
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Negotiating Power Dynamics: 'Neo'Colonial Hegemony and Rhizomatic Interraciality in Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness*

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| ABSTRACT

African literature critically interrogates Eurocentric discourses, ideologically driven narratives that construct black subjectivity as the subordinate Other within a white-normative epistemology. This white-supremacist ideology emerges as an exclusionary system of identification that fragments the reality of African people, subjecting them to alienation, segregation, and violence. Employing a qualitative, thematic approach firmly grounded in postcolonial theory, the paper investigates the representation of 'neo'colonial hegemony in Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness*. It examines how race intersects with identity, power, and violence to legitimize systemic hierarchies, defining indigenous populations as inherently primitive and savage. Furthermore, the study uncovers moments of interracial harmony, demonstrating how the chosen fictional narrative foregrounds rhizomatic interactions and non-asymmetrical encounters. The findings reveal that Zakes Mda's novel not only highlights essentialist categories but also reimagines racial difference through hybridity and intersubjectivity. The article, hence, offers valuable insights into how postcolonial African fiction stands as an artistic and critical framework that seeks to deconstruct the enduring legacies of 'neo'colonialism and Eurocentrism, contributing to subversive modes of discourse and knowledge.

| KEYWORDS

Postcolonial African fiction, Race, 'Neo'Colonial Hegemony, Violence, Hybridity, Intersubjectivity.

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1. Introduction

White-supremacist ideology establishes an apartheid-based human condition that triggers a profound rupture between whites and non-whites. It creates a racially stratified context where the black Other experiences physical and non-physical alienation sustained by racist systems. This white-driven discrimination territorializes the black Other, reducing him to essentialist stereotypes. It constructs him as a dependent being who perceives his wholeness in reference to the superior white Self. This inferior individual, produced within racialized discourses, manifests as a subhuman organism that lacks agency, an objectively present entity devoid of human dignity. This objectified figure oscillates between humanity and animality, standing as neither a human subject nor an animalistic object. He appears as an undefined being, a distorted reflection of the idealized white man. This dehumanized blackness emanates from the hegemonic matrix of 'neo'colonialism. The latter peripheralizes African people, displacing their realities and erasing their histories, experiences, and narratives.

The systemic fragmentation of African identity frames the representational framework of postcolonial African literature. The latter examines the lasting effects of 'neo'imperialism on African communities, investigating the configurations of race, identity, displacement, resistance, and nationalism. It critically interrogates Eurocentric metanarratives that misrepresent, marginalize, and even eradicate the black Other, seeking to deconstruct race-based asymmetries and hierarchies. It, therefore, manifests as a counter-hegemonic discourse that demonstrates a strong commitment to the African cause, a contextualized representational paradigm highlighting the richness, diversity, and complexity of the African experience. This resistant literary tradition, which

develops distinct narrative features that challenge the universality of the Western canon, cultivates a subversive artistic and critical framework. The aim is to destabilize the hegemonic structures that underpin white-supremacist ideology, reimagining an alternative reality that enables black people to reclaim their identity, subjectivity, and agency.

Several empirical studies investigate postcolonial African fiction, specifically Zakes Mda's works, focusing on dynamics of death, violence, and tradition while disclosing their interplay with memory, hope, history, and narrativity. Pires's (2013) "From Neglected History to Tourist Attraction: Reordering the Past in Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness*" investigates the intersection of the past and the present in the aforementioned literary text, unveiling the tragic history of the Xhosa land that emerges as a tourist attraction. It shows how Nongqawuse's prophecy, despite its destructive consequences, contributes to the social, cultural, political, and economic development of Qolorha, marking significant progress that promotes tourism. In "Splitting and Becoming Double in Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness*," Kenqu (2019) explores the representation of cultural duality in Mda's novel, examining the tension between Western modernity and African tradition. She digs into the social disintegration of the amaXhosa community under colonialism, revealing its consequences for present-day Qolorha. This brief review demonstrates that the existing literature fails to address the intersection of race, otherness, hegemony, violence, and hybridity, underscoring the critical need to examine forms of racial inclusion and exclusion in Zakes Mda's selected fictional work.

