

## Double Death and Double Violence: Reading Vutha in Zakes Mda's *Ways of Dying* as a Symbol of South Africa at Apartheid and Post-Apartheid Periods

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### Abstract

South Africa was under apartheid regime from 1948 up until 1990, when apartheid was ousted by the release of Nelson Mandela. At this, power was granted to majority Black and Nelson Mandela became the leader in 1994. South Africa was thus declared a free nation devoid of apartheid and any kind of discrimination. But this was just a political emancipation without economic authority. This paper thus depicts South Africa as suffering double violence both at the apartheid regime and the post-apartheid period as she wobbles among apartheid structures in this post-apartheid era. Vutha, Noria's son, a child of 'Immaculate Conception', who suffers double death and violence, represents South Africa during apartheid hegemony and the post-apartheid South Africa in the hands of majority rule, where the apartheid strictures transform into the post-apartheid era. This develops into a dichotomy of binaries metamorphosed into a continuity of the past in the present.

**Keywords:** South Africa; Apartheid; Colonial.

### Introduction

Zakes Mda's *Ways of Dying* (1994) is replete with metaphors of violence and death, aptly epitomized in the character of Vutha, Noria's "Immaculately conceived" son in Zakes Mda *Ways of Dying* (1994). This stands for a symbol of South African situation passing from the dichotomy of apartheid to post-apartheid era in the history and psyche of South Africa. The impact of art in the establishment of reality is underscored by David Herbert Lawrence when he says that: "The business of art is to reveal the relation between man and his circum-ambient universe at the living moment" (127). Hence, there is a relationship between man and his social environment which the art reveals.

It is pertinent to note that the African novel is a response to and a record of the traumatic consequences of the impact of Western Capitalist colonialism on the traditional values and institutions of the people. This situation as well as circumstance is pronounced most in South Africa which has just emerged from the shackles of apartheid separatist enclave. Mda is conscious of the South African situation and portrays this in his novel, *Ways of Dying*, using Noria's son, Vutha as a symbol of the South African situation, suffering double death and violence in the hands of apartheid and Black majority rule in the new South African state. Mda in this novel is using his sensitivity as a writer to portray the South African nation and situation as going through a double death and violence just like Achebe notes in *Morning Yet on Creation Day* that:

the African writer must primarily concern himself with the past in an effort to help his fellow African regain that lost dignity by showing them in human terms what happened to them, what they lost (42-45).

The double death and violence suffered by Vutha is epitomic of the South African situation now, from apartheid to post-apartheid era—white racial rule to Black majority rule amidst violence, corruption, poverty, unemployment and racial discrimination even amongst racial likes. Ngugi in his work *Homecoming* (1982) arguing for a deeper political commitment says that

... literature cannot escape from the class structures that shape our everyday life. Hence a writer has no choice. Whether or not he is aware of it or not, his works reflect one or more of the intense economic, political, cultural and ideological struggles in a society. What he can choose is one or the other side of the battlefield: the side of those social forces and classes

that try to keep people down. What he or she cannot do is to remain neutral. Every writer is a writer in politics. The only question is whose politics (58).

These assertions highlight the notion that literature is a tool used to educate the masses about events in their society. This echoes the political situation in South Africa. The political situation in South Africa dominates all aspects of life in that country. Thus, commitment among black writers has been seen as a necessity. This view is echoed by Nazareth in his work *Literature and Society in Modern Africa* (1972), as he notes that

Apartheid affects every aspect of a person's life like a virulent form of cancer. Hence many South African writers and, 'colored' South African writers are concerned with fighting Apartheid, with demonstrating how monstrous Apartheid is and showing how it dehumanizes everybody (22).

Broadly speaking, the African novel is a response to and a record of the consequences of Western capitalist colonialism on the traditional values and institutions of the African people. This explains African writers' pre-occupation with the past and contemporary social issues. While recognizing the need for a redefinition and reordering of values in modern Africa in the wake of the disruptive effects of colonial era, writers like Chinua Achebe; Ngugi Wa Thiong'O; Ayi Kwei Armah; Mongo Beti; Bessie Head; Ezekiel Mphahlele; Nadine Gordimer; and John Maxwell Coetzee, realize that before this re-ordering can take place there must be a confrontation with the past. Achebe in his work "Morning Yet on Creation Day" (1981) states that:

There is a saying in Ibo that a man who cannot tell where the rain began to beat him cannot know where he dried his body. The writer's duty is to explore in depth, the human condition. In Africa, he cannot perform this task unless he has a proper sense of history (22).

The novel and literature as a whole have never ceased to be a vital tool in showcasing and dissecting the anatomy of society showing the incongruities prevalent therein. Ayi Kwei Armah in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1975) uses the novel to expose the ills in his society at the demise of colonialism. He also uses it to show a state of disillusionment and despair amongst the Africans at the time when his country had gained political independence. He explores the social and political corruption in Ghana, soon after political independence, by the supposed messiahs of his people. Achebe in *A Man of the People* (1966) and *No Longer at Ease* (1960) uses the novels to express the disillusionment of his fellow Nigerians at the enthronement of Nigerian citizens as political leaders soon after independence. He depicts the degree of official corruption and bestiality the elite in both novels.

