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The Politics of Magic Realism in ZakesMda's *Ways of Dying*

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Letter of Approval

This thesis, entitled “The Politics of Magic Realism in ZakesMda’s *Ways of Dying*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Sangita Karki has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

The sole thrust of this thesis is to examine how two different brands of realities coexist side by side in ZakesMda's *Ways of Dying*. One reality refers to the mounting carnage and massacre that take place when anti-apartheid movement reaches climax. Magic realism serves as the viewpoint from which Toloki's entire redemptive endeavor is analyzed. In the novel, the death toll takes such a massive proportion that it is necessary to organize public mourning by hiring public mourner like Toloki and nurse. Toloki's frequent philosophy of death foils the harrowing experiences of murder and massacre. Though majority of people take part in the anti-apartheid movement, they themselves become the victims of their anger and aggression. The more the movement gets prolonged, the more conflict, chaos and carnage occur. Due to the prolongation of conflict and anti-apartheid movement, people begin to think that violence become the part of daily life. Fed up with the lingering trace of violence, majority of people turns to the mythical belief and practice. The myth of mountain woman occurs frequently in the novel. To give the mythological twist to the pervading phenomena of death, there is frequent reference to African mysticism, mythic belief and religious doctrine.

The Politics of Magic Realism in ZakesMda's *Ways of Dying*

This research examines why the mode of magic realism is used to portray two different brands of realities. In Mda's *Ways of Dying*, political reality and mythical reality coexist in such a way that the totality of all the realistic details provide the lifelike glimpse of South African society which hovers on the verge of transition. *Ways of Dying* portrays the experimental turn in black South African writing. Mda eschews neither the direct contextualization of a message within a particular socio-historical milieu nor its indirect dramatization within his narrative practice. This particular choice of narrative mode moves between white postmodern writing and black realist writing. Toloki reminds people that death has become an integral part of life. So it is unavoidable.

Nurse and Noria hint at the necessity to revive mythical faith and fantasy in an attempt to seek shelter from the terrible experience of war. By incorporating the techniques associated with magic realism in his fiction, Mda ensures that everyday tasks and events are defamiliarized, while the supernatural or mythic world is familiarized in a process which makes the lives of the marginalized believable. *Ways of Dying* offers a dynamic combination of allegory, realism and magic realism, which allows the mythical consciousness. By means of individual myths, the victims of violence attempt to understand and interpret the world.

ZakesMda's *Ways of Dying* has been interpreted and analyzed from different perspective by many critics. *Ways of Dying* dramatizes the breakdown of the psychological makeup of those who are directly affected by the violence. In hostile circumstances, there is the possibility of the emergence of depressive mentality, which is stated in this research. But in the different perspective, Obi Maduakor takes it as a unique book. Commenting on the novel, he asserts:

Mda's *Ways of Dying* is a thought-provoking novel. It is noted for its moral preoccupation and dark political realities. The emerging solidarity amidst Toloki, and Noria's striking enough to yield plenty of interpretive possibility. But that does not mean, it is brimful of ambiguity and dubiety. The imagination that conceived it is nurtured by the same moral outrage that occasioned other remarkable works of Mda. (85)

Maduakor's perspective gives a religious picture along with the moral values and norms in the -independent South Africa. The genius of Mda is matchless. His creative talent knows no dimension. Versatility is the hallmark of Mda. In the veil of obscurity, he succeeds in injecting profound post philosophical wisdom. Some of the ethical suggestions are vague while others are fruitful to human beings beyond race and culture.

Aisha Karim, the leading critic of Zakes Mda, is of the opinion that the mythological references to the shipwrecked explorers serve the structural frame of the novel, *Ways of Dying*. It is difficult to guess if the shipwrecked persons can stand for universal fear of being self-dissolution or not. The following lines convey Karim's viewpoint on the core content of *Ways of Dying*:

Speaking of Mda's *Ways of Dying*'s deployment of premonition as a central trope in his work, the tormented and shipwrecked figures seem appropriate to the trouble-torn personality of the writer, and that it is also eminently apposite to a trouble-wracked, post-independence Africa. Whether the analogy between popular South African deity and the writer works is viable or not, it is extremely suggestive for our

reading of Mda's *Ways of Dying* as the very novel that the mythographer singles out for harsh criticism. (11)

It would be fair to say that to revive the myth is to assert the implication of the role of individuality via communal practice and plan. In terms of its nuance of presentation, this novel is drastically different from Mda's earlier novel. It should go without saying that the novel is certainly uncharacteristic of Mda's oeuvre.

