The Nature and Culture Binary in Zakes Mda’s The Heart of Redness

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ABSTRACT
The coexistence of nature and culture becomes an essential subject of study in the quest for ecological sustainability. Positive cultural traditions must be perpetuated to preserve the environment, as man’s attitude has amply demonstrated. The complex relationships between nature and culture make it even more important to take into account a comprehensive approach that acknowledges the interconnectedness of humans and the ecosystem. The goal of this study was to explore Zakes Mda’s The Heart of Redness with a particular emphasis on how nature and culture can coexist to promote a sustainable ecosystem. It adopted postcolonial ecocriticism as its conceptual framework. The question that guided this study was: “How have nature and culture been presented in the novel to create eco-consciousness?” This study encourages readers to reflect critically, through a textual analysis of the unique characters that the novel presents, on how their choices affect the natural world and how culture and the natural world coexist. It serves as a gentle reminder to readers that keeping a harmonious balance between tradition and modernity is essential for both the survival of the ecosystem and the maintenance of a common human identity. This study ultimately contributes to the growing body of literature on postcolonial ecocriticism.

Keywords: Culture, Ecological, Nature, Postcolonial-Ecocriticism, Sustainability

INTRODUCTION
The ability to critically analyse human behaviour has been provided to man by literature, which has been recognised as one of the many media for reflecting modern or contemporary challenges.1 In addition, literature has depicted numerous aspects of human life, including those involving aestheticism and the power of nature. However, literary writers are now taking into account ecological issues and the numerous kinds of risks that arise with constant environmental exploitation and the associated risks to humanity.

In fact, the growing global environmental catastrophe has made it necessary to pay attention to the relationships between people and the environment. This is because to conserve what already exists in the ecological realm, man needs to acquire new attitudes toward nature and the environment. According to Lynn White, the recent ecological catastrophe that humanity is experiencing is due to human-centred interaction with the natural world; as a result, to address these issues, humans must (urgently) reevaluate their worldview.2

REFERENCES
In the quest for ecological sustainability, the harmony between nature and culture becomes a crucial area of research. Man’s attitude has clearly shown that positive cultural practices must be upheld in order to conserve the environment. It is again essential to consider a comprehensive strategy that recognises the interdependence of people and ecosystems due to the complex interactions between nature and culture. This study aims to discuss Zakes Mda’s The Heart of Redness by focusing on the reconciliation of nature and culture for ecological sustainability. Focusing on nature more closely reveals a parallel social environment and colonialism’s history teaches the value of human interaction with the natural world. Nature stories shape how societies view the Earth, which is frequently seen as complete and undamaged and looking forward to empire’s and globalisation’s interference.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
The conceptual basis for this study is postcolonial ecocriticism. Environmental concerns are now recognised as being not only essential to European conquest and global supremacy but also as fundamental to the imperialist and racist ideologies that have historically and continue to underpin such attempts. Rob Nixon is one of the major proponents of the idea that postcolonialism and ecocriticism must work in tandem and even uses the term “postcolonial-ecocriticism” to describe this. Huggan and Tiffin are of the view that postcolonialism and ecocriticism’s partnership has mostly given them a great deal of visibility. They assert once more that this alliance shows the necessity of a largely materialist viewpoint on how people, animals, and the environment interact over time. According to this approach, anti-colonial criticism must take into account both the cultural politics of representation and the more complex forms of mediation.

Huggan and Tiffin emphasise postcolonial-ecological critique’s rejection of the idea that non-Western governments can be categorised as Third World or Fourth World as well as developing or underdeveloping. They use progress as the foundation for their argument against globalisation. They believe that challenging and providing feasible alternatives to Western concepts of development has been one of the primary objectives of postcolonial ecocriticism as an emerging field. Progress is not inherently bad but because it is based on the viewpoints of First World nations, it affects former colonies, even though this is not necessarily the case. Huggan and Tiffin’s primary argument is unmistakable that indigenous societies are undervalued in comparison to Western industrialised communities, as seen by the requirement for those subsistence-based communities to catch up with the industrialised ones. This is because the social and ecological foundations upon which both civilisations are based are so drastically different.