Literature also teaches as well as ridicules the society where it is premised. In Mongo Beti's *Poor Christ of Bomba* (1971), the author criticizes the wholesome acceptance of the West in all ramifications without an inkling of reservation. He ridicules the early church in Africa used by the Europeans as a means of wisely exploiting the colonized and inexperienced Africans, who even in the face of abject poverty still submit to the demands of the church. Literature in Africa is influenced on the greater part by politics. This gains support by the declaration of Leopold Sedar Senghor at the "First International Congress of Negro Writers and Artists at the Sorbonne" in 1956 when he said "contemporary African poetry and novels are conditioned by the colonial presence" (1956). African Literary scholars have indeed regarded their works as a weapon against colonial presence and oppression.

Lawrence in *Morality and the Novel* (1925), states that "The business of art is to reveal the relation between man and his circum-ambient universe, at the living moment" (127). He goes further to affirm

that: “as mankind is always struggling in the toils of old relationships, art is always ahead of the times, which themselves are always far in the rear of the living moment” (127). Accordingly, there is a relationship between man and his social environment which the art or literature reveals. This relationship Lawrence calls “life” for mankind. According to him “it has the fourth dimensional quality of eternity and perfection and is momentaneous” (128). The novel or literature is a good example of the subtle inter-relatedness that man has discovered. Everything is true in its own time, place, circumstance, and not as much true outside of its own place, time, and circumstance. The novel borders on the balance of society and man, good and bad; morality and immorality, love and hate, violence and consciousness; reconciliation and peace. All the above qualities describe human existence which is life that the novel and literature as art explore and reveal. This is echoed by Lawrence when he posits that “the novel is the book of life” (Lawrence 133), hence the novel has sought to convey the human condition. It has sought to explore human experiences within the milieu, space, time and environment with the view of explaining those factors or experiences that impinge on his consciousness, development and psychology.

In South Africa, protest literature began with the theatre which was popularly called ‘protest theatre’, produced by Mluma. He offers an explanation of the meaning of theatre literature to clear off the impression of its meaning as he says:

... because the South African Media operate under the misguided impression that all theatre that treats political themes is protest literature or theatre, not all political theatre is protest theatre. Least of all, agitprop cannot be protest. Protest literature ... depicts a situation of oppression, but it does not go beyond that. It addresses itself to the oppressor, with the view of appealing to his or her conscience. It is a theatre of complaint, and sometimes even of hopelessness (39).

Fugard blazed the trail in this theatre of protest. His political theatre depicts various aspects of segregation in South Africa, such as the Immorality Act in *Statements after Arrest* (1972), racial classification in *The Blood Knot* (1985), the various pass and influx control laws in *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (1968), created jointly with John Kani and Winston Ntshona, and the Group Areas Act in *Boesman and Lena* (1969). These plays clearly protest against racial segregation by depicting its inhuman nature. The prevarications on the depiction of South African reality in these works show that the oppressed suffer in silence, and are not involved in any struggle against oppression. Instead, they are involved in a struggle of how to accommodate oppression and survive it, and not how to confront it. They are endowed with endless reservoir of stoic endurance. The spirit of defiance that exists in the evident, real life situation in the South Africa of global recognition is non-existent in these works. A typical character representing this is Styles in *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*.

In the mid-1970s black theatre practitioners went beyond protest, a position which was spearheaded by the black consciousness movement of the time. This was a period that witnessed a resurgence of literary works that were overtly political among blacks, and a gradual movement away from the political Township Musical Theatre. The practitioners of this new theatre for resistance state that:

Their case against protest theatre is that ... it, by its very nature, places the onus on the blacks to prove their humanity, whereas protest literature addresses itself to the oppressed with the overt aim of rallying, of mobilizing the oppressed to fight against oppression (Mda:115).

The novelists followed suit to condemn the apartheid and racial discrimination prevalent in South Africa. This situation actually provided Negro writers with the background, for a large number of novels. Most of Peter Abrahams’ novels, for instance, re-create the social climate of racial segregation in this country. This South African writer with his *Mine Boy* (1946), *Tell Freedom* (1954), *Wild Conquest* (1950) and *The Path of Thunder* (1948) in many ways mounted great protest against apartheid in South Africa.

Ezekiel Mphahlele's autobiographical story *Down Second Avenue* (1959) is in the same line of protest against apartheid. It includes two episodes which portray Negro life in South Africa: the police harassment and killings. There is a host of protest novelists which include; Herbert I. E. Dhlomo, who expressed the despair of his oppressed race in a long poem "Valley of a Thousand Hills", (1962), Alfred Hutchinson, one of the accused in a famous treason trial who in *Road to Ghana* (1960) denounces the shifting climate which drove him into exile.

