his legs also twisted), she feels bound by *ubuntu* to help him. Her conscience does not allow her to leave him in such a state. She then offers him a lift, which he rejects, indicating that “he has his two feet to walk with” (Mda, 2015:10). The quick, sarcastic response by the woman, saying “four feet”, emphasises her reasoning that the sun may even set even before he crosses the river, which is itself far from the mission station as his first destination. Her patience (one of the qualities of *ubuntu*) helps to melt Malangana’s heart, as she kind-heartedly

tells him, “I can’t leave you alone here, soon it will be dark” (Mda, 2015:10). He then stops resisting when she alights and helps him to mount the mule (Mda, 2015:11). It is already dark, and the stars are twinkling when they enter her village, where (houses of the school people surrounding or forming laager-style settlements around the mission station), forming a buffer between the missionaries and crude natives (Mda, 2015:8). Refusing his gestures for her to drop him on the desolate spot, she responds, “Hey! Hayi ke! I can’t just leave you here at this time” (Mda, 2015:11).

This is how Malangana finds himself sitting on a stool carved from a garingboom trunk (Mda, 2015:12), sharing a meal of samp and beans with the woman’s family. It is not surprising that a woman succeeds in getting to Malangana’s opaque heart to open up and accept help from another person. However, *ubuntu* is a two-way process, where the receiver, as in this situation, has to go through a ritual of introducing himself, the place he comes from, and his father’s name and clan. He is also expected to share information about his travels, the weather (where he comes from), and any additional anecdotes he picked up along his travels. Mda (2015:12) adds that in this context, itinerant travellers are also conveyers of news. However, despite his gratitude for the hospitality, Malangana is not prepared to share with them anything regarding his travel. He does not like them, not only because they are amaMfengu, the group of people who contributed to Mhlontlo’s defeat at the battle of Tsitsa Gorge, but also because they are too kind to him, especially the woman of the house. He does not mind the man much, as he just sits chewing loudly and ignores him (Mda 2015:13). The woman has that caring nature of willing to help, but this requires Malangana to share with them some details of his journey, which he is reluctant to do.

The *ubuntu* values are observed and practised by amaMpondomise and their king, Mhlontlo, even in dealing with the belligerent Hope and his people at the time of disagreement between the two over Mhlontlo’s inability to participate in the government’s war against the Basotho (Ntoa ea Lithunya). This was when the Basotho of Matatiele, under chief Magwayi, was fighting against giving away their guns as decreed by the government (Mda, 2015:57). The social inclination of Mhlonto and his

subjects is accentuated in the narrator's observation that "like all the people of the Eastern Region, amaMpondomise were known for their hospitality" (Mda, 2015:119). However, the contrast reflected by the stand-off, and the fact that the guests from Qumbu were the most unwelcome visitors, raises the question as to this community's patience to still offer hospitality to them under the circumstances. Tension had been brewing between the government, led by Hamilton Hope, the magistrate of Qumbu District, and amaMpondomise led by their king, Mhlontlo, since the Maclear meeting of September 25, 1880 (Mda, 2015:56). That is where Hope addressed the chiefs (including Mhlontlo) that they, as subjects of the British Empire, would take part in the war, on the government side, in crushing the Basotho rebellion. Although Mhlontlo and his subjects were not for taking up arms against "their own friends" (Mda, 2015:57), the moment in which Hope decides to lead government forces (including amaMpondomise) to the war coincides with Mhlontlo's mourning death of his first wife. As indicated in Chapter Five, he, in this instance, could not touch any weapon of war according to the culture (customs and traditions) and was supposed to be in seclusion (and observe certain rituals) for a specifically determined time, and would, therefore, not be able to participate in the war (Mda, 2015:120) personally. To the utter disgust and anger of the amaMpondomise, Hope rejects this "excuse" as insignificant heathen customs, which he would not allow to delay the plans of the British Empire. He also rejects the delegation of Mhlontlo's uncle, Gxumisa, to lead amaMpondomise warriors to the war. He demands that Mhlontlo physically participates in the war, regardless of his mourning rites. This creates discomfort (and silent rebellion) amongst the amaMpondomise about the planned expedition.

Despite these tensions, the amaMpondomise adhere to their *ubuntu* tradition in preparing for "*iindwendwe*" (guests, including Hope and his entourage) as soon as "*iintlola*" or spies reported that they have left Qumbu, and were on their way to Sulenkama, to camp near Mhlontlo's great place for further strategic planning and training. The welcoming of the *iindwendwe*, which include amaMpondomise warriors or amaButho gathered as per Hope's orders, includes slaughtering fourteen cattle for feasting. Since there was no time (amidst negotiations on the war strategies and the

king's participation) to brew beer at the great place, and due to the mourning (for the king's senior wife), women's donations in the village included home-brewed beer. This is part of hospitality referred to as *ukuphekisa*, which partly reflects communal sharing. Mhlontlo is, in this process, presented as a typically benevolent leader with *ubuntu*. In addition to ordering the slaughter of the cattle for iindwendwe, he shares a meal with Hope and his entourage, regardless of their differences. When he ultimately comes out of his quarters (where he observes mourning rituals), meeting Hope and his entourage, he manages to put aside their differences and asks about their lives, including their families, and commends Davis' brother. The latter, at the time, is the priest in charge of the Shawbury Mission and school, doing an excellent job of teaching and guidance of children from Sulenkama, including Mhlontlo's son, Charles. Despite the mourning ritual, which requires total seclusion and prohibits certain foodstuff, he sits down with the entourage under the wagon and shares a meal with them. He instructs his men to ensure that his food is well prepared, according to custom, including avoiding any seasoning that may have salt traces. This becomes interesting to Hope and company, as they watch the proceedings with keen interest. The *ubuntu* culture brings about Mhlontlo's benevolence towards his arch-foe, Hamilton Hope, even at the time of heightened differences between the two. When The amaMpondomise warriors assassinate Hope, Mhlontlo ensures that innocent people in Hope's entourage, like Davis, are spared and safely escorted to their families.

6.5 UBUNTU IN SHE PLAYS WITH THE DARKNESS (1995)

In this novel, Zakes Mda focuses on social binaries that subvert social cohesion, primarily a symptom of African humanism and *ubuntu.* Through the divergent narrative of the "twins", Radisene and Daksha, Mda critiques the divisiveness of post-colonial society, which is the antithesis of pre-colonial society, with humanistic values. The latter form of society, characterised by social cohesion, a sense of belonging amongst community members, inclusivity, trust, and general *ubuntu* values until the colonial era, is metaphorically symbolised through the "twins" and their experience as they grow. They initially bond intimately as children growing at their home, well cared for by the mother and the community, until Dikosha is denied the opportunity for secondary

education on the basis of gender, whilst her twin brother's further education is fully funded by the local church leaders, the "Holy Fathers of the Church" (Mda, 1995:5). This is when their indigent mother could not afford their high school costs. Although this moment of their different features marks a split in the siblings' lives, as they henceforth take divergent routes in their growth trajectories, they occasionally reach out to each other in the *ubuntu* tradition. In this regard, McDonald (2009:134) provides a specific philosophical context pertaining Mda's *ubuntu* or humanistic deployment of twinship. The broad cultural concept of *ubuntu* can, in this concept, be effectively expressed through the proverb *umtu ngumtu ngabantu* (in Nguni languages) or *motho ke motho ka batho* (in Sesotho). The English version, "a person is a person through other people," points to the perception that "the self is not created through self-determination, but primarily through the sacrifices of others and interaction with them" (McDonald, 2009:135). Therefore, the self may not completely split from others even when one pursues such.