Once more, Huggan and Tiffin contend that maintaining the notion of environmental sustainability is a step toward protecting the marketability of nature. This suggests that the primary motivation for addressing environmental degradation is that it limits the growth of capitalism, as suggested by the fact that many sustainability projects have Western roots. They believe that within the context of postcolonial-ecological criticism, the phrase “environmental sustainability” needs to be separated from the Western world’s assertion that it speaks for the interests of the planet. Thus, the notions of development and sustainability—which have traditionally come from the perspective of the West—need a revisionist understanding.

LITERATURE REVIEW
In Wendy Woodward’s study of The Heart of Redness, she maintains that Mda uses epistemological encounters to reveal dualistic thinking by employing humour for postcolonial intentions and, in particular, for re-orienting the traditional Xhosa worldview within a historicised background. Woodward states that the use of humour in the text makes it “more effectively transformative in its representation of the lives of the villagers of Qolorha.” Similar to Woodward’s work is that of Richard Samin who examines how Mda draws attention to the ambivalence that penetrates writing and opinion throughout the times of colonialism by evoking Nongqawuse’s historical context. He claims that Mda revives the mythical figure of Nongqawuse as a metaphorical device to reveal the duality of her function in South African literature and history. The conclusion of the study makes it

5 Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment (Routledge, 2015).
7 Huggan and Tiffin, Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment, 12.
10 Woodward, “‘Jim comes from jo’burg’: Regionalized identities and social comedy in Zakes Mda’s The Heart of Redness”, 174
abundantly evident that the novel may be seen as a form of epistemological exercise that challenges readers to abandon their fixed dualistic paradigms to comprehend the present-day complexity and ambivalence.\textsuperscript{11}

In addition, Harry Sewlall employs an ecofeminist perspective in assessing the character of Qukezwa to explore the very tensions in \textit{The Heart of Redness} which are caused by the past put next to the demands of urban life on the present-day generation.\textsuperscript{12} The reader is prompted to consider the nature of esoteric knowledge and ancient ecological wisdom through the mythopoeic conception of Qukezwa’s persona and the aura of mythopoeia that she possesses. She represents the struggle against the Eastern Cape’s colonial exploitation. More so, Dirk Klopper’s paper makes use of anthropological studies to examine the function of the diviner-prophet in Xhosa society to make the case that the novel’s critique of binary thinking and its focus on ecological awareness are converging in the idea of the prophetic being’s examination of the interaction between environment and culture.\textsuperscript{13} The reviews done here and others that can be identified from other sources have not discussed the text from the postcolonial-ecocritical perspective. Hence, this study expands the previous discussions further by examining the text from a postcolonial-ecocritical perspective.

SYNOPSIS OF THE NOVEL

\textit{The Heart of Redness} tells of the struggle for the pastoral spaces where the Western power contests the conventional dogmas and the former times, when cultural belief systems were important in the society, but are still disputed by the Great Cattle Killing and imperialism—two crucial historical events for the Xhosa people. The novel aligns with two unique narrative strands to evaluate the current battle of ideals: one describes what happened four years following the initial democratic elections of South Africa while the other tells the story of the “Cattle Killing Movement,” which takes place between 1856 and 1857 and examines the earliest interactions between the British colonisers and the Xhosa. Owing to the protagonist, the dangers of mass tourism are avoided, the prophetess Nongqawuse’s significance as a part of the Xhosa people’s heritage is restored, and the significance of alternate development models is brought to light.