Another prominent critic of Zakes Mda, Jane Tammy, says that individual will is celebrated by the author as the agent of social transformation. Mda writes for the sake of affecting certain stroke of transformation in society. Both *Ways of Dying* and *The Heart of Redness* aim at highlighting individual forces. Tammy makes the following view regarding to Coetzee's nuance and tact as an author:

Indeed, both of Zakes Mda's novels, *Ways of Dying* and the later *The Heart of Redness* tend toward questioning of this role of individual will as the agent of social transformation — a role that is generally affirmed in Mda's prolific dramatic output. In following the lives of a group of friends, their drunken bouts, their individual love affairs, and their idiosyncrasies, *Ways of Lying* launches a supremely witty critique of African society, steered by corrupt, laughable, and self-hating elite. On one hand, the novel preempts any possibility of social transformation as coming from these elite. (27)

Tammy maintains that novel deliberately avoids the need to reflect on the problems of society. Mda is more interested in the probable methods of social transformation. Whatever methods he discusses are no longer efficacious and viable. Mda mistrusts collective activity. His work, *Ways of Dying* is a case in point. As advised by the

novelist, it is tough and challenging to reform society via philosophical model. No viable solution is propounded by the author.

The values propagated and embodied by the protagonist are worth considering. Toloki's model of handling the fear generated by endemic violence and his vehement sense of prudence are two facets of the same coin. His unwavering trust in the power of unity is forced to disintegrate as his plan fails. The following lines clarify Nicholas Smithson's view:

An exploration of power in the wake of the psychic enervation of Toloki is the foremost theme of the novel. It is about the power to rule that is fought for in escape route, or the power that is exerted in prejudice against a group of people who are considered less than human. It is about the power of the mind to conceptualize how to demean a nation of people; how to propagandize one's beliefs; or how to rationalize one's horrible and disgraceful actions. And it is about the power of survival. But power is not the only theme. (54)

Smithson's view that *Ways of Dying* is not only about the power of rational administration of society or the dominance exhibited by white supremacy or the exploitation of colonization is undoubtedly apt and appropriate. It is also about the sometimes deadly consequences of self's struggle to subjugate the other, the disintegration of the human spirit, and the complete destruction of a way of life.

Simon wants the rest of the world to partake of that mysterious substance. He has the vision of reforming society through pacifism.

Dominating nature of power is partly hinted at and partly exposed in the novel, *Ways of Dying*. From the observation of protagonist's predicament, it is easier to catch the glimpse of this sort of thematic substance. Abdulrazk Gurnah comments on

this fiction in somehow similar way and analyzes the discursive aspect of the way power operates and percolates. He says:

Whether it is real or perceived supremacy, whether it is inherent or artificial authority, the theme of power dominates both the novel in Mda's *Ways of Dying*. There is the authority of Toloki over the art of mourning. But this authority is parental. It is nurturing and safeguarding. Toloki, because of subservient position in the alien land, has the authority as well as the obligation to make sure that his employees' work matches the criteria of the position or fulfills the needs of the department. (68)

Grunah suggests that Toloki gives Noria even more power than the supervisor requests. Through his own lack of confidence, Noria imagines Toloki to be a far greater figure than Mda really is. Treacherous dispositions are presented without irony and are often overtaken by a tough-talking radical voice. In terms of Mda's choice of language and metaphor, *Ways of Dying* is matchless.

Emily Cappo has looked into the very title of this novel, *Ways of Dying*. She is determined to demystify the conscious choice of title for this novel. Her view is expressed in the following excerpt:

The middle part of *Ways of Dying* contains excerpts from Toloki's report. In it, he discusses the aims and achievements of propaganda and the difference between its effect on people from Western cultures and those from African cultures. One theory that Toloki pays special attention to is that of the father-voice and how it works to control the common citizen as well as how it fails as a device of propaganda. (34)

Intermixed with the narrative of the report are Toloki's interior monologues. His comments tend to exaggerate his position, such as when he refers to himself as a hero of resistance. Bleak vision of life is reflected in this novel. This vision is provocative of fear of life. Actually, unknown and unfamiliar beings employed to keep an eye on Toloki and Norio. The very title of this novel evokes the sense of transitional violence which is redemptive in orientation. A kind of lingering anthropomorphic pride is entirely accountable for the inception of negative vision almost verging on despair and fatalism.

Annie Gagiano traces autobiographical elements in the novel, *Ways of Dying*. Thoughts are not properly presented in the novel. Gagiano makes the following remarks:

Mda's many fictions, his autobiographies, essays, direct political statements and his other writings are probably all better known for their lucid presentation. Though lucidity is obviously present in these works, certain degree of obscurity is present. Relative obscurity is an index of absence of admiration-more highly rated. The richness of this text is nevertheless in one way measurable. It is one of the few African Anglophone novels which brought irresistibly to mind when so disparate and wide-ranging a list of topics as bodies' identities, subcultures and repression is mentioned. (76)

As claimed by Gagiano, it is a sustained, complex and intensely dramatic evocation of the ancient and urgent question of how violent political and social repression is to be opposed. The entire novel is replete with disparate social and political identities as well as the presentation of one main subculture. Sometimes, it aims at projecting insistent power of ruthless repression.