When Radisene's education path takes him to the "lowlands", the country's urban areas, with secondary schools and higher education institutions, Dikosha remains sad and forlorn in their home village of haSamane. Having been a bright-minded learner, she gets bored just staying at home with nothing that challenges her mind, and her resentment of the church father's decision to exclude her from schooling is passed on to the family and the community. She then psychologically isolates herself from the rest, preferring to spend her days in the veld among the aloes and turning over boulders in search of snakes; she would then play with these creatures, "mesmerise them with her dance", seize and drain venom out of their bodies, skin and roast them in anthill ovens she dug for these purposes (Mda, 1995b:4). She would then share the snake meat with herd boys without talking or being friendly to them. Shunning the whole of society, she avoids speaking with anyone, "not even with her mother or the girls with whom she sang" (Mda, 1996b:2). This anti-*ubuntu* behaviour is only alleviated when the brother is back home from the lowlands, which happens once or twice a year. The first time he visits is when he had just completed high school and started working as a teacher at a night school where he was a student. Dikosha is so excited that she breaks her silence,

talks, and even giggles, and she asks him all sorts of questions about life in the lowlands. This is before she sees the gifts that he brought her and their mother; the red dress and a bag of cabbage, respectively.

Dikosha highly values the red dress, and this brings them closer as siblings; she pecks her brother on the cheek as she thanks him for it, and expresses deep gratitude for the dress, saying “it’s going to last me forever” (Mda, 1995b:10). She indeed values the gift as she is later seen wearing it on “important or big occasions, such as Misti’s ceremony, for her educational achievements from overseas institutions. When food was served, she was not keen to eat from the communal dish, but everyone recognised the “thin girl in the red dress” (Mda, 1995b:48). McDonald (2009:135) noted that the twinship theme in this novel (as well as in his other writings post-1994) foregrounds interpersonal relations of brotherhood and sisterhood as a fundamental and indispensable bond to foster interconnected humanity or *ubuntu* in post-colonial and post-apartheid South Africa. This also ameliorates divisive issues like race, class, and gender relations, as the concept enables overcoming such binaries by re-establishing the significance of humanism in South African society, and mapping out crucial elements of twinship over the social division that cascaded to further satisfied and polarised society.

The culture of ubuntu is reflected in communal interactions in ha-Samane and neighbouring villages and through individual relations with others in the community. Despite the twins’ divergent lives, the ha-Samane community lives up to the African proverb “it takes a village to raise a child”. When they enjoy each other’s presence and bonding during Radisene’s home visits, the family gets a pleasant surprise visit by the “Mother of the Daughters” in the company of other village mothers:

> “Ahe, Mother of the twins”, we heard that our son is back from the lowlands. “We thought we should come and see him with this billycan of sour porridge” (Mda, 1995b:10).

After surveying Radisene, and marvelling at how grown up and handsome he has become, they each give him some money (a five-cent or ten-cent coin) as a token of

their parental love. He is touched by this expression of their selfless love, knowing how destitute their social conditions are at the time.

The concept of twinship is more pronounced in *She Plays With The Darkness* (1995b) than in any of Zakes Mda's novels, perhaps due to the sudden prominence of the ubuntu concept in post-1994 South Africa. The latter issue is partly addressed by Ngcoya (2009:6), where he demonstrates that the values of indigenous African cultures, as they have in previous struggles against colonialism and racial oppression, continue to play a critical role in shaping post-apartheid South Africa. He also argues that, like other indigenous value systems, *ubuntu* provides a new idiom for voicing old and new concerns about the trajectory in South Africa and the world at large. This is demonstrated through the democratisation of society, which, coupled with relaxation of the oppressive regime and social context, freed most people's minds and led them to relook at themselves and their cultures positively. The individuals in the "new" environment developed the confidence to identify with the communities they come from. On another level, a community became an organic unit that in turn reflected their *ubuntu* aspirations. Shutte refers to this as "the whole-hearted identification of the self with the other" (Shutte, 2001:52); this points to an egalitarian type of relation between the component individuals themselves, on one side, and between such individuals and the community, on the other. Thus, the individuals' dependence on the community does not suggest that he/she is less than it, but that he/she is identical with it. In other words, the relationship between the two gets so complex that the "community" becomes the "I" and alternately the "I" also becomes the "community", personified or individualised. The in-context deduction from this argument is that the two should never compete or in an inequitable relation, but a twinship mode. Radisene and Dikosha's twinship is also extended to their respective twinship with their home village, haSamane. McDonald (2009:142) corroborates that the siblings are both entwined twice, first with one another and second, with their community. As indicated earlier in this chapter, their relationship with each other is never the same after the biased selection of Radisene for high school education funding. It is earlier "on and off", that is, although Dikosha's focus and social interests were thwarted (after the incident) and therefore rebelled against everyone

around her (including not talking to anyone), she became lively and showed enthusiasm when Radisene was back home (even for few days) (Mda, 1995b:12). Such times include the one when he brought her the gift of the red dress. However, there are times when everything is upside down pertaining to their relationship (and twinship). These are times when she even brings to a halt her favourite social engagements, that is, dancing and singing, because her loathing of him would not allow her to be even in the same room with him:

> She danced until the following autumn, when she suddenly confined herself to her house, and played and danced only with the darkness. She had felt in her bones that Radisene would be coming, and did not want him to lay his eyes on her. She did not want to lay her eyes on him either. She was going to sit in her room until he went back to his lowlands (Mda, 1995b:170).

As the core value in the *ubuntu* continuum, the significance of the twinship concept is maintained by Mda, even at the highpoint of the now divergent lives of the siblings. At the time when they are so socially and spiritually separate that they are unable to re-engage effectively with each other, remaining split even when in each other's presence towards the end of the novel (McDonald, 2009:142), their individual twinship with their home village remains the crucial basis on which each characteristically fulfils Mda's humanistic theme featuring *ubuntu*. The two principal characters are measured in terms of their ability to interact and integrate with the haSamane community.

The twinship theme is further explored through communal monozygotic and dizygotic resemblance parallels between identical social entities and intergenerational characters, in line with McDonald's (2009:143) argument around Misti's character. In this regard, the ha-Sache village is profiled at the almost same level as haSamane, to the extent that they seem identical. These two villages share the Black River. Along the banks of this river, Radisene used to look after cattle as a young boy. This is also where the twins one time sit and bond with each other, whilst admiring nature around them. Next to the river, a huge cave with a granite mouth that opened on the riverside, "the cave of

Barwa" is portrayed as the crucial historical site and centre of attraction for people primarily from both villages:

> The twins sat on the granite rock at the mouth of the cave, while Dikosha was entranced by the dancers on the wall, Radisene was engrossed in the dark water of the Black River as it lazily flowed past the cave (Mda 1995b:17).

While listening to the deep rumble of the river that flowed past the cave to ha-Sache, and the whispers of the long-departed cave inhabitants, Radisene's mind reminiscences about Misti. He was strongly attracted to this petite girl from ha-Sache, but afraid to approach her, and therefore was now negotiating with his twin sister to be an intercessor for him. Ha-Sache also gets high profiling through big communal gatherings and feasts hosted in this village. In addition to Misti's educational achievements' celebration, ha-Sache hosts a big *tlhope* or diviners' night for her initiation to the diviners' world. These occasions are communally significant for the two villages. Attendance by the people from ha-Samane (at all these occasions) is highlighted by the narrator, as in this instance:

> That evening, those people of ha-Samane who loved social occasions and were undaunted by mountains of snow, rode their horses to ha-Sache. Others went on foot (Mda, 1995b:141).

The two villages are portrayed as the epitome of ubuntu, featuring communalism, people's reliance on each other and cultural integration. At Misti's feast in ha-Sache, the Mother of the twins and the Mother of the Daughters, both from ha-Samane, arrive three days earlier to help with the preparations. The narrator shares the expertise and ability of these two women for cooking and traditional beer brewing (Mda, 1995b: 42). Their skills and experience in these areas are not sold, but freely given for the benefit of the community. Sharing in the community is also demonstrated in the feast through neighbours not waiting to be asked for any help needed by the hosting family. They voluntarily bring their own home utensils, including "benches and cookery" (Mda, 1995b:44). On such occasions, the two villages would also share their respective expertise in cultural performance. In this regard, women from ha-Sache excel in the

Mokgibo dance. The whole audience joins by singing, clapping, and other signs of appreciation. Men render the Mohobelo dance with the full attention of the audience. The audience appreciates the variation between the two villages: “The men from ha-Samane, led by the Father of the Daughters did the slow, graceful version of Mohobelo, while the ha-Sache men, led by the Father of the Homestead, did the faster more agile type” (Mda, 1995b:47). In addition to communal celebrations, learning from one another on the part of community members provides an opportunity for cultural integration amongst and between the two villages.