DISCUSSION

To commence, the exposition of the plot is on a debate between Believers and Unbelievers. Both parties hold conflicting opinions on whether to approve or reject the tourism project as well as the best idea for their respective economies. Bhonco, the Unbelievers’ leader, sees the tourist industry as a logical step toward modernisation in their community and a potential source of income for the villagers. Bhonco might be categorised as a member of the group who considers nature to be a tool for meeting human needs. The provocative statement Bhonco makes demonstrates his desire for development:

‘The Unbelievers stand for progress,’ […] ‘We want to get rid of this bush which is a sign of our uncivilized state. We want developers to come and build the gambling city that will bring money to this community. That will bring modernity to our lives, and will rid us of our redness.’\textsuperscript{14}

From the extract, it may be inferred that the environment of the inhabitants has to be altered. Bhonco’s view of the environment demonstrates his lack of understanding and appreciation of nature. He does not give thought to the implications of depleting the environment for their so-called progress and what that would mean to their lives. This setting, which Bhonco calls “bush,” still has features of the previous generations which he says is a “sign of our uncivilized state”. The stress of getting rid of the “bush” as a symbol of their primitive existence suggests a break with their cultural history. The urge to get rid of this emblem shows a readiness to give up certain aspects of one’s own identity or even to compromise them in favour of embracing an externally imposed idea of development.

Most crucially, the central struggle of the story is symbolised by the “redness” in the novel’s title. Sewlall in an attempt to establish a relationship between the works of Mda and Conrad, concludes that Africa, as envisioned by Europeans as the Dark Continent, is metaphorically represented by the title \textit{Heart of Darkness}.\textsuperscript{15} It serves as a stand-in for the wilds of Africa, a continent that still awaits the West’s civilising mission and also \textit{The Heart of Redness} takes on metaphorical aspects because it represents ignorance and a lack


\textsuperscript{14} Mda, \textit{The Heart of Redness}, 79.

of progress. Bhonco views development as being totally desirable for the entire population and refers to the red ochre-related backwardness and inferior civilisation as “redness.” “Redness” as used in the extract can have a literal or figurative meaning. It might allude to the natural environment, signifying the uncontrolled nature and wildness that the Unbelievers strive to eradicate in their quest for advancement. In a metaphorical sense, it may refer to cultural behaviours, beliefs, or traditions that are considered impediments to modernity. Thus, the statement “rid us of our redness” makes it very obvious that they need to modify their environment and their cultural beliefs which they contend is necessary for transforming their identity. As a result, this struggle between assimilation and cultural preservation is further complicated by this.

Bhonco’s educated daughter Xoliswa Ximiya, who despite denouncing some of the Xhosa rituals and traditions that her father views as barbaric, has a significant impact on his stance about the construction of the resort:

The Unbelievers are moving forward with the times. That is why they support the casino and the watersports paradise that the developers want to build. The Unbelievers stand for civilization. To prove this point Bhonco has now turned away from beads and has decided to take out the suits that his daughter bought him many years ago from his trunk under the bed. From now on he will be seen only in suits. He is in the process of persuading his wife also to do away with the red ochre that women smear on their bodies and with which they also dye their isiXhakha skirts.16

Bhonco’s dislike for the traditional value system is demonstrated by his hatred for the traditional dress code and red ochre, which he believes symbolise the Believers’ antiquity and unwillingness to adapt to modern society. The discovery that Bhonco begins to despise the “red ochre” and becomes interested in Western outfits is particularly odd. How modernity is conceptualised here, which relies on disparaging native understanding and cultural expressions, shows how closely colonialism and modernity have been related in the Global South as both a discourse and a practice.17 Bhonco’s drive for advancement is influenced by Western hierarchical thinking, which sees native people, the environment, and animal life forms as the “others” who are subservient to humans. The risks that this company brings to the community’s biodiversity are not particularly concerning to the Unbelievers. They do not care whether the neighbourhood’s trees, the coast, or the land’s fertility are destroyed.