Thomas Benton is a critic of ZakesMda. He contends that *Ways of Dying* is the product of Mda's attempt to cope with hatred and cruelty which are implanted in the consciousness of every South African citizen following the time in which western colonizers made up their minds to shift power to the native inhabitants of South Africa. Benton shortly puts forward the following view:

Fiction has few characters as utterly loathsome as Toloki. Coetzee takes on envy, hatred, and iniquity, bringing the reader to identify with a character so despicable that they shudder to recognize their own empathy. The opening chapters create an atmosphere that promise to be a much-needed deviation from typical narratives of heroism and goodness. Noria's character can also be read as a version of the author's younger self; some experiences seem too vivid to be imagined. (41)

The wild passion of African citizens is kept in the novel with a huge sense of dedication on the part of the novelist. Benton is more interested in the analysis of the inner malaises of the characters like Toloki and Norio. Though outer challenges which arose out of the inhabitants' suspicious nature are vital, inner psychological conditions of characters are of utmost importance.

Wylie Henderson does not hesitate to give credit to ZakesMda for humanizing the entire region of Africa via allegorical mode of representation. According to Henderson, ZakesMda is the first South African author who is conscious of the culture of empathy. As an author, he seeks to expose and externalize some of promising and pessimistic plight of South Africans to the world of Western Hemisphere. Mda is the first writer to rely on textual strength to project the power and plight of South African to the western world. Henderson puts forwards the following

view with respect to the possibility of interaction between the dilapidated African community and the liberal western world:

ZakesMda may have achieved a political goal by humanizing a region still obscure in Western thought. He describes historical world of South Africa at the time of the end of colonialism. This issue is implicitly embedded in the subtext of *Ways of Dying*.

However, war and political conflict take the back seat to the human dramas that occur because of and — more importantly — despite of such events. The author's simple language is surprisingly effective in explaining the complexity of emotions, characters and dynamics which could exist in any culture. (76)

Although there is still doubt and discussion about the alleged nonpolitical motive of ZakesMda for writing *Ways of Dying*, Henderson maintains that the driving force behind the creation of *Ways of Dying* is undoubtedly political. Without doubt, this novel can hardly survive on its own. Prior to the publication of this novel, Postcolonial culture of South Africa remained a mystery which haunted to the world of readership of Western Europe. When this novel circulated to the western world, many facts about the culture and geographical oddities of South Africa became accessible to the western world.

Mark Seltzer holds the view that characters in ZakesMda's fictions are guided and governed by the environmental pull and tug. Factors found in the local surrounding produce quirky effect in those who dwell in it. Mda is acutely aware of this condition. Characters in his novels are expressive of the effect of environment. *Ways of Dying* is a case in point:

Whilst there is always a confusion in Mda's *Ways of Dying* about to what extent the characters are mere manifestations of their environment and as such, powerless ciphers, unable to perform any act of agency, or whether they are to some extent morality tales, with protagonists attempting to work with and against their environments to achieve some sort of epiphany or new mode of living, *Ways of Dying* can certainly be read in a more positive fashion, and as both evidence of a death of affect and a railing against it. (75)

Fascination with esoteric pattern is the most dazzling component in *Ways of Dying*. The dilemma lies at the heart of the novel. It is very hard to catch a definite answer. The exploration of the new way of seeing one's own inner journey occupies the forefront of the novel. But it is doubtful to ascertain the relevance of this exploration.

Although all these critics have examined the novel, *Ways of Dying*, from different perspectives, none of them has concentrated upon the issue of the projection of magical realism. Thus, the researcher aims at probing this issue from the vantage point of Rushdie's imaginary homeland.

The researcher makes use of the theory of magical realism and additional theoretical insights of postcolonial critics like Rushdie and Said. The possibility of magical realism increases in the postcolonial period. In the postcolonial period, two different kinds of experiences are likely to occur. That is why it would be fruitful to probe the emerging realities which conflict each other from the vantage point of post-colonialism. As claimed by Rushdie and Said, magic realism is the emerging language of the postcolonial world. Dual realities are likely to emerge in the postcolonial world. The lingering vestige of colonial give rise to one brand of reality which often collides with the freshly cultivated reality of the recently independent

counties. That is why those writers who deal with the experiences of the postcolonial world should adopt the strategy of magic realism. Most of important theoretical insights are borrowed from Salman Rushdie's *Imaginary Homeland*. Rushdie's status as an immigrant to Britain but writing about the Indian sub-continent allows him to position himself as both an 'insider' and an 'outsider' of both cultures. This hybrid identity allows him to take advantage of magical realism as the most appropriate style for his novels.