Ubuntu as a theme is also broadened and sustained through Misti. McDonald (2009:142) equates the significance of this character with the two main characters, Radisene and Dikosha, pertaining to twinship and community mediation. She is represented as person who is more able to reach across both sides of the divide between individual and community and past and present. Radisene’s crush on her takes effect from their teens to when they are both working and mature adults. She acknowledges this emotional chemistry between them, as she opens up to him when she visits him at the hotel in Maseru, where he stayed, to inform him about her “calling” and bid him (and their impending relation) farewell, as she was now about to be a *lethuela* diviner:

> You know Radisene, Misti finally said; I have always thought of you as somebody very special. I love you too Radisene… I have loved you since we were kids, but things will never work between us. I am leaving town for some time. When I come back I’ll be different. My life is not my own. I have been called by the ancestors. I am going to be a lethuela diviner (Mda, 1995b: 118 -119).

Despite her high educational qualifications (a degree in Medical Laboratory Technology) (Mda, 1995b:46-47), her high-paying job at the Maseru Hospital and material possessions like the Volkswagen (Mda 1995b:69), she ultimately accepts the dualities of her identity when the ancestors call her to become a traditional “Lethuela”, or diviner. This calling reflects and signifies the twinship between the past and the present, which, according to McDonald (2009:143), follows the trend in Mda’s narrative writing that has

been heightened in *The Heart of Redness* (2000), with dual plots between ancestral and descendant pairs of brothers. This foregrounds traditionally perceived societal continuity and the power of the past in the present. Misti is summoned by her grandmother, who died long before she was born (who herself was a diviner) across the different times of their lives, and brings her into the fold as her "twin". Misti's portrayal as someone who can reconcile her status as a modern, highly educated individual with her place within her rural home village shows her as having more *ubuntu* than her counterparts, Radisene and Dikosha.

However, considering all variables, Misti's appearance as a corrective to the twins is not solid, due to her privileged position compared to Dikosha. Misti and Dikosha presented the two characters through varying degrees as champions of cultural integration and reconciliation, especially between the past and the present. Although Dikosha initially disengages with the ha-Samane community life, due to the challenges resulting from her disadvantaged and poor background, she does later find some level of integration into haSamane. The level of community integration that fulfils Dikosha's worldview reflects the need to create cultural identity in the post-colony actively. This is the notion espoused by Hall (1994:394) where he argues that although a deeper understanding of the historical process pertaining to post-colonial identity is crucial, a parallel process of continual creative regeneration is of utmost importance. This further explained below:

> Cultural identity is a matter of "becoming" as well as of "being". It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something that already exists, transcending place, time, history, and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical they undergo constant transformation (Hall, 1994:394).

In this regard, Attwell (2005:195), in his critique *Rewriting Modernity: Studies in Black South African Literary History*, refers to Mda's tendency to have a protagonist who is not just a maker of meaning, but also "maker of culture". Hence, it turns out that Dikosha's rehabilitation into the community is not just meant for her to return fully. She re-constructs the traditions to which she is exposed (through her own examination of

baSotho traditions and former village inhabitants). This includes Sotho indigenous culture, like “ditema” patterns in some areas of ha-Samane, and what she borrowed from the Barwa cave paintings. She also embraces the present, as reflected through her strong attachment to the red dress, and her lowlands gift. She uses all these to create her new identity (Mda, 1995b:13, 48). Her new developmental and cultural occupations in the village include working on her cabbage patch, through which she enlightens and empowers other village women to grow their own food and vegetables of different types. This results in community gardens that the women do independently, “unlike in the lowlands, where such projects are supported by the Germans, the Americans and all sorts of white people from across the seas” (Mda, 1995b:116). Community social activities become one of the means for her interaction with the people. In addition to playing with the darkness in her room, she would avail herself of dancing on a variety of occasions in the village; known for her excellent dance performance skills, she is featured in all dance occasions across the board. These include Zionists, as they drummed themselves into a frenzy possessed by the Holy Spirit, the *tlhope* dances, where Mathuela drums throbbed, Mogkibo and *famo* dance of the *fuchu* parties. She also danced with young children and men in their various groups (Mda, 1995b: 170).

Dikosha’s *ubuntu* qualities are further reflected in the decision she takes to conduct men’s confessions. Although she does not do any counselling sessions, the men feel much relief when they leave (Mda, 1995b:178). Although Misti is seen as the epitome of twinship between the past and the present, culture integrations and *ubuntu* are a “corrective” to the main characters, Radisene and Dikosha, and on closer inspection, the latter (Dikosha) reflects similar qualities to Misti’s. Dikosha starts life on the backfoot, from a poor home (unemployed single parent), and cannot pay for her high school education. McDonald (1995b:143) argues that her lack of agency leaves little room for her to negotiate identity in ways similar to what Misti easily does, with an affluent family background and better education. This disempowerment leads her to reject her disenfranchisement through self-isolation. However, as indicated above, her reintegration into the community reflects ubuntu qualities of similar value with those of Misti. They ultimately can be seen as a manifestation of Biko’s (1978:51) vision,

expressed in the form of the “great gift that Africa bestows to the world, a more human face”, an *ubuntu* projection. This reflects a two-pronged resolution to or mediation of the world’s inhuman and hostile social environment.

On the one hand, Biko (1978:45-51) propagates the concept of humanity, which, if well understood and embraced by all, would culturally liberate not only South Africa, but the whole world, from inhuman social systems that include racial prejudice, human oppression, exploitation of one by another, and all these would be replaced by a new order characterised by human equality. On the other hand, such propagation and the eventual realisation of the two (humanism and *ubuntu*) is mainly initiated and driven by the downtrodden. The fact that the oppressed or subjugated are mostly those with lesser means, Biko (1978:31) attributes positive potential to them so as not to merely liberate themselves, but also to trigger and attain fundamental transformation in the world in which they live. Therefore Africa, on which various atrocities (that include colonisation and slave trade) have been committed, is arguably best suited to champion humanism and *ubuntu* to the whole world.

6.6 CONCLUSION

The focus for this chapter was concept of *ubuntu* as the overarching theme in Zakes Mda’s selected novels. It initially anatomised and probed African Humanism as the foundational concept for the *ubuntu* philosophy. This entailed examining Mphahlele’s philosophical views on the subject. After grappling with what he saw as the biased, inhuman representation of the non-European character in South African English fiction, Mphahlele explored the possibility of humanistic images in South African literature. The two concepts, African humanism and *ubuntu*, are subsets of an egalitarian, non-racial society, which he deals with in his writings, more so in post-1994 general elections in South Africa. African humanism was initially traced from its logical derivative, humanism. The various definitions associated with the latter were found to be joined by common elements that include human interest, welfare, fulfilment and human dignity. The concept was similarly defined to have the well-being of persons as its core value. A significant difference was highlighted between the 16th-century interpretation by

Hinnells (1995:225) and Eleojo's (2014:302) concept definitions. Whilst the former attributes "humanism" to non-religious beliefs and values, the latter described most African peoples as "incurably religious". This and the view of human persons as the universe's centrepiece, as suggested by Mbiti (1982:38), projects African humanism as anthropocentric.