#### Post-Colonial Theory and Its Contemplation in Zakes Mda's *Ways of Dying*

Zakes Mda's works are best examined within the ambit of post-colonial theory. This is because his works examine the relationship between the binaries of apartheid and Post-apartheid South Africa. This implies the relationship between the "colonized" and the "colonizer", 'self' and 'the other', the oppressed and the oppressor, the master-servant relationship. The choice of this theory for this work is not only because South Africa is known to have been under colonial rule, but also for the fact that she has been under the subjugation of apartheid with draconian oppression. In respect of the disposition of Zakes and his works, Post-colonial theory qualifies as the theory for the analysis of his works under study.

Post-colonial theory was postulated by Edward Said in his work entitled "Orientalism" (1978). It came into lime light through the efforts scholars who responded to the new consciousness came up at the Indian independence in (1947), and also as the reaction to the general negative reorientation to the 'Third-World' struggles from the 1950s onwards. Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) was an inspirational key text as it reveals colonial violence on blacks. The text discusses to a large extent the impact of colonialism and the slave trade on blacks. Said's work, *Orientalism* opens critical perspective on Post-colonial literature. In this work, Said engages the three areas of literary and historic concerns, namely the 4000 years of history of cultural relations between Europe and Asia; the scientific discipline producing specialists in oriental languages and culture from early nineteenth century; and finally, the longterm images, stereotypes and general ideology about "the orient" as the "other". In these areas Said exploits the alien culture of science as a means of development and lampoons the cultural alienation of the Asians by the Europeans and the relegation of the Orient as "the other". In *Orientalism Reconsidered* (1986), the notion of "how knowledge that is non-dominative and noncoercive can be produced in a setting that is deeply inscribed with the politics, the considerations, the positions and the strategies of power" is established (295).

Another exponent of post-colonial theory was Gayatri Spivak. Spivak was interested in how truth was constructed rather than in exposing error which she confirms in the statement that "Deconstruction can only speak in the language of the thing it criticizes, the only thing one really deconstructs is something into which one is intimately mired" (Selden and Widdowson 193). Post-colonial theory challenges the legacy of colonialism and deconstructs the imperial ideology of superior culture and world super class position. The theory focuses on the cultural psychology of those who are marginalized by dominant Western culture: the new immigrant; the working class; women; and other post-colonial subjects, and interrogates the legacy of the imperial attitudes of the West on their former subjects. Post-colonialism could be taken as a practical reflection of history, culture, literature and modes of discourse particular to the former colonial subjects of England, Spain, France and other European powers. Its focus is on third world countries in Africa, Asia, Caribbean and South America as well as Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The theory is a reasonable attempt to overturn the imperial process of colonization, and the strategies to overcome the instrument used as the actual material in the discursive effects of the process. Spivak is of the opinion that based on the fact that in many societies women like colonized subjects have been relegated to the position of "other", women and colonized subjects have an intimate experience, that is, of the politics of oppression and repression. She states further that:

Both feminism and Post-colonialism seek to reinstate the marginalized in the face of the dominant. Both also give up simple inversion of traditional views in favor of a more generalized question of forms and modes (Selden and Widdowson:194).

Spivak's work and concern are important as they hinge on issues of ethnicity, class and gender as her own subject. She traces the predicament of the Post-colonial intellectual in a neo-colonial world in her own cause as well as in the texts of the western or Indian traditions she examines.

According to Slemon Stephen, Post-colonialism addresses "issues affecting the structures of violence imposed by western liberation to deconstruct, question and change the system" (375). According to Selden and Widdowson, post-colonial theory enjoins the "other" to construct itself.

Post-colonial theorists enjoin the "other to play out their role" (194). This implies that, third world countries and people should play out their role and recognize their strength, identity and culture as the theorists assert that "Third world nations are the master of their destiny" (Selden and Widdowson:194). Spivak in the essay "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism" (1985) posits that

The subaltern ... the oppressed and silenced cannot, by definition speak or achieve self-legitimation without ceasing to be that named subject under neo-colonialism. But if the oppressed subalterns cannot be spoken for by western intellectuals because this would not alter the most important facts of their position nor speak for them, there can apparently be no non- or anti-colonial discourse (Selden and Widdowson 194 -195).

The post-colonial writer uses history as a major tool to excavate evils of colonialism for the benefit of the present so as to enhance the future. This approach makes the Post-colonial theorists have a realistic view of such colonial or oppressive structures in the contemporary society. Thus, the Post-colonial writer foregrounds historical issues that evoke violence and complicity in their novels, placing them at opposite ends for evaluation. At the same time, the period of helplessness and the development of a confessional mode are revealed by the Post-colonial writer, using the Post-colonial theory. Post-colonialism is interested in the disintegration of the imperial positions of Western culture and politics. The Post-colonial theory operates in a double spate and has close relationship with the binary code of colonialism. Post-colonial texts thus tend to produce a sense of identity which may be contaminated by rejecting what is already inextricable from them, that which has become part of them. It is, therefore, embroiled in complicity. According to Tiffin "Post-colonial writing and criticism are in consonance with each other in the search for a new globalism" (192). This simultaneously asserts local independence and global interdependencies by relying on interactions that contaminate without homogenizing. Post-colonial studies operate on a duality that is oxymoronic, that is, the use of colonial culture and the rejection of its ethics.