However, Zim and the Believers are sceptical about the assurance of development and enlightenment. He fears that this option will further impoverish them. Colonialism will be widespread and nature will be devalued. Many of the inhabitants may be dispossessed and displaced, and they will lose grip on their ancestral inheritance. Their means of livelihood is likely to be truncated and they may stand the chance of being excluded from the project’s benefits. Thus, he considers any modernisation-related shift to be unfavourable and a threat to upholding their old ways of life which give them fulfilment, recognition and a sense of identity. He has a strong attachment to Xhosa rituals and traditions and views anything associated with modernity and unrelated to Xhosa culture as a threat. The genuine Xhosa customs that existed before the arrival of the British invaders, in Zim’s opinion, are what will give them fulfilment. He finds no sense in depleting the landscape in the name of development: “This son of Ximiya talks of progress. Yet he wants to destroy the bush that has been here since the days of our forefathers. What kind of progress is that?”18 This rhetorical question indicates that the concept of development according to Zim should not come with destruction.

Moreover, the idea of tradition can be viewed from several angles thus, giving it various connotations. Goncalves Pires observes that tradition is often discussed in terms of the spread of cultural systems and conventions that are assumed to inevitably define a particular tradition, leaving out the vibrant quality that comes with passing traditions to future generations, which is a conscious exchange in which one chooses to consent and follow, enhance, or even reject some components of such customs.19 This implies that there is a certain degree of liberality where a group of people have the choice to alter whatever custom they deem to be outmoded to conform to the trends of the day. The narrative clearly illustrates the Xhosa people’s desire to uphold their historical traditions as well as the effects of modernity on those traditions, including how imperialism and the current globalisation trend have affected them.

Furthermore, ecological concern is made a recurrent theme as the plot moves forward. It is highlighted through the characters’ personal experiences. Even though ecology is not a major element of the plot, the novel

18 Mda, The Heart of Redness, 79.
tackles the significance of ecology in a postcolonial context. It does this by talking about the effects of having a conflicted view of Western authority. The novel makes a powerful point about how power is distributed inequitably in the capitalist world. It further examines the difficult choice of whether it is better to cling to the local rather than the global to maximise wealth for locals or to be a part of a society tied to the global economy. The modern world as a whole, purportedly including the affluent regions of South Africa, is what supplies the essential component of the world economic system. This key element is ecology, which also plays a strategic role in the text since it enters the story in a way that prioritises the social, economic, and psychological well-being of human society. In this sense, the novel brings to mind the anthropocentric orientation of the emerging new environmental culture in South Africa.

In fact, the current environmental damage of the Xhosa people’s lands is comparable to the tragedy that resulted in the slaughter of cattle in-between 1856 and 1857. The inhabitants of Qolorha are in danger of making the same catastrophic mistake again by accepting the alleged development and modernisation promised by the casino, just as the Believers did back when they blindly followed Nongqawuse’s prophecy to restore the wealth and power of the Xhosa. The story describes the modern Unbelievers as the winners in the current capitalist world. They are the aristocrats of modern Western culture, which has ruined the nation’s natural beauty. They support a development model that is sectarian in that it empowers only a small number of individuals while the majority of South Africans live in poverty. Qukezwa foretold this, and Camagu describes it as follows: ‘You talk of all these rides and all these wonderful things,’ he says, ‘but for whose benefit are they? What will these villagers who are sitting here get from all these things? Will their children ride on those merry-go-rounds and roller coasters? On those cable cars and boats? Of course not! They will not have any money to pay for these things. These things will be enjoyed only by rich people who will come here and pollute our rivers and our ocean.’

Camagu challenges Mr. Smith, one of the visitors, on the benefits of the ostensible development they hope to bring to their neighbourhood. Readers can tell from the series of rhetorical questions in this extract that Camagu is expressing his dissatisfaction with the type of development the inhabitants hope to receive. He views it as a threat to their water resources and a kind of progress that will only benefit a few influential people in the community. After Lefa Leballo described it as being of national significance, Camagu passionately opposes this supposed development project and persuades the neighbourhood to oppose it as well. Camagu retorts: ‘It is of national importance only to your company and shareholders, not to these people!’ [. . .] I tell you, people of Qolorha, these visitors are interested only in profits for their company. This sea will no longer belong to you. You will have to pay to use it.’

Camagu’s outright rejection of this idea of development demonstrates his sound understanding of colonial tactics. He unmistakably sees it as a disguised form of economic imperialism which only aims at enriching the economies of colonial imperialists and ultimately leaving the people in a state worse off than they were.