In bringing the concept closer to the central theme of the chapter, *ubuntu*, Mphahlele's reference to Jacques Maritain was brought into context: "humanism aims to render man more truly human" (Mphahlele, 1986:7). This highlights as significant the way people relate to one another, and according to Gaylard (2004:273), this is rooted in African proverbs and aphorisms. According to Mphahlele (2002a:147), a contrast was drawn between the western lifestyle, which is predominantly individualistic, and the African way of living defined chiefly in the community and the collective. Emphasis was placed on the fact that the human person finds fulfilment in the context of community.

African humanism is thus a communal concept, which also gives effect to the *ubuntu* way of living. *Ubuntu* as a concept was defined regarding "radical communitarianism" as proclaimed by Kamwangamalu (1999:27). This emphasised the value of an individual's subordination to group interests or community, otherwise put, *umtu ngumtu nga banye abantu*. The core value of "humaneness", was defined through people's understanding of themselves as humans with dignity and value. Gaylard's (2004:270) argument that this depends on an individual giving the recognition to others and receiving the same or more was evaluated. A comparative reference was made to Ngcoya's (2009:2) definitions through African proverbs, idioms, and aphorisms, emphasising community wholeness and the role of human persons within it.

Against this background, the novels *Little Suns* (2015) and *She plays with the Darkness* (1995b) were analysed. The reference made to Steve Biko (1978:45) indicated that, despite the colonial pressures on the African culture after Jan van Riebeek's arrival in the country, *ubuntu* culture re-emerged into what is known as the "modern African culture". The 1994 political dawn in South Africa reignited the debate and nostalgic feeling around this culture, hence Mda's writings on the subject. The study of *Little Suns*

(2015) and *She Plays with the Darkness* (1995) was undertaken in this chapter along these lines. This demonstrates that, notwithstanding the domination by the colonial and Anglo-Boer culture, African culture emerged from the battered and disfigured form into a well distilled and refined African culture, inspired by *ubuntu* philosophy. From this fact, credence can be given to Biko's (1978:51) assertion that Africa is yet to bestow to the world "a more human face". This is the core indicator of humanism and *ubuntu* that the two novels propagate.

CHAPTER SEVEN

7. EPILOGUE AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

7.1. COMPENDIUM / SYNOPSIS

7.1.1. REVIEW OF THE STUDY BACKROUND

Investigating African humanism, *ubuntu* and character representation in Zakes Mda's fiction is both an arduous and rewarding task. It was imperative to initially provide a contextual definition of critical and operative concepts, as outlined in the first chapter of this study. This entailed delving into approaches and methodologies applied in the study, such as the critical referential approach, biographical approach, realism, socio-cultural approach and African humanism.

The social context of literature was traced from the colonial era to post-apartheid fictional writings. The divisive political regime of the time, and the fact that most of those on the harsh end of the "stick" were the black Africans, led to protest literature primarily by non-white writers. In *Philosophy from Africa*, edited by Coetzee and Roux, Irele (2002:35) reflects on a collective consciousness of Blacks as a group that has been subjected to a more pre-eminent social force that they view as the Black predicament that historically subjugated African writers to the west with its dominant culture. The consequent resistance themes to counteract western dominance constituted progression from subordination to independent thinking that generally reflected significant development in African literature.

In further sketching the background to the study, reference has been made to Harrison's (2012:3) writings on the South African political developments since 1910. In his book *The White Tribe of Africa* (2012:3-4), he indicates that, although the white-only settlement that resulted in South Africa's Union in 1910 did not include black South Africans, it was after 1948 that apartheid policy was introduced, enacted and implemented. However, there were also significant discriminatory practices that predate 1948, as elaborated in the first chapter. This would have resulted in the intensified resistance by Black people, which instead, reverberated into more protest literature,

some of which would be clandestine, to avoid censorship. The contextualisation of the study included a review of more than four decades of political instability, defiance campaign and state brutality before the “cease-fire” of the early 1990s. This reflected that the struggle that had hitherto been chiefly characterised by the binary opposites of Afrikaner nationalism and African nationalism had been more cultural than political. This was the crux of the peace talk negotiations between the representatives of the two organisations, then the National Party (NP) and the African National Congress (ANC). One could see the similarity between Biko’s (1987:45) concern about African culture being dominated and at the risk of being vanquished by the west, and Afrikaner’s apprehension as expressed by Peter de Lange (in Thabo Mbeki – The Dream Deferred 2009) and about possibly losing their cultural identity in a democratic South Africa. This is at the centre of the study, as it investigated Mda’s representation of character pertaining to people’s culture and *ubuntu*, part of which refers to African humanism.

The problem statement involved a critical evaluation of protest literature. Nkosi (1983:133) cautioned about the restrictive nature of writings that rely on racial conflict themes and the “diminishing returns” of this writing in contemporary times. Although Es’kia Mphahlele found himself to be one of those writers who could not pull themselves out of the race quagmire in their writings, Nkosi’s (1983:134) testimony about the positive development on Mphahlele’s characterisation approach across the racial spectrum, since the publication of *The African Image* (1974), was foregrounded in the first chapter of this study. Against this background, Zakes Mda’s writing, from overtly political, in his early artworks to fictional narratives in the post-apartheid South Africa, was traced. His growing up in an apartheid society, his parents being intermittently harassed by security forces and himself subjected to exile at the age of 14 was linked to his political activism, which developed alongside his artistic talent. The *ubuntu* approach in his writings closely compares to Biko’s conception of African culture.

African humanism was defined as a philosophy with assertion on pre-colonial African ways and as a vehicle for human dignity and social transformation (Mphahlele 1974:10). Regarding this matter, a case was made for the close relation between selected fictional

works and social factors. In this instance, the myth that social reality repels the imagination was dispelled and proven false, as both Mphahlele and Mda's literary works reflect moments of the close relation between imagination and reality. The concept of African humanism was defined alongside African culture, as the colonial denigration of Africans centred around these spheres, which in turn form the core theme in Mda's narrative writings. This is similar to his forerunner, Mphahlele. The latter refers to African humanism as claiming back and repositioning African culture to its rightful place (Mphahlele 1974:67). This aligns with Biko's (1987:97) writings, according to whom the denigration of African culture was imposed to advance colonial interests. The by-product of such segregated oppression was anti-African literature, which increased in abundance from colonial times to the beginning of the democratic era in South Africa. This forms the central theme of Mphahlele's book, *The African image* (1974). Zakes Mda's contribution to the advancement of African humanism was demonstrated through his focus on the African renaissance.

The justification of the study reflected on social challenges that African writers' sort to address through their writings. The focused survey of a few of these writers revealed their focus to be on the decline in the quality of family life among Africans since World War II. This closely addressed the systematic destruction of African family life, originally from the time of colonisation. However, at an increased momentum in the era of mineral discoveries in South Africa, around 1886 (Tang & Watkins, 2011), industrial development required intensive cheap labour, which would enhance industrialists profit maximisation. The consequent migrant labour pitched against the declining rural economy would then haunt and destabilise African families for successive generations, as reflected by Mphahlele's character, Rampa in *The Wanderers* (1975) and Peter Abrahams' *Mine Boy* (1946).

The justification for the study demonstrated the nature of the literary response to the socio-political challenges of the time, which were anti-imperialist, and affirmed African humanism, legitimacy, and self-determination. Reference was made to Ngugi wa Thiongo's polemical essays, *Barrel of a Pen* (1983) and *Writers in Politics* (1981) and

the book *Decolonising the Mind* (1986), which provided a philosophical background for his fictional works. These were seen as reflecting a strong cultural focus and dialectical relationship between African literature and socio-political reality. Such literature found an easy fitting expression in the binary opposites of a black and white divide that characterised post-1652 and pre-1994 South African society. A typical context was presented through Stephen Blacks' novel, *The Dorp* (1920), which limits the role played by blacks to the margins of the narrative. Silvester Stein's view in *The Drum* magazine of the late 1950s was used as a point of reference and affirmation that literary writing mirrored the racially divided society. This resulted in foregrounding white characters for predominantly white readers, and relegating black characters to comic objects as passive victims. As indicated in the first chapter of this study, Mphahlele emerged amongst many protest writers, explicitly focusing on African humanism, which aligns with Biko's writings on African culture. Mda's writing was probed to the extent to which it elevates African humanism to the point where it recognises the humanity of all people across racial lines. This was accentuated in *Justify the enemy: Becoming Human in South Africa* (2018), in which he refers to the "most fundamental lesson in his writing career" at the time, that is, "to allow even one's enemy full humanity" (Mda 2018:10).