Thus, literature of Post-colonial studies questions the view of the West in matters of culture and historical perspectives. The lumping of countries together in geographical or economic blocks, which overlooks vital difference in history, outlook and cultural practice are among the concerns of Post-colonialism. In this respect, Said posits that the West tends to "oblige writers to adopt the language of the former colonial power, for practical convenience and or economic control of the media or publishing houses. In many cases, the foreign language has traditions, social structures and lectures that are not appropriate to what the new writers wish to say. It is obvious too that the West applies economic or political coercion to exploit the colonized or third world countries.

Post-colonial studies use a concept called "otherness" to describe human attitude. 'Otherness' is derived from Freudian psychology. It argues that human beings inevitably define themselves against what they are not. The writer works within a horizon of understanding, which shifts as human thought moves more deeply as the age moves on. Post-colonial theory does not only focus on the West but also places emphasis on the attitude of the Blacks. The theory asserts that third world countries also place themselves as the 'other', the alterity. Governments in third world countries often show colonial attitudes to their own

people. The literary theory helps to interpret literature by identifying the topics and markers characteristic of writers shaped by colonial and Post-colonial life.

#### The Resilience of Past-Apartheid Structures in Post-Apartheid South Africa

At various periods of human development—the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial – literature has always been used as a means of reflection of the events in society. At the pre-colonial era, it was purely orality, at the colonial period literature was used to account for the colonial experience at the time and to protest and resist colonial operations. At the Post-colonial era literature is also used to expose the events and ills as well as suffering experienced by the colonized in the hands of the colonizers. This relationship between literature and society gives credence to the view that literature is a tool used to educate, struggle, resist oppression, and assert one's rights. A writer's sensitivity to the social events within his social milieu is evident in his creative work. This approach to social issues, evident in the writer's sensitivity to his social environment is his consciousness transformed into art.

Achebe observes that “an African creative writer who tries to avoid the big social and political issues of contemporary Africa will end up being completely irrelevant...” (8). It is in the light of this that Ogungbesan declares that “the writer is a member of society and his sensitivity is conditioned by the social and political happenings around him” (109). In this regard, Mda does not remove himself from the reality in the South Africa polity. He confronts the social conditions that tend to stifle progress in the society by highlighting the areas of conflict, which may likely mar the nascent democracy of South Africa. Of paramount importance in the works of Zakes Mda is the resilience of the past structures of apartheid in Post-apartheid South Africa. He uses history of the episodic life of South Africa and South Africans in South Africa to reveal the social events in Post-apartheid South Africa which were dominant during apartheid rule. He focuses on the past not to poise for revenge, but as a pointer to his people of their journey so far. Achebe has noted this point in his statement that “The African writer must primarily concern himself with the past in an effort to help his fellow Africans regain that lost ‘dignity’ by showing them in human terms what happened to them, what they lost” (44). Emphasizing the importance of history Achebe says “There is a saying in Igbo that a man who cannot tell where the rain began to beat him cannot know where he dried his body. The writer can tell the people where the rain began to beat them” (44). Restating his position later he says:

Here then is an adequate revolution for me to espouse to help my society regain belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and selfbasement ... and it is essentially a question of education, in the best sense of the word...I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past with all its imperfections was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them (43 – 44).

This is of importance to the Post-colonial theorists not as a recreation of the past but as a reflection of the process through which those causes began slowly to produce their effect. Postcolonial theorists try to find the basis for oppression, inequality, dehumanization, class distinction of human values and cultural imperialism, as well as the degradation of people internally through class operation, and externally through the subjugation of nations to colonial and semi-colonial status. This cannot be done without recourse to history, the history of the people within the social milieu. In line with other writers of both African and European descent such as Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'O, Wole Soyinka, Coetzee and Nadine Gordimer, Mda sees history as a continuum in which the past, present and future are inextricably tied together, each helping to mirror, to justify or condemn the other.

One of the critical historical reminders which Mda reveals is poverty. Poverty exposed the people to chains of devastating social conditions such as hunger, destitution and hopelessness. In *Ways of Dying*, using the characters of Toloki and Noria as archetypes, Mda exposes a degree of poverty in Post-apartheid South Africa which was also common in the apartheid era and seems to share the same

conception of stasis in the Post-apartheid era as Nadine Gordimer, as the period is characterized by ambiguities, uncertainties, and contradictions. Noria and Toloki are presented as poor blacks who have no decent home. While Noria lives in a shack of a house, Toloki is a professional mourner and wanders from one burial house to another. The transition means death, even though rebirth is associated with its movement into the new democracy. The narrator notes “there are funerals every day because if the bereaved were to wait until the weekend to bury their dead, then mortuaries would overflow” (136). This situation becomes like carnival, with the various funeral situations becoming comical in the overcrowded country as “hymns flow into one another in unplanned but pleasant seques” (145). The protagonist, Toloki, evokes the image of an unreal being embodying the transition as an unreal historical time. He wears a black costume and top hat which he got from a shop renting out “period” costumes to the theatre world and which is hall mark of his profession, a professional mourner. The narrator defines these period costumes as costumes used in plays “that were about worlds that did not exist anymore” (26) or belonging not “to any world that ever existed” (26) thus emphasizing the unreality of this historical epoch of South Africa.