This research intends to examine how magic realism is projected in the novel, *Ways of Dying* by Zakes Mda. In *Ways of Dying* two different brands of realities coexist, one foiling the other. The reality of violence during the transitional period of South Africa is put beside the reality regarding how people tormented by violence affirm their hope and struggle create a secure horizon of future. *Ways of Dying* juxtaposes hope and despair, negation and affirmation, violence and pacificism. The entire generation of Toloki is caught up in the complex maelstrom of violence, murder, agony and pessimism.

The transitional society of Africa offers despair, unexpected death and series of pain and pathos. Even in the midst of sporadic violence and bloodshed, characters like Toloki and Noria cherish secure future which brings stability, order, peace and progress. The present reality of conflict generated by anti-apartheid movement stands face to face with the reality of hope and struggle for the establishment of peace, order and hope. The notion that human beings are always more than a number of problems they face is the driving force behind the struggle of shipwrecked characters like Toloki and Noria. In the very beginning of the novel, the reality of violence that sporadically occurs in the transitional society of Africa is presented.

In the lamentation delivered by the nurse, the harsh reality of violence and conflict is clearly seen. Later on, Toloki, a professional mourner, does his level best to transcend this reality regarding violence. The nurse's pathos and agony at the death of a boy is reflected in the following citation:

This little brother was our child, and his death is more painful because it is of our own creation. It is not the first time that we bury little children. We bury them every day. But they are killed by the enemy. Those we are fighting against it. This little brother was killed by those who are fighting to free us. We mumble. It is not for the Nurse to make such statements. (1)

Death, decadence, violence and communal fury occur frequently in the African society which hovers on the verge of transition. In the liberation movement against apartheid, considerable numbers of South African people get united and direct their coordinate their forces. The reality about the death of people who join in the movement against apartheid is presented in the novel. This reality is painful. The families of those who suffer injury as well as those who lose their lives are tormented seriously. The families of those who lose their lives in the movement against apartheid are restless, seriously haunted and then directionless. The reality regarding the conflict and violence prone transitional society of South Africa reign sovereign. But that does not mean other kind of reality is absent in the novel. Other trajectory of reality also resides in the novel.

It is a common perception that magical realist fictions are often set in rural areas but some politically motivated writers like Salman Rushdie have set their magical realist novels in big cities which are under political and social tension. Rushdie discloses the following viewpoint:

Magic realism is associated with non-western cultures which could not be approached with a typical western mentality because magic realist works are full of exotic magic, myth, and grotesque elements. This use of magic has been considered a regional alternative and a protest to the Eurocentric categorization of the world. The direct allusions to history and the history of the margins have strengthened the postcolonial identity for magic realism. (87)

Rushdie has contributed largely to the connection between magical realism and post-colonialism by presenting magical realism as an instrument to undermine western concept of stability. He emphasizes the function of magic realism as the weapon of the silenced, marginalized, disposed voices in their fight against inherited notions of imperial history.

Reality with respect to Toloki's indulgence in the shamanistic practice is also reflected in the novel. Toloki's distinctive personality is supported by his trust in the power of shamanism. The harsh political reality coexists with mythical as well as shamanistic glimpse of reality. Toloki is strict in following shamanistic cult. He swallows his own urine to quench his thirst. He too is fond of standing in line of shamanistic practice of arms taking. The following extract is illustrative of how Toloki's life style projects shamanistic reality:

Votary or no votary, he will not collect alms. It is one tradition of the sacred order that he will break, in spite of the recognition of the shamanistic elements of alms-taking. When he comes back to a life that is far more the glamour of the aghori sadhu in those distant lands, he is glad that even in his dreams he is strong enough not to take a

cent he has not worked for. In his profession, people are paid for an essential service that they render the community. (15)

Toloki's shamanistic practice coexists with the harsh reality about anti-apartheid movement. It is somewhat unclear if Toloki uses his faith in shamanistic practice as a means to delude the people at large or not. Professing belief in the practice of shamanism is strictly professional for Toloki. It is means to spark hope and enthusiasm in people who are fed up with the devastation brought forth by the anti-apartheid movement. The present situation is full of confusion. What comes out of the womb of confounding presence is unpredictable. At any time any kind of event can take place. In the midst of confusion, uncertainty and haunting sense of fear, people are easily tempted by the magical charm of shamanism. For whichever purpose Toloki professes his belief in shamanistic practice, the reality about shamanism lies beside the haunting and tormenting reality about anti-apartheid.