The theoretical composition of the study featured Mphahlele's ideas on African humanism, its propinquity to Biko's writings on African culture and the consanguinity of these concepts, and its contribution to the *ubuntu* philosophy. Mphahlele's critique of character representation in the apartheid era fiction was discussed in relation to Nkosi's (1983) and Ndebele's (1978) analyses of Black writing. The critical focus on the theoretical background was Zakes Mda's ideas on the social impact in fiction writing. An outline of selected theories of characterisation propagated by Foster (1970), Pickerel (1988), Fishelov (1990), Margolin (1990) and Fokkema (1991) was featured particularly for their formative contribution to the study of literary character. However, their seminal work was anchored in recent theoretical proclamations on the subject, including the same authors revisiting their work and that of others. For example, articles such as *Man is the measure* (Foster 2012) *The what, the when, and the how of being a character in literary narrative* (Uri Margolin's 2007) as well as *Virtual people* (Newman 2009), were

featured in the study. The key theoretical propositions selected for the background study were dovetailed to both post-colonial and decolonisation theories as sub-themes that sew together different sections with common reference points. This was enabled by the broad-based nature of these postulations, which render them a prolific pedestal from which other theories could evolve.

The research methodologies applied aided a deeper and more informed understanding of the different context of character depiction around the realms of African personality, humanism, and *ubuntu*, where the process included explaining, defining, clarifying, comparing and evaluating certain character aspects towards an improved understanding of African humanism and the contribution of the *ubuntu* philosophy to character representation. The research approach was interpretive, discursive, and evaluative, and therefore relied a great deal on textual analysis. Various materials were used, and these involved analysing both primary and secondary sources. The nature of the study necessitated a qualitative research method. This was used mainly on the rationale that various characterisation theories, their application, and actual depiction of characters versus different philosophical viewpoints require intense investigation. The qualitative approach was motivated through the approaches of Denzin and Lincoln (2000:3), as defined in the first chapter of this study. On this basis, and with reference to other writers on qualitative research, the study was undertaken through a qualitative approach.

7.1.2. SUMMARY OF THE MAIN CHAPTERS OF THE STUDY

The second chapter was dedicated to the literature review and theoretical framework as the basis of the study. In this regard, the initial “building block” was Mphahlele’s ideas on African humanism as expressed in *The African Image* (1974). His chief anxiety was the style and approach to character depiction in South African literature, particularly during the colonial and apartheid eras. The root of the problem emanated from a definition of character solely based on a societal group of people with whom the character shares racial identity. Mphahlele’s (1974:13) diagnosis in this regard entailed character definitions that reflect images of the different nationalities as envisioned in the

new, free and non-racial South Africa. This demystified the broad concept “African” in the definition that foregrounds “cultural” rather than “racial” makeup. Mphahlele (1974:14) also challenged the attribution of nationality based on geographical habitation. He, therefore, suggested that categorisation of people as Africans ought to be based on their embracing of and being part of African culture.

Mphahlele’s (1981:1) crucial contribution to this study is his acknowledgement of controversial literary images in his own fiction. Per his admission, he initially could not produce fully developed non-African characters, as he often, although in vain, tried to turn around a white stereotype. His growing up and socialisation in a racially polarised society would “cloud” his judgment ,to the extent that the figure turned 360 degrees back to the initial position, thereby losing the grasp on the character’s objective qualities (Mphahlele 1974:14). The experiences above reflect the writer’s quandary and plight in constructing rounded characters across racial lines, premised on societal norms of racial segregation and human inequalities. The impact of this social anomaly on literature bolstered Mphahlele’s resolve to advocate for African humanism in his writings. The reference to the “tyranny of place and aesthetics” encapsulates his belief and understanding of the society that his fiction responded to the addressed. He also used a Marxist interpretation of art and its function in society, which deciphers art as practically hinged on social relations (Mphahlele 1990:2). This was motivated by the notion that an individual’s self-awareness and environment are constituted in and through relationship with other human beings (Mphahlele 1990:3). The view of literature from the angle indicated above goes some way to explain Mphahlele’s quest for African humanism through his writings. Through his synthesis of literature's social function, Mphahlele (2002: xxi) provides a strong case for aesthetics-based literature that develops and empowers the human mind.

The social relevance of literature was identified as the essential quality that put the two writers on a similar footing. Although Mphahlele’s literary work was less political and merely dealt with the humanistic image of a black character, their writing careers were traced from their common conviction to address social decay and inhuman living

conditions for the less privileged people that characterised South African society. Mda's initial focus on a politically charged drama reflected a more action-orientated approach that was neutralised by the shift to the narrative fiction genre in the mid-1990s, which coincided with the advent of democracy in the country. Their objection to the notion of "art for its own sake" was discussed to be one of the key qualities that they share. The spotlight focus on Zakes Mda's writings reflects on his accentuation of human equality, which limited his oeuvre to the concept of humanism.

Fair acculturation could not transpire between the West and African culture due to the former's intention to conquer and vanquish the latter's supposed "barbaric ways and superstitions" (Biko 1978:44). This lamentable situation led to the African culture shedding (losing) most of its crucial elements, resulting in a "bastard" culture (Biko 1978:50), lacking humanism and ubuntu. Ashcroft et al. (1989:209) argue that when indigenous populations imbibe imperial culture, they espouse the assumption that their own culture is primitive and crude. In response to this, Biko propagated the conscientisation of Africans towards self-love and the embracing of their own culture towards a revived humanism. He focused the latter on concepts of collectivity and sharing that reposition the human being at the centre of society (Biko 1987:46).

The nature of the study involves an investigation of post-colonial and decolonisation theories, which were proven to have a significant impact on Black writing. In addition to the African writers' antagonism against the conquest by the west and colonialism since the early years of the 19th century, literary onslaughts on neo-colonialism were intensified by African writers, especially from the mid-20th century onwards. Different views on this "common enemy" were identified through the two "schools of thought", one opposing and critiquing political injustice in modern Africa, and the other focusing on addressing colonial and neo-colonial forces on society, culture, and government post-independence Africa. Despite differing opinions, most Black writers in the late 20th century used social realism in the wake of the post-colonial underclass. The era was also characterised by calls for more pro-African themes that elevated cultural decolonisation.

A specific reference was made to the writers, who, through their themes of resistance and decolonisation, impacted Zakes Mda's writings, including Achebe, Fanon, Biko and Mphahlele. A literary genetic linkage was demonstrated between these writers' foregrounding of Africa's experiences with colonialism, postcolonialism, and decolonisation, and Mda's writings.

In addition to African humanism, character representation in South African literature (particularly by Black South Africans) was surveyed through the critiques of Nkosi (1983) and Ndebele (1986). Although the two critics' appraisal of African writers' response delved into the socio-political environment of the apartheid era, Nkosi (1983:31) also focused on social stereotypes. He, moreover, noted that the challenges of African writing under the circumstances start with distorted identity. Therefore, according to him, it was crucial that a writer reflects proper racial groups in dealing with people and not identify certain groups simple as "non-white". The latter perpetuated the stereotype that would constrain many writers to racial oppression themes, which Nkosi (1983:32) cautions against. Ndebele (1986:151) was critical of writers who target and confine their writing to racial polarisation themes in a similar approach. According to him, literary work ought to go beyond such limitations to find various ways towards a redemptive transformation. He strongly advocates for writing that retraces the ordinary's rediscovering, which is seen as a retrieval technique, to give a "round portrayal" for African characters.