Apart from the incidence of death, hunger and poverty still loom large in the new democracy. Exemplified by Toloki, the professional mourner many still suffer and walk long distance in search of jobs which are not even available. The narrator notes that “He walked for long distances on gravel roads; he took off his boots in order to save them from wear and tear” (60). “He was dog-tired, and his feet were swollen and numb when he entered yet another small town and his mouth was dry, with hunger” (60). The author documents this to show the inconsistency in the black rule and depicts a continuity of the apartheid hegemony. The spate of death is high that it attempts to over number the apartheid records of violence and death. The author narrates that “deaths and funerals continued to dog his way throughout. For instance, in one village he finds the whole community in mourning...” (66). Toloki notes that “Death lives with us every day. Indeed, our ways of dying are our ways of living” (98).

The economic and social conditions of the blacks are noted and mark the social conditions during apartheid still present in the Post-apartheid period as Toloki’s business premises is just “a shopping trolley where he keeps all his worldly possessions...” (14) and “his headquarters is a public place ... and sleeps at the quayside, come rain or shine” (14). The blacks still live in abject poverty, hunger and want. This is depicted in Toloki as “he spends his destitute life on recreation ground, cooks his food on the fires of a funeral pyre, and feeds on human waste and human corpses. He drinks his own urine to quench his thirst...” (13). This indicates in Mda’s view that the new democracy has not got guaranteed safety as poverty and poor accommodation still exist amongst the blacks in this new South Africa. Many macabre images of arbitrary and senseless killing, further establish the poor social conditions affecting the blacks. The death of people is often described in terms of games and fun. A white man burning a worker laughs, and a black “crony” of the white man explains that “the white colleague was merely laughing because it was a game” (64) the narrator states that, “to him the flames were a joke when the man screamed and ran around in pain, he thought he was dancing” (65). The many deaths, poverty and poor social condition of the blacks as depicted in the novel point to the fact that in this historical nightmare, dying was a way of life and this points to a society that has regressed; a society where the law is indiscriminately violated or completely absent. The perpetrators of the crimes in this lawless society were allowed not to grow up, and this is evident in the fact that they cannot distinguish between their fantasies and reality. The political reality itself has taken on the form of a night mare where senseless violence permeates everything and everybody. Moreover, children become the instrument of death. Mda here highlights that children are not given proper education about life and society but are exposed to violent acts as was the case during the apartheid era. He notes that at this age Vutha was already a “veteran” in the struggle “an expert” at dancing the freedom dance, and at chanting the names of leaders who must be revered, and of the sell-outs who must be destroyed. He could recite the liberation code and the declaration of the people’s rights (179).

The heroic temper of children is mixed up with their innocence and omnipotence. This Mda notes “established Vutha as a hero among his peers” which “sometimes went to his head, hence his practicing the stone-throwing skills at Noria’s shack whenever she punished him for being a bad boy” (181). This infant, unable to know his own limitation is further given “political education” (181) about the “nature of oppression” (181). The text narrates that “much of this information floated above the hands of the children” (181) because they do not know the difference between good and evil. Mda draws consciousness of past apartheid by his reference to “these days” in contrast to “this day” or “today”. Such sentence as “those days, they did not allow people of his color onto any of the beaches of the city...he could not carry out his ablutions there as he does today” (120) is illustrative of the past. This statement evokes the practical exclusion experienced by Africans during the apartheid period. In the same vein, he draws back the memory of the period of apartheid when he says “people of his complexion were not allowed to buy houses on the suburb in those days” (125). “Funerals were held only on Saturday and Sunday morning in those days, because death was not as prevalent then as it is at present” (145).

Mda’s historical insight makes him have full grasp of the fact that art is a realm that can incite a discussion or create a shift in consciousness, from which natural change can arise. At the same time fiction, as a product of the imagination may already envision changes that seem quite impossible under the existing circumstances. In the novel, he contends with the past as he keeps abreast the silent images of the past. He says through the narrator:

The government was refusing to give people houses. Instead, they were saying that people who had qualifying papers had to move to a new township that was more than fifty miles away from the city ... Most people did not even have the necessary qualifying papers. Their presence was said to be illegal and the government was bent on sending them back to the place it had demarcated as their homestead (121).

The transition period is reminiscent of the apartheid era when violence was the order of the day. Mda directs consciousness to this period to remind South Africans of the path they are threading into the new democracy. The transition, though, does not mean death, but an indeterminate unfolding state which could yield death and also rebirth. Toloki states that “there are funeral every day, because if the bereaved were to wait until the weekend to bury their dead, then mortuaries would overflow” (136). The atmosphere of the transition creating a rebirth carries the image of violence and the serious funeral situation as “hymns flow into one another in unplanned but pleasant seques” (145). Robben Island prison is the castigating tool which is the epitome of apartheid and the castration of black identity. The occurrence of incessant death and burial in the new South Africa is Mda’s revelation of the past which is a reflection of the continuities of the polarities of apartheid in the Post-apartheid era.