Through the mode of contrast the horrible truth of the reality is emphasized. In discussing narrative choice of magical realism, it is important that along with the serious side of the literary method there is also a funny and playful side which requires specialized audience. In this regard, it is worthwhile to quote Edward Said. Said reveals the following view:

Magic and references to ancient myth control and structure the narrative but instead of fossilizing it in past they are well-established in the contemporary history. The novel's major themes, the creation and telling of history, identity and stories arise through the structured hybridity of magical realism and without magical realism it would be extremely difficult to connect these free themes, along with the discussion of the problems of post coloniality. (71)

The magical realism is used to solve the problems of postcoloniality because people would like to create their own identities, histories, stories, beliefs, customs, and tradition, and to share them with others.

Toloki sways and seduces people who have lost sense of direction and destination in their lives. In the midst of formidable anti-apartheid movement, he is only one person who has instilled vacuous sense of certainty and hope in the members of bereaved family and neighbors. The more mysterious the death, the more esoteric and occult Toloki appears to be. Being strange, being idiosyncratic and being a messianic figure in the land of death and devastation is the sole and whole thrust of Toloki. The reality represented by Toloki has the aura of mystery, touch of magic and fragrance of shamanism. Such a trajectory of reality softens the harshness and horror of politically charged reality. The following extract presents the case in a lifelike way:

Not even at mass funeral had he earned such an amount. So, he made a point of giving of his very best. Throughout the funeral, orator after orator, he sat on the mound and made moaning sounds of agony that were so harrowing that they affected all those who were within earshot, filling their eyes with tears. When the Nurse spoke, he excelled himself by punctuating each painful segment of her speech with an excruciating groan that sent the relatives into a frenzy of wailing. (17)

To transform hopelessness and harrowing experience into the temporary source of happiness, Toloki puts himself on the path of becoming a public mourner. To thrive in his profession, Toloki tends to use any kind of knowledge that helps him to divert the attention of sufferers and victims of harsh political phenomenon. Frenzy and fear, mystery and fact, horror and happiness are the daily phenomena that occur in the lives

of people. That is why; it has become essential for Toloki to do all such things in a spectacular way. He has to produce the spectacularly sober atmosphere in the public so that he could help people how to cope with daily news of disaster and devastation, hopelessness and horror.

If Toloki creates mystic and mythical aura in the process of working as public mourner, there is a nurse who works to report about people who are supposedly missing in community. The nurse reminds readers that death toll is taking place in a huge proportion. “This is our elder brother, we learnt from the Nurse, left home one day and said he was visiting his beloved sister, who now found she standing before this grieving multitude in the person of the Nurse. But since the day he stepped out of the door of his house, no one had seen him alive again”(18). Out of professional restrictions and philanthropic concern, the nurse surveys the scene in which death toll takes place in an incredible proportion. The following extract throws spotlight on the horrifying reality of carnage those results from the soaring anti-apartheid movement:

She joined the queue in the morning when the offices opened. At last her turn came at midday. The woman at the counter looked at her briefly, and then took a pen and doodled on a piece of paper. Then she shouted to a girl at the other end of the office, and boasted to her about the Christmas picnic she and her friends were going to hold. They discussed dresses, and the new patterns that were in vogue. (19)

The nurse tends to remind people that death toll takes place in massive proportion. For the sake of the success of anti-apartheid movement, many people have lost their lives. Because people sacrificed their lives to make anti-apartheid movement successful, it is imperative to organize public funeral of those who died. All the activities of nurse refer to the grim reality of violence and death toll. Nurse serves as

the reminder of grim reality that horrifies those who anticipate pacifism to emerge as an antidote to the wound an injury resulting from the advent and prolongation of anti-apartheid movement.

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said dwells upon the literary and political function of the device called magic realism. He had the following to say about the use of the term magic realism:

Discussions of magic realism in the Caribbean and African novel, say, may allude to or at best outline the contours of a postmodern or national field that unites these works, but we know that the works and their authors and readers are specific to, and articulated in, local circumstances, and these circumstances are usefully kept separate when we analyze the contrasting conditions of reception in London or New York on the one hand, the peripheries on the other. (374)

While Said is not here calling for the abandonment of the term magic realism, he is alerting us to the necessity to pay attention to specificity, to context. Indeed, it is difficult to take issue with the term itself unless we assume that language is propositional, and that the application of a category somehow determines the interpretation of the text to which it is applied. Of course, as Said has shown, discourse is always tendentious due to the fact that there is always a desiring agent behind the words.