The study's hypothetical foundation was unravelled through character theories proposed by Foster (1970), Pickerel (1988), Fishelov (1990), and Margolin (1990). These were significant points of reference, particularly on foundational information on the literary character. However, limitations inherent in such fundamental philosophies were "balanced off" through later publications on character theories. For instance, Forster's (1970:52) basic theory that literary character ought first be understood as human beings were investigated from the perspective and notion of "actual" life. However, the differentiation between fictional characters and real-life people was maintained. In a later publication, *Man is the Measure*, Forster (2012:161) accentuates

human aspects of character. Analysis of this view reflected a culture inclined in the expression that elevates humanitarian qualities. Margolin's (1989:4) argument that an actant is presented through semantic concretisation that includes social functions was applied to Mda's writing. A comparative analysis was also effected between Mead's (1990:443) assertion that characters represent social or ideological types and Newman's (2009:73) notion of characters as virtual people. The synthesis that whilst literary characters are rooted in their discrete fictional contexts, their comprehension is enhanced through framing principles that foreground the notion of real human beings. This was used as one of the key reference points for the study.

Chapter Three dealt with character analysis in the novels *Ways of Dying* (1995a), and *She Plays with the Darkness* (1995b) through African originated theories. The focus on African humanism vis-à-vis characterisation triggered a contentious issue or question as the extent to which a literary character represents a human being. This was addressed through character theories that involve traditional and structuralist views, according to whom the meaning formation of literary character lies much on the human aspect (Fokkema 1991:19). The gist of this theoretical view was that a variegated and diverse comprehension of a character depends on the character's textuality and its similitude to actual persons. This accentuated the foundational rationale of the study, namely that novels or literary texts are about people, and sustaining a plot is achieved through psychological motives.

The evaluation of African humanism in Ways of Dying (1995) focused on the interaction between the two main characters, Noria and Toloki, at different times in their lives. These characters were discussed as the novel's fulcrum, as the author uses them to explore issues pertinent to societal conditions of the time. These include the "rural-urban divide", beauty versus ugliness, poverty versus wealth, spirituality versus the material world; and generally, love-hate relationships that characterise society. Having grown up together in the countryside, they meet again in the city under different circumstances. Their significance was seen to resonate with histories and experiences of black communities, generally in South Africa. In line with African culture, which was

under duress ever since the colonial invasion and in the early 1990s when black-on-black violence shrouded townships in the country, Toloki is used to draw attention to the significance of death lamentations and mourning rituals (giving closure and continuity) for black communities. The two characters were also highlighted as ambassadors of the African renaissance that Mda emphasises and that ordinary people would effectively drive without any "power" base (Mazibuko 2002).

In addition to African humanism, the study of the novel, *She Plays with the Darkness* (1995b) reflected the focus on social binaries and postulating the role of the marginalised artist in the context of societal transformation. The divisiveness of post-colonial society was investigated, with the consequent rationale for the necessity of humanistic values in transforming post-colonial culture identities (Attwell 2005:194). Deployment of the concept of twinship, which was identified as the significant thread running through Mda's novels, proved more elaborate in *She Plays with the Darkness* (1995b), apparently to validate the perception of brotherhood and sisterhood as a primary, underlying bond, whose relevance remains significant in the post-colonial era. The concept of ubuntu is demonstrated through the depiction of the two siblings, Radisene and Dikosha, as twinned; not only to one another but also, each to the community of haSamane. The African proverb, which can be defined as "the self is not created through self-determination but basically through sacrifices of others" (Macdonald 2009:135) was used to accentuate the need for human solidarity. The phrase *umntu ngumntu ngabanye abantu* (in isiXhosa), or *motho ke motho ka batho babang* (in Sesotho) has been featured in this study as the crux of African humanism and also key to human solidarity. Instances include childbirth, being raised in a particular community, and socialisation in human society as essential forms of human interdependence, for which solidarity is crucial. As expressed by Mda in the novel, *She Plays in the Darkness* (1995b), the "self" is thus ultimately always intertwined with the others. This is the basis of his deployment of the twinship concept.

The fourth chapter was focused on *The Heart of Redness* (2000) and *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2002) in reference to western-based theories of character alongside views

from selected African theorists. It was demonstrated that the difference between the two theoretical perspectives is not symmetrical, but that they merely represent different points of emphasis; for instance, the depiction through “the frame reality” (Newman 2009:73) indicates that although character roles are significant at the textual level, writers do write about human beings, and human destinies. This was illustrated through Camagu’s long journey to Qolorha–by–Sea searching for NomaRussia, after his “first-sight” attraction to her at a wake in Hillbrow, Johannesburg. The central nerve of the novel was reportedly what he “lands” on, on his arrival to the small seaside hamlet. The feud between the “Believers” and “Unbelievers”, which involved the analeptic event of cattle-killing and destruction of subsistence crops by many members of the amaXhosa nation in 1857 (Mda 2000:60), pulled him to the centre of the dispute, from which he finds it difficult to extricate himself without causing harm to either side.

In the *Madonna of Excelsior* (2002), the main character, Popi, was reflected to be in a strange fictional state, with no choice but to adapt. Her being born out of adulterous relation and interracial, illegal sexual relation put her in a challenging and controversial social position, which filters through to her fictionalisation. This was viewed in terms of Newman’s (2009:74) theory that actions and events of a character’s fictional life provide data through which the reader imagines and forms a mental picture. The presentation of characters in the two texts was examined through theoretical instruments that include “lenses of reality”, character as artifice, non-actual individual, existential entity, character identification traits, and character as a readerly-mental construct. Character portrayal in the two novels was pitched against the critique of African writing.

Chapter five dealt with Mda’s philosophical ideas in *Justify the Enemy – Becoming Human in South Africa* (2018) and *Sometimes There Is a Void* (2011). compared to his fictional writing. The significance of chronology and intertextual links between these publications was the critical focus. The two novels, *Black Diamond* (2009) and *Little Suns* (2015), were analysed explicitly, and the intertextual coupling indicated above. This drew attention to the significance of the environmental factors in Zakes Mda’s writing. A reference was made to his interview with Zoë Wicomb, where he responds

explicitly that place and landscape determine his characters' emotional and spiritual development. The linkage also indicated tracking the area's historical past and the inhabitants, featuring successive generations. In line with Fanon's view (1967:166), the two novels also foreground the view that the present communities owe their existence to those of the past. In addition to providing environmental background for his plots and characters, Mda (2018:46) perceives landscapes as memory reservoirs that provide a "*domaine perdu*" that serves as a source of emotional power that kindles nostalgic urge to recreate past domains and sensual imagination by an artist or writer.

The focus of Chapter Six was on the *ubuntu* philosophy as featured in Zakes Mda's literary work, with particular reference to *Little Suns* (2015) and *She Plays with the Darkness* (1995b). Due to the thin line between this philosophy and African humanism, the chapter further explored the apparent relationship between Es'kia Mphahlele's writings and Zakes Mda's literary work. The former's concept, African humanism, was traced from his MA dissertation *The non-European character in South African English Fiction* (1962). A follow-up was made through his publication, *The African Image* (1974), where he deals specifically with the controversy around humanistic images in South African literature. In line with Steve Biko's African culture concepts (Biko 1977:35), Mphahlele (2002:137-138) reemphasises his view regarding the significance of culture as a lever to African humanism. His accentuation of the need for a rounded portrayal of African characters within the realms of *ubuntu* was analysed, and its application examined in the two novels.

7.1.3. PRECIS ON FINDINGS

One of the fundamental statements made earlier in this study referred to African humanism as propagated by Mphahlele (1974:13). This philosophical view was associated with the extension of not only the goodness of a human person in general but particularly the virtuousness of the African person in context. The latter was based on cultural concepts that include collectivity, sharing, mutual respect, and placement of human beings at the centre of the cosmos, as promulgated by Biko (1987:135). The concept of culture was then logically put at the centre of the two complementary fields of

epistemological development: African philosophy and African fiction. This approach is resonant with Jackson's (2020:1) view on African epistemology, despite her warning about certain possible contradictions.