The paper explores the dynamics of 'neo'colonial hegemony and rhizomatic interraciality in Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness*, studying how race intersects with power, violence, and hybridity to both racialize and de-racialize black subjectivity. It investigates the manifestations of racial Manichaeism in the aforementioned novel, revealing hegemonic 'neo'imperial structures that peripheralize and territorialize the black Other, destabilizing his psycho-physical wholeness. This alienated African subject loses his existential possibilities within 'neo'colonial contexts, experiencing both symbolic and non-symbolic enslavement. The article, at the same time, enquires into the configurations of transcendental otherness in the selected fictional work, uncovering non-hegemonic encounters and non-hierarchical dialogues between the white Self and the black Other. These cross-racial exchanges, as the study demonstrates, destabilize the racialized formations of white-ism, constructing an alternative reality which is deeply rooted in cultural pluralism, interracial harmony, and existential intersubjectivity.

2. On Conceptualizing Black Subjectivity

Human reality emerges as a socially constructed setting that serves as a reference for identity, a matrix of belonging rooted in race. The latter is a culturally shaped system of identification that operates through difference, an exclusionary network of markers that partitions the world into two antithetical extremes, the Self and the Other. It, as Stuart Hall (2017) maintains in *The Fateful Triangle, Race, Ethnicity and Nation*, "is the centerpiece of a hierarchical system that produces differences" (p. 33). Race, hence, is a taxonomic schema that describes people in the light of their cultural actualities as well as their developmental conditions and levels of sophistication. It, according to Mbembe's (2017) *Critique of Black Reason*, "is the mechanism through which a group is reified. On the basis of this reification, someone becomes their master, determining their fate in a way that requires neither explanation nor justification" (p. 35). Such asymmetrical categorization differentiates between human beings in reference to a white-normative epistemology that constructs non-whites as inherently different, or more precisely as the ontological Other, through the lens of Eurocentrism. This ethnocentrically conditioned discourse functions within the dynamics of physicality, foregrounding the spatial and biological distinctions between racialized groups. It, accordingly, sustains systemic hierarchies, reinforcing racial divisions, social barriers, and cultural boundaries. Race, in this sense, is a radical framework of identity formation grounded in white-ism, an essentialist paradigm that not only dehumanizes but also oppresses subaltern communities. It extends beyond abstract ideological classification, producing racist structures that govern social relations and human actions. In *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms*, Ngũgĩ (1993) explains, "Racism, though an ideology, is not felt as a mental or spiritual abstraction. It is felt in the flesh, in the very practice of daily living" (p. 139). It shapes the everydayness of the black Other, influencing his lived experiences, emotional encounters, and social interactions. In other words, it positions him within a racialized reality marked by segregation, marginalization, and violence, a stratified context that restricts his access to social, cultural, political, and economic spaces.

White-supremacist ideology anchors an essentialist process of identification that obliterates subaltern identities and cultures. It defines human reality through asymmetrical polarities, race-driven dualities that segment the world into antithetical extremes. This racial arrangement grants white people absolute authority, enabling them to control all the components of their environment, including their rival ego: the black Other. These white masters subordinate black entities, negating their autonomy and selfhood. Such neglected Africans emerge as inferior beings stripped of human value, dignity, and agency. They, as Mbembe (2017) clarifies in *Critique of Black Reason*, are "trapped in a lesser form of being. They are the impoverished reflection of the ideal man, separated from him by an insurmountable temporal divide, a difference nearly impossible to overcome" (p. 17). This subhuman subject desperately attempts to recover sovereignty over his reality, asserting his self-consciousness. However, this self-fulfillment process fails to materialize for he lacks the capacity to transcend his marginal status. Said otherwise, he faces difficulty in eliminating his peripheral otherness. This ineradicable difference shapes the African as a dependent consciousness, a

non-autonomous being who is characterized by primitiveness and unethicity. He, as Fanon (2004) states in *The Wretched of the Earth*, "is declared impervious to ethics, representing not only the absence of values but also the negation of values. He is, dare we say it, the enemy of values. In other words, absolute evil" (p. 6). Such transgressive immorality casts the black Other outside the human community, constructing him as the white Self's antagonist, a mismatched and illegitimate rival. It renders him an unequal opponent who is destined to experience different forms of subjugation and alienation in a racialized world shaped and ruled by a white presence.