Mda shows his bitterness in the continuous existence of this macabre orgy to establish his condemnation of this violent saga. The apartheid era rendered many black ladies’ widows even in their prime as their husbands became victims of macabre mines accident and police violent raids on blacks. In the new South Africa, Mda feels a sense of history to hear of death and funeral by violence. He narrates:

She starts another hymn. The old ladies pick it up in their tired voices, some of which have become hoarse. They have been singing for the greater port of the night. She is nearer to God. The distance from the havoc, murder, and mayhem in the streets down below attest to the fact (25).

He uses this approach to balance his view between apartheid and Post-apartheid. David Atwell and Barbara Harlow have noted the context for interpreting Post-apartheid South African literature. In their conception of Post-apartheid South African literature as essentially a conflict between past and present and its articulation in both a national global economy, they contend that:

South African literature since 1990 has taken upon itself the task of articulating this larger predicament. Its fields are the experiential, ethical, and political ambiguities of transitions; the tension between memory and amnesia. It emphasizes the imperative of breaking silence necessitated by long years of struggle, the refashioning of identities sought between stasis and change, and the role of culture or its representation— in limiting or enabling new forms of understanding (3).

The situation in Post-apartheid South Africa is uncertain and makes concerned individuals to doubt about the reality of the end of apartheid that many concerned individual, both within and outside South Africa are critical of this situation. The feeling of an unrealized goal after the struggles to end apartheid is disheartening, particularly considering the attitude of the blacks in control of power in Post-apartheid South Africa. Dennis Brutus in an interview with Nwahunaya says:

I have no regrets for engaging in the struggle. I am very pleased that we succeeded in overcoming apartheid. My regret is that those who have succeeded, who have replaced the apartheid regime, have been guilty of policy similar to the policy of apartheid regime. They have protected a small elite of millionaires...er... black millionaires now living in under very secure conditions... barbed wires, sex lives, armed guards.... But the mass of the people is still living in slums, in the ghettos and shanties and shacks.... What we have is not what we hoped to achieve (35).

In line with this view, Mda is of the opinion that the transition makes it possible for apartheid to masquerade as a democratic Post-apartheid South Africa. This is on the premise that Postapartheid South Africa registers continuities with apartheid in several ways. Mda in showcasing the social and economic conditions of the blacks in the Post-apartheid era underscores the fact that political emancipation has not been complemented by social and economic liberation. He is inferring that even though blacks have achieved some form of political independence, the conditions of life confronting them are typical of economic exploitation and impoverishment rather than economic and social equality. Kunnie notes that:

“Since capitalism is the new form through which apartheid operates, the white oligarchy still controls the real source of power and influence for it has the means to keep blacks at the level of basic subsistence” (56).

Mda therefore believes that if the conspicuous gap between the wealthy and the lower classes continues to widen, and the rich white and their surrogate black elite become richer, while the black masses grow poorer, then there is no normalcy in the new black democracy of South Africa, hence the situation is that of stasis. Mda in this novel is read as being densely equivocal in his meditations on the relationship between history and memory, the past and the present, modernity and tradition. In doing so, the novel explores debates over the role of art in Post-apartheid South Africa. Mda emphasizes the haunting presence of the violent past of apartheid and slavery, and suggests that in mourning the past, memory might lead into unexpected, uncomfortable directions, rather than restoring a whole identity or healing the scars of the past. Mda in this mode is making a scathing demand for new forms of politics that are equal to the task of imagining the possibilities of contemporary life.

Mda continues the interrogation of the reality of the Post-apartheid South African democracy. Mda’s use of imagination corresponds with Lukacs’ prescription for the novel as he states:

Imagination is the realization of individual character coupled with an understanding of the historical dynamic, a representation of public and private realms in which one is not subordinate to the other; instead there should be a dialectical interaction between public and private realms (122).

Lukacs uses typification in his characterization. In a character, the determining factors of a particular historical phase in a concentrated form are found. Mda's approach in characterization represents this concept. The novel to Mda should represent the real state of the people. In his imaginative temper, Mda construes a realism that agrees with the sensitivity of a writer. A social critic, Oko has noted that:

Realism is achieved in successful writers who have been able to show not only the social, but also the individual determinants of social upheaval in profoundly conceived individuals who are not stereotype of ideas but vivid embodiments of the limitations and possibilities of their understanding of the great issues of (a nation) Africa in transition, but also from their sympathy with the suffering of the masses of the exploited and peasant population. Their humanism is transmitted to the fate of their characters (110).