The application of African humanism in Zakes Mda's novels, as per the reflection of African philosophy, which includes Mphahlele's ideas from his philosophical texts, *The African Image* (1974) and *Es'kia* (2002). These accentuate harnessing of the individual to the community, using culture as the basic concept, thereby dislodging exclusive western universalisms, as well as the praxis on post-colonial and decolonisation theories. However, Jackson (2020:1) cautions that what often seems to be overlooked in this context, namely the precise meaning of "African" within the concepts of African philosophy and African writing. The key features identified, that is, "morality" and "textuality", initially present a two-sided scenario, where the former is a distinguishing feature of African intellectual production, and the latter an epistemological orientation that includes (and goes beyond) the literal (practice of writing). These qualities are both featured in most of Zakes Mda's novels, as was explicitly illustrated in the analysis of *Ways of Dying* (1995a) and *She Plays with the Darkness* (1995b). It was also demonstrated that these characteristics are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

In spite of its alignment to Biko's (1978:35) concept of collectivity, orality has also been perceived to have potential for cultural reductiveness and essentialism. The cautions by Jackson (2020:1), include that textuality may not be seen as a quality that is at variance or incongruous with African knowledge traditions. This was instantiated in the reflection that Zakes Mda's writing is characterised by both orality and textuality. Her observation that a number of African philosophers have applied similar approach to challenges of individualism in an effort to differentiate "philosophical" from social-scientific pronouncements, reflects close relations between African philosophy and African writing. It is, moreover, noted that, as per Moretti's (2000:65) thesis, the difference between the Western European and African philosophy, should not be aligned with, or based on anthropological particularism.

It should be pointed out that the significance of culture in African writing does not make it exclusive to African philosophy. In Chapter Two of this study, it was earlier noted that both Mphahlele and Mda have high regard for the social function of literature, and therefore sees this as its primary "ingredient". However, the African colonial experience, which was accompanied by the key target of eliminating indigenous culture or "African superstitions", led to the African writing (which developed from orality) bringing to the centre the concept of culture. Hence Amilcar Cabral argues that anti-colonial struggles are in essence "acts of culture" (Cabral 1980:138-154).

The centrality of culture as a social factor plays a more prominent role than just being proverbial glue of a society, as noted earlier. However, it is also a significant factor in African writing, especially from an African humanism perspective and African philosophy. Various philosophical views points converge on the centrality of culture in African writing. Mphahlele's focus on the subject was inspired by his response to the perceived distortion of African humanity (which is hinged on culture) in South African literature, especially during the 1950s. A slightly different premise is Biko's view on "acculturation", which supposedly ought to happen in a fair and balanced manner between the converging cultures. Therefore, his oral and textual reaction to the suppression of the indigenous culture by the western culture (Biko 1978:45) prompted literary writing on the subject. Although such writing may be labelled culturally essentialist or nativist and inspired by ethnophilosophy, Jackson (2020:3) links this to the Belgian missionary Temple's *Bantu Philosophy* (1945). This writer, who is of European descent, lived among the Africans (Luba people) in the then Belgian-Congo (present-day Democratic Republic of Congo), where he became enlightened as to the African alternative to the western ontological foundation. Although using the term 'Bantu' associated with the divisive colonial and apartheid motives, the Bantu philosophy proposed a remarkable transposition from the western demeaning of Africans, as basically lacking a philosophical framework.

The latter reflects the colonial legacy, which regarded Africans as crude and primitive, and therefore at the mercy of colonial masters to achieve civilisation and the "modern

world". Despite some criticisms against this ethnophilosophy, and its focus on culture and African thought, it demonstrates that culture and knowledge production are not mutually exclusive. This is further corroborated by Jackson (2020:3) in her observation that most African philosophers probe the role of culture and indigeneity, "a vow a commitment to epistemological decolonization [sic]". Some of the writers whose themes feature this philosophical perspective were referred to in the second chapter of this study. They include Achebe, wa Thiong'o, Mphahlele, Matshoba and Mda. Wa Thiongo's radical move towards the decolonisation of African cultures was highlighted through his move from ex-colonial languages to indigenous languages, where possible (Griffiths 2000:211). He led this transformation through his novel, *Petals of Blood* (1977) or *Petals ya Damu* (1977) in Kiswahili.

It was also learnt that the most deep-rooted and long-lasting form of colonisation had been the psychological conquest and domination of the minds of the oppressed in a colonised country by the colonial masters. This is also to cultural colonisation that African philosophy denounces, and most African writers condemn (Jackson 2020:10). The contextualisation of Frantz Fanon's theory on the development of critical and independent thinking towards "decolonisation of the mind" and consequent "neurosis of blackness" rallies African writing that seeks to emancipate colonised minds. It highlights the psycho-existential complex between the coloniser and the colonised, which causes permanent psychological scars and, to some extent, intellectual dependency on the former. This is substantiated by Biko's (1987:74) assertion that the mind of the oppressed is the oppressor's most potent weapon by means of which to retain and intensify the unequal and dependency relation between the two. The attitude expressed by Hamilton Hope towards Mhlontlo, the amaMpondomise and the rest of the natives in *Little Suns* (2015) illustrates this point. The Maclear *imbizo* practically demonstrates power relations between the colonial oppressor and the colonised natives in a way that it sinks in the latter's mind. The three magistrates, Messrs Thompson, Welsh, Hope, and their entourage sit on chairs, in front of all the attendees, in a classroom-style sitting arrangement. King Mhlontlo (whom Hope gave the new designation of the paramount chief) practically demoted his entourage, subordinate chiefs and other black (native)

attendees, who are ushered to sit on the ground, facing the authorities (Mda 2015:51). Hamilton Hope impresses on everyone, including the police official, who announces the arrival of the king of amaMpondomise at the *imbizo*, that no native should be referred to as “king”. All should recognise and pay high allegiance to only one sovereign, Her Majesty the Queen of England. Natives (in community leadership) could only be chiefs, and at best, be paramount chiefs (for those who have subordinate chiefs, paying allegiance to them), like Mhlontlo (Mda 2015:49). As could be expected, the *imbizo* does not end in consensus, but with the “authority” instructing the natives to participate in the war (as support for the Hope-led smaller government troops). The “paramount Chief” is also instructed to ensure that his people comply with other Government imposed rules that include tax, religion, and a new culture (from the colonial masters), and also that he and his people also abandon black, indigenous culture called black superstitions.

7.2. CONCLUSION

In this study, an effort has been made to probe African humanism and character representation in Zakes Mda’s fiction. The evaluation of the pertinent literature reflected proximity to Mphahlele’s philosophical writings on African humanism. The precursor to this was found to be his concern over the blatant distortion of African image in character representation involving blacks in the South African literature, from the era of the country’s colonisation through to the advent of all-inclusive democratic rule. He, in essence, condemns flat characterisation across racial lines, to which he admits his own guilt and weakness. His attempts at portraying white characters roundedly had often suffered setbacks (Mphahlele 1974:14) due to the socio-political environment at the time of his writing. It was noted in the second chapter of this study that Mphahlele’s acceptance of the challenge to construct fully developed characters has visible effect in his wiritings. The big challenge he confronts other writers with, is the extent to which they are able to shake-off prejudice, to be able to attain development of round characters. Polarity of the literary character features were dealt with in chapter three, focussing on the bilateral formation in narrative writing, that is, social realtiy and imagination, both of whom are significant in literary analysis. The social aspect of

character was emphatically dealt with in chapter four with focus on both Western and African originated theories. This involved culture dynamics and binary polarisation in *The Heart of Redness* (2000), alongside different racial forces that are at play in *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2000). Fictional development of characters in Zakes Mda's fiction is significantly propped through landscape and physical contexts. This, deduced from Mda's (2018:41) own acknowledgement that most of his characters are constructed through these features, was demonstrated in chapter five through comparative analysis of *Black Diamond* (2009) and *Little Suns* (2015) with his philosophical texts, *Sometimes There is a Void* (2011) and *Justify The Enemy – Becoming Human in South Africa* (2018).