Qukezwa’s forecast of environmental devastation aims to make up for the preceding prophecy’s damage. The chance for modern Believers to undo the harm done to the Xhosa people in the past is provided by this. It is crucial to remember that the primary goal of livestock slaughter was to turn the land from “bad” to “good,” which might be paralleled to the current initiatives to prevent environmental suicide. This is demonstrated in the narrative by the casino’s danger of degrading and obliterating the land’s natural and authentic beauty through the advent of a capitalist contemporary society. Once more, it depicts modern-day South Africa as being quite similar to the Xhosa cattle-killing of 1856 in terms of death. In this case, it demonstrates how deaths brought on by lung disease and the cattle-killing movement in the sixteenth century are largely indistinguishable from those brought on by industrial pollution, pandemic illnesses like HIV and poverty in contemporary South Africa. This, Mda confirms by stating in an interview that modernity and death seem to be intrinsically intertwined, as evidenced by the Unbelievers’ behaviour in the novel.

The novel’s characters also disagree on matters pertaining to the acceptance of Western modernism or the promotion of cultural values. The most noticeable aspect of this is how some of his characters, like Camagu and John Dalton, are depicted as embracing both mixed lifestyles. When Camagu returned to South Africa in 1994 to cast his ballot and take part in the nation’s reconstruction, he encountered prejudice and marginalisation

21 Mda, The Heart of Redness, 171.
22 Mda, The Heart of Redness, 171.
due to his lack of involvement in liberation struggles. The extract below captures how this is expressed in the narrative:

Only then did Camagu understand the full implications of life in this new democratic society. He did not qualify for any important position because he was not a member of the Aristocrats of the Revolution, an exclusive club that is composed of the ruling elites, their families, and close friends. 24

In spite of his academic accomplishments and career, he is unable to secure employment in the new South Africa. Because he is not a member of the freedom fighters, he finds himself in a very tough situation where he is subjected to discrimination. To his dismay, he learns that one must “dance the freedom dance to get contracts” 25 despite one interviewer having recommended him to start his consultancy. Camagu’s quest to regain his African cultural identity is motivated by his sense of alienation in his own country. He could not fit in the new South Africa with the Western knowledge he had acquired. This indicates that despite being familiar with Western culture, Camagu downplays the significance of modernity in the West through his attraction to rural life and, specifically, his relationship with Qukezwa in contrast to Xoliswa Ximiya whom he had previously admired. When the two decide to get married, Qukezwa also becomes Camagu’s final answer to his identity quandary.

Furthermore, Camagu’s promotion of ecotourism enables previously colonised people to fight off the threat of a new, contemporary colonisation, this time around, they take the guise of global capital forces with their headquarters in Johannesburg. As a result, Camagu adopts the persona of the youthful prophetess of the previous century and suggests to the locals that they integrate into modern commerce while maintaining moral regard for the society’s ancient values and cultural heritage. According to Camagu, rejecting capital-intensive development will safeguard the quality of the people’s labour in addition to conserving the last remnants of the pre-modern era’s connection to the land. Camagu muses toward the end of the story that he is unsure whether ecology will be sufficient to safeguard the indigenous population. The idea put out by Camagu is not supported by all of the locals. This adds another element of uncertainty. Camagu proposes the “promotion of the kind of tourism that will benefit the people, that will not destroy indigenous forests, that will not bring hordes of people who will pollute the rivers and drive away the birds.” 26 This kind of development will preserve the natural resource as compared to the other which will seek to destroy the forest zones and the rivers.

Significantly, it should be noted that the Believers value an innate link with traditional culture and have a strong ecological consciousness. They do not hold on to the colonial idea of development at the expense of destroying the environment. Zim and his daughter are adamantly opposed to colonial modernity’s dualistic viewpoints that only describe nature in terms of its usefulness. They also express their displeasure with the village’s plans for the West-based firm. He makes an effort to persuade the Unbelievers that the firm’s plan to construct a resort represents their inner motivations for eradicating the village’s natural environment with a lovely English garden and surrounding scenery that would showcase Western civilisational viewpoints underneath the banner of Western-oriented globalisation. By refusing to join the Unbelievers in praising the plans for a sizable casino complex, the Believers are striving to both defend their territory and demonstrate their resistance to the progressive concepts of capitalism.