Hinged on the historical period of the nineteenth century slave era, Mda uses the novel to dissect the authenticity and reality of Post-apartheid South Africa. Colonialism, capitalism and apartheid are structures of Western control used to debase the Africans. Colonial and apartheid mentality have assumed and made blacks romance with the idea that the black man did not exist and matter in any sphere of existence, had slept in the Dark Continent until the Livingstones and the Stanleys woke him into history through a mixture of piety and violence, the Bible and the gun. Capitalism, colonialism and apartheid are one and the same tool which the West uses to exploit, oppress and make the other unequal.

Ngugi notes that "It was capitalism and its external manifestation, imperialism, colonialism, neocolonialism that had disfigured the African past" (45). Mda seems to mark the impact of slavery and colonialism on the psyche of Africans and Africa as it is evident that the history of Africa and her past is presented by the colonialists as the history of savagery and slavery, and that African history has nothing to contribute to the history of the world. As Ngugi notes further that:

For in order that one group, one race, one class (mostly the minority) can exploit another group, race or class (mostly the majority) it must not only steal its body, batter and barter it for thirty pieces of silver, but must steal its mind and soul as well. Hence the oppressor's obsession with disfiguring a people's past and history (45).

Mda sees a sharp similarity between the nineteenth century slave era and its abolition and the apartheid era and the Post-apartheid era. In drawing attention to the past for the benefit of the present and future, Ikiddeh notes that "most writers have long recognized their responsibility towards society" (33) and the declaration of Achebe among the white audience that he is a teacher through his novels also reminds us of Yevgeny Yevtushenko who apparently answering back Western criticism of his earlier poetic concerns says:

To write only of nature or woman or world sorrow, at a time of hardship for younger countrymen is almost immoral. What the people wanted was that someone should speak to them openly and seriously about how they were going to live (Ikiddeh:33).

These represent Mda's thought for South African society in the Post-apartheid period. Soyinka has articulated the writer's function thus:

To help lay the philosophical foundation on which a new nation is built to offer moral direction, not only by drawing attention to values of an endurable past, but even more importantly, by showing a concern for the collapsing present (14).

Mda in the same vein notes the economic condition of the nation during the apartheid era emphasizing that it was being controlled by the white minority leaders while the black wallowed in abject poverty and want. Wendy Woodward considers the novel as a fable which captures the experiences of apartheid South Africa and represents colonization, oppression and subjugation of the human mind. It represents and

showcases South Africa's past, present and future. In this novel the author tries to balance issues with history by suggesting that despite the political transformation in 1994, from apartheid to multi-party democracy, Post-apartheid South Africa reveals that the old binaries and structures of apartheid have been carried over into the present.

Writing on the impact of cultural imperialism, Said notes that "the Western world has consistently over time, rewritten the identity of the East to match a Western fictional construct" (78). In his work Said recognizes cultural difference as rooted in ideas of hegemony, that is, the West has somehow seen herself and her cultural institutions as superior and the pervasive filter through which all aspects of non-western cultures are defined and explored.

### **Symbolism of South Africa in Vutha**

The tragedy of death and violence in South African is seen in the personified term of Vutha. The South African history is a long odyssey of colonialism and apartheid of colonialism by the Dutch, the khoikhoi and the Kalahari culminating in the mixed race and multi-racial nation of the present South African nation. South Africans experienced a period of hardship and violence in Apartheid rule. This situation characterized the literature and psyche of the nation. This epoch gives vent in the works of writers like Lewis Nkosi and this is shown in this statement in Nkosi's "Fiction by Black" that:

the apartheid inheritance continues to influence the thematic choices of South African writers ... while some black writers remain somewhat stunned by the sudden change, another category of white writers, suddenly quite numerous, see the end of apartheid as the occasion for inventing black villains where function is to serve as pawns in a game in which roles are suddenly conveniently revised (117-129).

In the new South Africa, certain striking features of apartheid are present as also are the emergence of new ways of experience and conduct that are free from the ideological determination of the past. This situation gives vent to a kind of literary temper that Elleke Bohemer suggests that "writers should follow the winding course of change to adopt their writing to the moment and movements following apocalypse" (7). South Africa, during apartheid minority rule, has passed through immorality act, racial discrimination, pass law, and other separatist law or another. The reality of Zakes' *Ways of Dying* and Vutha as a metaphor of South African apartheid makes Irene Visser suggest that the novel is "an answer for the call by several theorists in 1890s, such as Jane Walks Albie Sachs, and Njabulo Ndebele for a new fiction not bogged down and rendered faceless by the struggle for total freedom. The metaphor is succinctly captured by Rita Bernard who explicates the setting of *Ways of Dying* "as an intimate of Bakhtin's theories on the location and space of the carnival and grotesque" (254). The carnivalesque and the apocalypst in the South African psyche represent Achebe's and Ngugi's notions that:

... in Africa where despair deepens in the practice of polices and in lives of the people, the writer must represent the vanguard of the armies that will liberate the masses from ignorance and culture stagnation and restore for them their earlier attachments to life (*Homecoming*,355).