Evaluative character analysis in Zakes Mda's fiction initially focused on his novels *Ways of Dying* (1995a) and *She Plays with the Darkness* (1995b). This is where the commonality between Mphahlele and Mda, on the social relevance of literature, was first illustrated. The novels deal with equally challenging social conditions that negatively affect black people in a slightly different focus from the racial oppression themes. Although such conditions are not a form of direct oppression, they are presented as the legacy of the apartheid administration against which ordinary and poor people's moral strength prevails, especially in *Ways of Dying* (1995). This novel encapsulates the idea of a "new dawn" in South Africa, with a concept of renaissance embedded in ordinary people's lives, most of whom are poverty-stricken. The two protagonists, having grown together in the same village, meeting again as adults under different challenging circumstances, in the city and squatter camp. They fall in love and pledge to take care of each other, including allowing to be taught, one by the other, "how to live" (Mda 1995a:115). An observation by Mazibuko (2009:115) that Mda uses the African renaissance theme within love discourse, which takes into cognisance the needs of the spirit and gives prominence to the emotions or soul entrenched in art and creativity that are accessible to all and sundry, is applied in consolidating Mda's concepts of African humanism and *ubuntu*. The contextualisation of Thabo Mbeki's speech, to the parliamentary launching of the South African constitution in 1996, *I am an African* (Mbeki 1998:31), is apparent in Mda's literary works. In the speech and citing the

invocation, "*Vuku Zenzele*", Mbeki (1998:141) heightened the need for South Africans to see themselves as Africans and work together towards nation-building as well as to a future that envisions African renaissance. Mda's crystallisation of the concept translates to an empowering discourse that changes the capital "R" to a small letter "r" in the term African renaissance. This is done explicitely, to foreground the role of ordinary people in transforming their own lives instead of always looking to and waiting for the powers that be.

As per the interview with Mazibuko (2002), *Women and Change*, his writings highlight that even amongst the ordinary and impoverished people, women tend to be more focused and consistent than men. Therefore, he portrays them as potential power centres to rebuild and shape post-colonial and post-apartheid South Africa. They are also projected as symbols and agents of spiritual renaissance, functioning at the margins of a conspicuous materialist and male hegemonised discourse. The role played by Noria, maDimbhaza, Malehlohonolo, and other women in the informal settlement's developmental affairs and projects are crucial, to the extent that Toloki observes (in the few days of his stay in the camp and attending meetings with Noria) that the people who are most active in the affairs of the settlement are women. Not only do they do all the work by themselves, but they also play leadership roles (Mda 1995a:172). The impression on the men is that most would rather spend their days drinking with friends, only to go home late in the evenings or at night, to demand food and their other rights from their wives. The few that happen to attend some community meetings, generally like making impressive speeches, displaying eloquence and devoid of substance. Due to such reasons, the African renaissance implied in Mda's literary works places women at the centre, as they often drive community development projects and most families' spiritual and material well-being.

Ubuntu was investigated as far as it relates to African humanism and its applicability to Mda's fiction. It was defined as a multidimensional concept that encompasses African ontologies' core values, mutual respect amongst human beings, general care for human life, collective sharing, humility, solidarity, hospitality, and general communalism. Its

proximity to African humanism is highlighted through Es'kia Mphahlele's observations that the African begins with the community through which he/she determines the individual's place and role in relation to the community. A human being finds fulfilment, not as a separate individual, but within family and community (Mphahlele 2002:147).

The concept was also articulated through Gyekye's (1997:41) views, namely that *ubuntu* is used to characterise the norms and values inherent in human society. Members of a community are expected to show concern for the well-being of one another, to do what they can do to advance the common good, and participate meaningfully in community life. The African proverb *umntu ngumntu ngabanye abantu* (a person is a person through other people) ultimately denotes people's humaneness and this sense of themselves as human beings possessing individual dignity and value, which depends on both giving such recognition to others, as well as receiving it from them. This is corroborated through Kamwangamalu's (1999:30) view that *ubuntu* constitutes the ontological foundation for a society that recognises and respects the rights and dignity of others. This was demonstrated in the study of both *Little Suns* (2015) and *She plays with the Darkness* (1995). In his epic journey to track and find Mthwakazi, Malangana (in the former novel) benefits from the *ubuntu* of several people. These include the man on horseback that helps him after an ugly encounter with goats on his path (Mda 2015:9) and the woman that offers him a lift when the night finds him on the way and gives him shelter and food (Mda 2015:11). She additionally helps him with *umkhondo* (tracking) for his beloved Mthwakazi (Mda 2015:17-18). The mother-of-twins' communal support from the haSamane village women (Mda 1995b:10-12) reflects *ubuntu* in practice. The twinship, not only between Radisene and Dikosha, but also between each of them and the community, Misty and her ancestral grandmother who summons her to be *lethuela* (deviner), as well as between Misty and the community, come by as another form of *ubuntu* in a complex African society. The conducting of community projects, feasts, and celebrations in both haSamane and ha-Sache villages and live communal relations in these communities provide a practical manifestation of *ubuntu* as a humanistic concept.

7.3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

This study highlights the attributes of Mda's writing that brought it to prominence. Having grown up in a racially polarised country under the apartheid government, and his father been a political activist, his artistic career inevitably developed alongside his political image. Such an immersion would inexorably influence his writing. His admission that his earlier artwork's political immersion is rationalised through social commitment. The idea of the social relevance of art is a quality he shares with Mphahlele. Bell et al. (2009:3) substantiate this through the observation that the social function of Mda's art is its commitment to provide social commentary as part of African aesthetics.

In this study, African humanism and *ubuntu* were explored as the "marrow" or essence of Zakes Mda's narrative writing, as per the analysis of his novels that feature in this study. His concern for authenticity is a golden thread that runs through his literary publications as the accentuation of the social relevance of his artwork. This is further underscored by his particular use of place, landscape, and authentic historic events. The significance of place in his literary works is reflected as more than just a background for his characters, but as one of the vital initiating factors for most of his novels. These are ostentatiously demonstrated in *The Heart of Redness* (2000) and *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2002). Historical events and landscape are equally significant features that complete his character portrayal in the context of African humanism and *ubuntu.* According to African ideology, an additional underlying theme in some of his literary works reflects that present communities owe their living or existence (pertaining life-sustaining resources) from their primogenitor, translating to a high regard for the ancestors. Frantz Fanon (1967:166) elaborates the point further, namely that "each generation, must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission and either fulfil it or betray it". It is apparent that Mda's philosophical view on the rounded portrayal of characters involves not just persona (politically and socially), but also significant, are proper care for the environment, as well as all other resources that sustain the present and coming generations.

Although post-colonial and decolonisation theories were explored in some depth, there is room for further research in this area in reference to selected African writers. The fact that secondary colonialism continues to exist in the form of cultural and psychological colonialism, means complete independence has not yet been realised, and therefore, much more needs to be done towards achieving this national goal. An effort was made to investigate the concept of psychological colonisation and literary contribution towards psychological decolonisation, including Fanon's (2008:vi) view on "neurosis of blackness" and wa Thiago's condemnation of the European languages in African literature. That this perpetuates the neo-colonialist domination of Africans especially the cultural hegemony requires further assessment. Such a study may also survey and examine the possibility of developing a common regional language in South Africa that can sustain and develop common applicability and wider recognition, respect, and common utility of South African cultures. This resonates with J.M. Coetzee's writing on the required inter-relatedness between language, consciousness, and landscape (Coetzee 1988:7). The lack of such a core unifier creates a gap in sustainable nation-building. His argument, that from the beginning of the nineteenth century, landscape art and writing had been short-changed by the "question of finding a language to fit Africa, a language that will be authentically African" (Coetzee 1988:7), and "embraced" by the majority of present language (and by implication, cultural) groups, is considered here and may be expanded upon.

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