In the novel, there is a mythological reference to the birth of Noria and her humorous disposition. Some of the aspects of mystery related to the birth and growth of Noria appear to have mythological significance. “It is rumored that when Noria was a baby, she already had beautiful laughter. We say it is rumored because it is one of the few things that we do not know for sure. When that Mountain Woman was

pregnant she went to give birth in her village in the mountains, as was the custom with a first child”(32). In the time of dire crisis and confounding situation, mythological and legendary reference can provide the shelter. In the time of political chaos and confusion, mythological faith and religious doctrine serve as an oasis. That is why people tend to scratch the surface of mythology and religion. The following extract illuminates how this trend continues to gain momentum rapidly during the time of anti-apartheid movement:

Once, when the three friends, Nefolovhodwe, Xesibe and Jwara, were sitting under the big tree in front of Xesibe’s house, playing the morabaraba game with small pebbles called cattle, and drinking beer brewed by That Mountain Woman(who always had a good hand in all matters pertaining to sorghum), Xesibe complained, you know, Jwara, I think you spoil that child. You pamper her too much with good things, and she is now so big-headed that she won’t even listen to me, her own father. Poor Xesibe, he was not aware that at that very moment (34)

The myth of the mountain woman is used as a framework to dramatize the horrendous nature of women’s suffering. Many women had to lose the lives of their sons in the anti-apartheid movement. There is frequent reference to the myth of mountain woman. Horrified and frightened people invoke the spirit of the mountain woman. For them, invoking the spirit of mountain woman is the survival mechanism. It is the method of managing the misery of people who are trapped in the turmoil of anti-apartheid movement.

Unlike Said, M. H. Abrams briefly expounds on the notion of magic realism. In *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, M.H. Abrams provides the following definition of magic realism:

The term magic realism has been applied to the prose fiction of Jorge Luis Borges in Argentina, as well as to the work of writers such as García Márquez in Colombia, Günter Grass in Germany, and John Fowles in England; they interweave, in an ever-shifting pattern, a sharply etched realism with fantastic and dreamlike elements. (122)

This is a rather unspecific definition as there are a number of possible narrative modes which combine realism with the fantastic. If this is all that could be said about the term, the fact that it is still in circulation would be more than a little surprising. In order to understand what distinguishes the term from near cognates one could do worse than begin with its original application in art criticism.

Reality about how people fed up with the degeneration of anti-apartheid movement escape from the recurrent violence and carnage. Attempting to construct the fantasy world of escapism is one aspect of reality that exists in the novel. Noria is haunted by the agony of the untimely murder of her son. Toloki is also overburdened with the guilt of cheating people with his bogus faith in the power of public mourning. No matter how frequently Toloki organizes public mourning, death toll does not decrease. Thus, Toloki too longs to create a new order of normal life no matter how escapist it might be. The following extract reveals how the disappointed characters try to enter into the escapist world of fantasy and imagination:

First they dig holes for the poles. There will be a pole at each of the four corners, and then two poles at the door. After securing the poles with small stones and with sand, they will use the remaining poles as

rafters. This will be the only shack to have the luxury of rafters. This will be the only shack to have the luxury of rafters. Then they will put up the roof by nailing the iron sheets to the rafters. After that they will cover the sides with canvas and plastic. Thanks to Toloki's connection. (58)

When actual reality turns out to be painful and haunting, those who are affected by it have no option other than escaping from it. Fantasy, retreat into the mythological miracle and ritualistic practice become the saving grace. Without exercising any critical faculty of mind, people simply turn to the ritualistic cult and escapist world of fantasy.

In *The Location of Culture*, Homi K. Bhabha has dwelt upon the notion of hybridity at length. The following citation taken out from that book illustrates the concept of hybridity:

To see the cultural not as the source of conflict—different cultures—but as the effect of discriminatory practices—the production of cultural differentiation as signs out authority—changes its value and its rules of recognition. Hybridity intervenes in the exercise of authority not merely to indicate the impossibility of its identity but to represent the unpredictability of its presence. It reverses the formal process of disavowal so that the violent dislocation of the act of colonization becomes the conditionality of colonial discourse. (114)

According to Bhabha, when two different cultural norms stand face to face with each other, conflict is bound to happen. One dominant cultural value dominates the other. The least practiced and acknowledged cultural value can be gradually replaced by the overwhelming and overpowering culture. Thus, sense of conflict can naturally arise.

Those who pass through this phase of cultural conflict are bound to suffer. This is exactly what usually happen to the immigrants, the exiled and the expatriates.

Bhabha sees the possibility of transformation inherent in the state of cultural turmoil and dislocation.