Ogunbesan in the light of this declares that "the writer is member of society and his sensibility is conditioned by the social and political evening around him" (*Writer*, 7). Mda represents postapartheid South Africa as a conflict between the past and the present, hinting that the state of normalcy envisaged by South Africans is not yet realized. He notes that the racial divide once enforced by law has become an economic divide that mostly fall within racial lines. Vutha, Noria's son depicts this situation in South Africa. He dies violently and is eaten by dogs and by his second reincarnation at the age of five; he meets another violent death by neck lacing. Mda in this is showing that the political reality in South Africa has taken the form of a nightmare where senseless violence permeates everything and everywhere. Everybody and especially children, become the instruments of death.

Thus, Mda seems to share the same conception of stasis in the post-apartheid era with writer Nadine Gordimer as the period is characterized by ambiguities, uncertainties, and contradictions. In this novel, the author tries to balance issues with history by depicting that despite the political transformation in 1994, from apartheid to multi-party democracy, post-apartheid South African literature reveals that the old binaries and structures of apartheid have been carried over into the present. Thus, the new political platform in South Africa portrays ambiguities and contradictions, and it is hypocritical. The demise of apartheid transforms South Africa into a black majority rule.

This takes place after many decades of apartheid rule that represents Vutha's fifteen years of conception. South Africa has got political independence but the black rule is denied economic power. Again corruption, death and violence still find their way and are eminent features of the present post-apartheid nation of South Africa. This consciousness is captured by Brink, Atwell and Harlow as they contend that:

South Africa and its literature since 1990, has taken upon itself the task of articulating this larger predicament. Its field is the experiential, ethical and political ambiguities of transition, the tension between memory and amnesia...(3)

Mda is using his sensitivity as a writer to expose the ills that are still prevalent in his dear, nascent democratic society. This vision and sensitivity of his is echoed by Imeh Ikiddeh as he notes that, "Most writers have long recognized their responsibility towards society" (33). As a writer, he sees social sensitivity as a duty which he, as a vanguard of development, must accomplish through his literary impetus. In Vutha, Mda highlights the fact that children still experience violence as was the case during the apartheid era. Violence is seen as play. He notes that:

At this age Vutha was already a veteran in the struggle, an expert at dancing the freedom dance, and at chanting the names of leaders who must be revered, and of the sellouts who must be destroyed ...(178)

The age at which Vutha at his second death by necklacing, coincides with the period the author highlights and depicts in the novel *Ways of Dying*. The heroic temper of the children is mixed up with their innocence and omnipotence. Hence Mda notes "establish Vutha as a hero among his peers" which sometimes went to his head. This makes him practice the stone-throwing skills at Noria's shack whenever, she punishes him for being a bad boy" (81).

This child, an infant, unable to know his own limitation is further given "political education" (181) about the "nature of oppressors" (181). The text narrates that "much of this information floated above the hands of the children" (181), because they do not know the difference between good and evil. Mda is reading this violence to present South Africa in the Black majority rule and to establish that violence is inflicted among the blacks by the blacks. This represents the postcolonial theorists that posit that the "third world countries are the master of their political, social and psychological situation" (Widdowson and Selden (139). This implies a change of baton from white racism to black abuse of power, discrimination and outright violence, even against one another.

The experience of Vutha is captured by Julian Kunnie in his analysis of the South African situation, both politically and economically as he questions:

Can De Klerk's action be understood a magnanimous gesture, symbolizing, like Paul on the road to Damascus, a genuine change of heart, ... Is apartheid really dead, or will it continue to survive tragically metamorphosed in a ghastly new Guise (55).

In line with this view, Mda is of the opinion that the transition makes it possible for the apartheid to masquerade as a democratic post-apartheid South Africa. This is on the premise that post apartheid South Africa registers continuities with apartheid in several ways. Mda is showcasing the social and economic

predicaments of the blacks in the post-apartheid era underscores the fact that political emancipation has not been complemented by social and economic liberation. He is inferring that even though Blacks have achieved some from political independence, the conditions of life confronting them are typical of “economic exploitation and impoverishment rather than economic and social equality” (55). Kunnie has also noted that:

Since capitalism is the new form through which apartheid operates, the white oligarchy still controls the real sources of power and influence for it has the means to keep blacks at a level of basic subsistence (56).

Mda, therefore, believes that if the conspicuous difference between the wealthy and the lower classes continues to widen, and the rich white and their surrogate black elites become richer while the black masses grow poorer, then there is no normalcy in the black democracy of South Africa. Thus, South Africa suffers double death and violence in the hands of black South Africans. Vutha’s first death and violence was because of lack of care, poverty and negligence on the part of the parents and the government due to apartheid. His second death and violence are in the hands of his fellow youths and black comrades, just in the same way as South Africa’s first violence was through apartheid regulations and the second violence through fellow black South Africans. Thus, this depicts black violence against blacks.

In conclusion, it is evident that South Africa since the inception of Black majority rule is still grappling with social, economic and cultural stability in the midst of continued racial discrimination. Thus, with this scenario, it can be read that South African political emancipation which is bereft of economic freedom is said to be in a state of dystopia, stasis and interregnum. Hence emancipation remains a mirage in this state of the nation. The blacks will continue to suffer if there is no change.

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