Again, Qukezwa enacts the rejection of imperialist and capitalist paradigms most convincingly. She highlights the reviving interconnection of nature and man through her intense sensual and artistic abilities. She embraces Xhosa social values in contrast to Xoliswa and champions a broad perspective on communal growth that places a premium on indigeneity, the environment and the preservation of the natural world. By fostering steadfast confidence in the customs and values of the Xhosa society, she once more represents the vitality of the native ecosystem. Qukezwa’s amazing capacity for interacting with birds and other creatures is one way in which she demonstrates her intense passion for comprehending the complex rhythms of nature. In contrast to Xoliswa, whose view of growth is influenced by the West causes her to assist the casino construction while criticising the Believers as maudlin “old fools” who wish to conserve wildlife, trees, and an antiquated way of life. It is clear from Qukezwa’s attachment to natural elements (trees, ocean, rivers, and all other nonhuman creatures) that the prevalent epistemic patterns must be broken apart to achieve holistic development. In her efforts to protect the natural treasures of Qolorha-by-Sea, she clarifies how colonialism is hidden in modernity’s

24 Mda, The Heart of Redness, 27.
language of deliverance\textsuperscript{27} and in order to refute it, the voices of the minorities must demand “an epistemological disobedience.”\textsuperscript{28}

In addition, Qukezwa shows her defiance of the dominant colonial order by first valorising native ecological ideals and traditional practices and then cutting down the exotic trees in the community. Qukezwa’s enjoyment of her native culture and commitment to preserving the village’s ecosystem serves as an example of her steadfast resistance to imperialist domination. She arouses in Camagu a desire to learn about and take in the sensuality of nature and its wealth through her interactions with him. She teaches him that nature has an ontological life and is not just a lifeless object that serves human wants. Evidently, during one of their conversations, she instructs him on the value of nature and the necessity of respecting it as a living thing: “You didn’t cleanse yourself when you first came here. You must drink water from the sea when you are a stranger, so the sea can get used to you. Then it will love you.”\textsuperscript{29} This discourse has given nature a human face and positive human qualities. This personification gives readers the chance to see how the natural world, particularly the sea, welcomes outsiders. It demonstrates that for the sea to convey its love to a stranger, the latter must likewise accept the sea for what it is by partaking in its water. Camagu’s updated understanding of nature and society has helped him to better understand the fundamental contrasts between the worldviews of Believers and Unbelievers.

Furthermore, Camagu’s inner development is shaped by a few crucial encounters with other characters particularly, Xoliswa and Qukezwa. They serve as symbols of two opposed worldviews. For instance, in contrast to Qukezwa, who is made to live in a symbiotic relationship with her natural world and the spirit of the land and is constantly prepared to defend tradition, Xoliswa is developed as a character to symbolise Western civilisation. The first difference between the two that stands out is how they both appear physically; in stark contrast to Qukezwa’s round and sensual form, Xoliswa’s figure upholds all Western ideals of physical perfection and conveys the image of a stiff, severe beauty. Qukezwa exhibits instinctive unpretentious behaviour that initially astounds Camagu before exerting an irresistible draw on him:

- Cool colors like the rain of summer sliding down a pair of naked bodies.\textsuperscript{30}