When people's exposure to violence does not end after some time and when it gets prolonged, a situation arises in which people begin to think that violence has become a part and parcel of daily life. In this situation, instead of thinking about how to end the vicious cycle of violence and bloodshed, what becomes necessary is the rationalization of violence. A few characters in the novel face this kind of situation. Such a situation poses jolt to the integrity of society. The following extract puts forwards this sort of view:

However the man's father refused to believe that it was all a game. He said that before his son died, he had told him that the white man hated him because he was doing so well in his job. He had been a laborer for many years, serving the company with honesty and dedication, and had recently been tipped for a more senior position. The white man had conspired with the crony to kill him. (65)

Social ideals and normative values shattered giving way to the rampant violence and disillusionment. The narrator is incapacitated to take any strong action when many misfits are engaged in promiscuous sexual activities. They goad their allies to commit more brutal acts. The narrator is entangled in the confused state of mind. How can he dare to take any action when he himself is trapped in the immobility of existence?

Mimicry is their strategy for redefinition and the strategy of renewing themselves. Mimicry generates hybridity which is the root condition of cultural dislocation. Hence, it becomes relevant to discuss about mimicry. Once again the

researcher quotes Homi K. Bhabha. Bhabha has given the precise essence of hybridity. His view makes the following revelation about mimicry:

In mimicry, the representation of identity and meaning is rearticulated along the axis of metonymy. It is like camouflage, not a harmonization of repression of differences, but a form of resemblance, that differs from or defends presence by displaying it in part metonymically. Its threat, comes from the prodigious and strategic production of conflictual, fantastic, discriminatory identity effects in the play of a power that is illusive because it had no essence, no itself. And that a form of resemblance is the most terrifying thing to behold. (90)

Identity can be blurred in a state of mimicry. In the condition of mimicry, what is imitated wont completely erased and displaced the experiences and values native to the imitators self. The state of mimicry involves the inherent possibility of conflict. One cultural norm, which is overpowered and delimited by the powerful force of different culture, always poses threat. The outer harmony and resemblance of unity can break at any time. The socially semblance of cultural harmony is a camouflage, according to Bhabha whatever solace and satisfaction they achieve, its durability cannot stay long. It is subject to disintegration.

The fear of ethnic cleansing has given rise to many assumptions about the fate and future of not only a particular country and race but also about the entire African race. The following extract highlights this line of analytical thinking:

Noria would leave home in the morning wearing her beautiful gymdress and carrying her schoolbag. Toloki often asked me how she could allow herself to be seduced by Noria. She soon came up with the suggestion that they visit a department store together, where she would

ask Toloki help in choosing various kinds of underwear. I waited for them among the racks of nightdresses outside their cubicle. (72)

For the provocation of violence, they need various colors of undergarments. The important fact is that nothing has prevented them from coming out of the secluded life. There is nothing shameful in declaring that she wants to seduce a virile man capable of anything. Her effort to find out the alternative possibilities of things like abstinence and indulgence has put them on the wrong track. In this state, it can safely be said that they are sidetracked from the normal course of action.

Toloki's desperate need to re-establish his identity takes him on a psychic journey in which the explorer of unknown lands becomes an explorer of his own unexamined interiority. The journey begins with a hallucination of his deceased mother reading about his death and evolves into an apocalyptic revelation confirming his existence and beliefs. In his first vision, a sun-dazzled stone desert speaks to him telling him that behind every exterior there lays a "black interior quite, quite strange to the world" (77). Yet when any interior is penetrated, the interior transforms itself into exterior, so that there is no certainty that interiors exist. In another vision, he is an environment of space and solitude pervaded by sun. His senses, all but sight - are in a vacuum. These sentences "I became a spherical eye moving through the wilderness and ingesting it...I am all that I see, such loneliness! What is there that is not me?"(79) are illustrative of the case in point. The solitary mastering soul maintains its interior in a depth of darkness unknown to the others. When its interior is revealed to light, it can no longer exist in solitary darkness. Brought up from the depths, it is exposed to a brilliance of light that is blinding, and then, to all that the light illumines.

The project of postcolonialism is not only applicable to the students of literature alone; indeed, it seeks to emancipate the oppressed, the deprived and the

down-trodden all over the world. Bill Ashcroft puts forward his view regarding to what postcolonial theory:

Postcolonialism is an enterprise which seeks emancipation from all types of subjugation defined in terms of gender, race and class.

Postcolonialism thus does not introduce a new world which is free from ills of colonialism; it rather suggests both continuity and change.

Postcolonialism marks the end of colonialism by giving the indigenous people the necessary authority and political and cultural freedom to take their place and gain independence by overcoming political and cultural imperialism. (22)

Culture as a strategy of survival is both transnational and translational. It is transnational because contemporary postcolonial discourses are rooted in specific histories of cultural displacement. Culture is translational because such spatial histories of displacement. It becomes crucial to distinguish between the semblance and similitude of the symbols across diverse cultural experiences. The transnational dimension of cultural transformation migration, diaspora, displacement, and relocation jointly makes the process of cultural translation a complex form of signification. The unsettling advantage of this position is that it makes readers increasingly aware of the construction of culture and the invention of tradition. Postcolonial literature is a body of literary writings that reacts to the discourse of colonization.

The absence that looms for both protagonists is the failure of transcendence, the missing superstructure that controls the relationship of subjects and objects. Toloki says about the presence of intruders in the anti-apartheid movement that faces the danger of degeneration:

After the funeral Noria did not stay at her home, even though Xesibe pleaded with her to stay. Our nightmare was that since whatever we reached for slipped like smoke through our fingers. We landed on the shore of South Africa clutching our arms and pleading for someone to stand up without flinching to these probes of reality. (94)

If they had walked toward Eugene's team singing through the bullets, Toloki's entire team members would have knelt and worshipped. The same religious meditations appear in Toloki's search for a father. The fatal loss of transcendence, the obsessive drive to explore, and the recourse to viol propagandist and the public mourners are common elements in the suffering and endurance of both the character.

The core finding of this research is that two different brands of realities are represented at the same time in Mda's *Ways of Dying*. The reality regarding anti-apartheid movement and the huge loss of human life in the subsequent ethnic cleansing is portrayed in the novel in a lifelike way. In addition, another version of reality concerning how people turn to myth, fantasy, rituals and other abstract practice to avoid the harrowing experiences of their daily lives. Toloki as a public mourner reminds readers how harsh and harrowing the political reality is. In addition, the occupation of nurse to cope with the tragedy of life reminds readers how people turn to some of the occult practice to soften the misery of their daily lives.

The impact of anti-apartheid movement, cultural chaos and colonialism's lingering vestiges not only block the progress of an individual but also the progressive forces of society. The fallout of social regression seems to be transmitted from one generation to another and from one culture to another. Carnage, chronic outbreaks of violence and directionless anti-apartheid movement are intersected. So the harrowing experiences faced by those who are involved in the

movement have to be studied and examined in broader light. Mda's *Ways of Dying* projects profound insight into the far-reaching harrowing experiences which the survivors of anti-apartheid movement face.

In *Ways of Dying*, the protagonists attempts to escape from the prison of his mind. However, intimate memories and dark secrets rise up at will to paralyze their psyches. This sort of circumstances brings them face to face with the geneses of their own individual and intensely personal stories in history. Severing one's roots is shown to be nigh impossible because the past is etched onto the psyche. Mda captures the anxieties and timelessness of the human condition. He dramatizes the notion of performativity as an intrinsic component of identity. Under the white minority apartheid government, rigid censorship attempted to curb the potential power of artistic creativity. South African writers from both sides of the racial divide were affected by this persecution. State censors were well aware that writers could incite violence, mobilize the masses, and spawn rebellion. The direct impact of these events can be seen in the cultural integrity and historical continuity.

Brutality, dehumanization, beatings of inmates on slightest provocation, suffocating surrounding, random shooting and cremation of living bodies of natives of South Africa are some of the heart-rending events which the main narrator of this novel narrates. Lack of minimum provision and requirement, deteriorating dignity and self-esteem and degrading health are some of the disastrous events that crippled the psyche and spirit of captives of the camp. In addition, constant threat of execution and impending doom had had impact on the psyche of sufferers of the camp. The threat of annihilation loomed like the sword of Damocles.

Apart from all these events, there are other events which robbed the last hope and dignity of the workers. It was horrible to expect and belief that war soon ends

and all the captives of the camp would get emancipation. It was great illusion to nurture this sort of belief. When some of the docile rebels of the camp nurtured their belief in the redemption, in divine providence, luck or destiny, they are mocked by other captives who were so pessimistic that they thought that it is antihuman to nurture belief in god, salvation and divine intervention. Though physical bodies of inmates of the camp were under the control and confinement of African guards of the camp, their spiritual lives too went out of their control. Physically as well as spiritually, all the prisoners of the camp were devoid of hope, and last grace of faith in deliverance from tyrannical injustice.

Toloki traces the charts whereby the harrowing experiences and responses of the camp inmates followed. In the first phase of captives' entry into the camp, they had an inner sense of resistance to the misery and hell of concentration camp. When they saw no chance to escape from such situation, they try to adapt to it. In the second phase they stopped seeking reform. Attempt of the inmates to raise voice of dissent incurred random beating, and immediate execution. In the third phase, almost all the captives reacted like machine devoid of any stroke of sufferings. It is the way of using thought as the means to achieve inner integrity in the face of threat and execution from the external world.

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