Her voice is vividly and visually portrayed through the use of colour images. This implies that her singing appeals to numerous senses at once, including sight, touch, and hearing. Warmth, comfort, and a sense of natural harmony are produced by aligning Qukezwa’s singing to gentle hues “like the ochre of yellow gullies” and the soothing colours of the ground. She sings in a way that is connected to the basic elements of the environment because of her choice of earthy tones which creates a sense of rootedness. This implies that Qukezwa’s voice and the natural environment are closely connected, as though the soil itself serves as her source of inspiration. The passage’s opposing dynamic is introduced by the comparison of “hot colors like blazing fire” and “cool colors like the rain of summer”. The comparison between hot and chilly tones highlights Qukezwa’s singing’s emotional range and variety. It suggests that she has a vocal range and style that can convey both tremendous intensity and calming serenity, giving listeners a deep and immersive experience. In order to further enhance the imagery and encourage readers to picture the settings that Qukezwa’s singing conjures up, “deep blue” and “deep green” are mentioned as the colours of the valleys and the ocean, respectively. Her voice may be able to take listeners to natural settings and arouse a deep connection with the environment since these colours generate a sense of vastness, depth, and tranquillity.

Besides, Xoliswa believes that traditions keep individuals imprisoned in a state of backwardness which is why she sees loyalty to traditions as harmful. Asking both women about the community’s state, their daily lives and customs, and their views on development, civilisation, and “redness”, Camagu gradually isolates himself from the concepts and principles that Xoliswa represents because of her overzealous belief in the illusion of cultural and economic progress which keeps her from realising the enormous dangers that the emergence of mass tourism could pose to the local population. He gains the community’s reverence by stopping a snake from being killed after realising that it is his clan’s totem, despite inciting Xoliswa’s contempt. She bemoans the fact that Camagu, despite his education in America, still adheres to superstition and that this prevents him from assisting the populace in embracing growth and modernity. However, Camagu rejects the idea of being referred


\textsuperscript{28} Karmakar and Chetty, “Epistemic (Dis) Belief and (Dis) Obedience: Zakes Mda’s The Heart of Redness and the Decolonial Ecological Turn,” 32.

\textsuperscript{29} Mda, The Heart of Redness, 104.

\textsuperscript{30} Mda, The Heart of Redness, 165.
to as an educated man from America and states that he is “an African from amaMpondomise clan.”31 He indicates strongly that his “totem is the brown mole snake, Majola.”32 and that believing in his totem has caused his people to accord him with greater respect.

Moreover, as a spiritual mentor who aids Camagu in learning the most personal secrets and the purity of the land, Qukezwa is the primary conduit for Camagu’s inner development. His interest in Qukezwa and their conversations is the source of his determination to maintain the community’s well-being. In fact, until Qukezwa influenced him, he did not completely evaluate the consequences of the construction of the resort. In a conversation with Xoliswa, he says Qukezwa is someone who “sees song and dance and laughter and beauty” whereas Xoliswa sees “darkness, witchcraft, heathens and barbarians.”33 Thus, Qukezwa serves as a conduit for Camagu to reconsider and value his traditional practices, which are intricately linked to natural laws.

Further, Camagu stands out as a wonderful epitome of a decolonial practitioner, having been motivated by Qukezwa’s rebellious actions to protect her community and preserve Qolorha’s natural holiness. He later establishes his epistemic disobedience by openly supporting the Believers in protesting the capitalist firms and adopting alternative proposals for the future of the community after overcoming his dissatisfaction with overlapping two cultures. When the Johannesburg-based Corporation secures its rights to Qolorha-by-Sea’s land, he patiently attempts to explain to the Unbelievers the implications of private ownership. He refers to the people and states that they will lose all rights to their lands and that there would only be a limited number of occupations accessible to them which to a larger extent will not be beneficial for them. He is talking about a loss that affects more than simply the land and includes lost traditions and practices. He immediately presents a green option to the residents. Camagu intends to promote ecotourism, creating a project that is morally and environmentally responsible and ensuring the Qolorha people’s ability to support themselves independently. He sees the development of a self-sufficient and self-sustaining tourism sector that will contribute to the community’s economic empowerment and safeguard the environment of the village.

Camagu promotes a type of tourism that is all-encompassing and linked to the unique indigenous cultural practices, one “that will benefit the people, that will not destroy indigenous forests, that will not bring hordes of people who will pollute the rivers and drive away the birds.”34 His ideal eco-culture is one that seeks to establish a better relationship between culture and nature for sustainability. By adopting this strategy, he urges the reader to consider how an ecological solution is required to stop the widespread environmental exploitation and the progressive annihilation of regional culture, traditions and collective identities brought on by globalisation. His decolonial ecological move toward boosting ecotourism and designating the village as a national heritage site would necessitate the combined efforts of the residents and the wise use of the local natural resources. It would serve as a living memorial to the community’s past, where the marvels of Nongqwuse that gave rise to the amaXhosa Cattle-Killing movement actually took place, but not as a foreign representation of the imagined past. He sees this monument as a vibrant reflection of the ecological features of the village in the present, exhibiting the present amaXhosa culture. As a result, he encourages the people to re-evaluate development objectives based on group solidarity and moral considerations of ecology, reversing the imperialistic plan for a vacation paradise that has captured the hearts of the Unbelievers. To encourage an indigenous ecological culture, he also organises a cooperative of local women and emphasises traditional Xhosa crafts like making jewellery and clothing. Camagu’s action confirms Huggan & Tiffin’s understanding of postcolonial-ecocriticism where they maintain that postcolonial-ecocriticism as an emerging field has the goal of challenging and offering workable alternatives to Western ideas of development.35

Nonetheless, in demonstrating the importance of solidarity and cooperation in a community, Dalton practically becomes the custodian of the ecotourism project initiated by Camagu. Dalton travels to Pretoria to obtain a court injunction that will formally haunt all activities on their property and revoke authorisation to construct the vacation resort. Even though the amaXhosa were severely affected by Nongqwuse’s prophecies, Mda sheds light on the opposite side of the narrative to ensure the community’s safety from external threats and to make a viable future possible. Though he is aware that it is just a transitory success and that power struggles and future generations will be responsible for the ultimate evolution of the land, Camagu’s development plan ultimately prevails.

Importantly, given that both Dalton and Camagu’s initiatives are aimed at improving the well-being of the community, there is a clear dichotomy between the casino idea and the related but distinct projects of the

31 Mda, The Heart of Redness, 152.
32 Mda, The Heart of Redness, 152.
33 Mda, The Heart of Redness, 162.
34 Mda, The Heart of Redness, 172.
35 Huggan and Tiffin, Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment.
two men. It can be observed that the author appears to promote Camagu’s initiative intended for those “who like to visit unspoiled places for the sole purpose of admiring the beauty of nature and watching birds without killing them.”

Again, the novel offers a practical approach that a community can adopt to advance ecological modernisation and protect human and environmental well-being without giving in to the pressures of market-based political and economic systems. It does so by supporting a perspective that is more environmentally conscious on a local level. The consequence leads to a better understanding that can enable the locals to strengthen their sense of empowerment and land conservation. Generally, it challenges the reader’s perceptions by showing that some locations were the object of power struggles and battles over ownership long before colonialism, and it confirms that it has made a significant contribution to postcolonial ecological discourse. As stated by Dolce, “Men’s greed and lust for power and wealth are […] explored by the writer as representing, though with different manifestations and justifications, a continuum from the colonial past to the present. They are patent expressions of a system of domination.”

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, balancing nature and culture is a crucial issue in the pursuit of ecological sustainability. The importance of balancing these with the preservation of nature has increased as a result of the pressure that human activities place on ecosystems and the threat that they pose to biodiversity. The Heart of Redness challenges readers to acknowledge how closely tied their survival and well-being are to the state of the natural world by exposing the connections between nature and culture and a comprehensive awareness of the interconnectedness between human cultures and the natural world is necessary to attain ecological sustainability. This inspires readers to look into how to balance the need for environmental care with their desire to preserve cultural legacies and customs. This may pave the way for more peaceful and sustainable coexistence with the earth by appreciating the inherent value of nature and incorporating ecological issues into our cultural frameworks. Finally, this study serves as a reminder that it is only when a comprehensive strategy that prioritises the preservation of both the cultural legacy and the natural integrity of the environment is adopted that ecological sustainability can truly be achieved.

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