The white Self peripheralizes blackness, subjecting it to the essentialist regulations of white-ism. The latter objectifies the black Other, constructing him as a selfless subject. This subjugated Other, hence, stands as an alienated entity lacking human agency, a dependent being who perceives his wholeness in reference to a superior white ego. This dominant white Self diminishes his presence, placing him in the realm of objectified organisms. Such an inferior subject, experiencing existential marginalization, manifests as an exotic form with supernatural features. He appears as a hybrid creature, an undefined subject submerging in negative blackness which is located beyond the ordinary attributes and qualities of humanity. Du Bois (1903), in *The Souls of Black Folk*, affirms, "Somewhere between men and cattle, God created a tertium quid, and called it a Negro, - a clownish, simple creature, at times even lovable within its limitations, but straitly foreordained to walk within the Veil" (p. 89). This undetermined being, oscillating between humanity and animality, endures race-driven symbolic and non-symbolic violence sustained by white-supremacist discourse. Such an ideologically constructed metanarrative creates racialized hierarchies, generating an everlasting disagreement between the white Self and the black Other. It, in other words, triggers "a sudden volcanic rupture of nearly all relations between black and white, in work and government and family life" (pp. 95-96). This social and cultural separation establishes the foundation of a white-dominated world, a Eurocentric condition promoting fantasies of white supremacy and black inferiority. These essentialist discursive practices contribute to the marginalization of black people who experience "war, murder, slavery, extermination, and debauchery" on the grounds of white people "carrying civilization and the blessed gospel to the isles of the sea and the heathen without the law" (p. 163). These oppressed communities encounter both physical and non-physical enslavement in a stratified setting produced and sustained by 'neo'colonial projects, a taxonomic reality where "the best of the whites and the best of the Negroes almost never live in anything like close proximity" (p. 166).

The black Other maintains a marginal existence, a peripheral mode of living which is subjugated to the regulations of Eurocentrism. The latter deprives the black Other of his agency, rendering him an objectified being devoid of human features. It, in this sense, manifests as a trivial projection of the white Self, a fragmented ego constantly aiming to achieve unattainable humanity. This unreachable state of being is deeply rooted in, and defined by, the logic of whiteness. Thus, the black Other, as Fanon (1986) indicates in *Black Skin, White Masks*, "wants to be white" (p. 11). Such a journey of misidentification leads black people to become preoccupied with whiteness. They attempt to annihilate their cultural affinity in order to assert themselves as fully developed human beings, equal to the white Self. They desperately strive "to prove to white men at all costs the richness of their thought, the equal value of their intellect" (p. 12). This distorted recognition creates a rupture within their psycho-physical structure, pushing them to neglect their authentic selfhood. Such a brainwashed black Other endeavors to exit his negated realm, undergoing an assimilatory process that nurtures a feeling of unbelonging within his 'un'consciousness. This sense of detachment causes a 'non'symbolic fracture within the black community as "the educated negro, slave of the spontaneous and cosmic negro myth, feels at a given stage that his race no longer understands him" (p. 16). This disconnection between the black Other and his surrounding reality establishes the foundation for the emergence of an indefinite entity that belongs to the realm of the unknown. This estranged subject annihilates his black affinity in an attempt to immerse himself completely within the supreme culture of the white man who subjugates him. He, therefore, manifests as an indeterminate being caught between the affirmation of blackness and the assimilation of whiteness, experiencing a profound split within his internal structure of feeling.

Postcolonial theory, as an epistemological framework, aims to move beyond racialized hierarchies, reconstructing black subjectivity through hybridity. It attempts to develop a counter-hegemonic discourse that destabilizes 'neo'imperial legacies, conceptualizing a decolonized world that foregrounds diversity, relativity, and plurality. This inclusive narrative foregrounds multiple subaltern experiences, placing cultural identities in a floating system of signification. The latter functions within the processes of conflictual temporalities and liminal actualities that shape interracial relationships in light of cultural dialogues and exchanges. These cross-cultural interactions challenge the hegemonic version of the human condition, creating a hybrid setting where the white Self and the black Other interact horizontally. This hybrid realm emerges as an enunciative site, an in-between cultural space that deconstructs the center-periphery structures of Eurocentric realities, as Bhabha (1994) emphasizes in *The Location of Culture*:

The enunciative is a more dialogic process that attempts to track displacements and realignments that are the effects of cultural antagonisms and articulations, subverting the rationale of the hegemonic moment and relocating alternative, hybrid sites of cultural negotiation. (pp. 177-178)

This cultural hybridity, said otherwise, disrupts the essentialist algorithms of white-ism, racialized formations promoting ethnocentric cultural patterns. It annihilates the static notion of identity, advocating cultural relativism and holism. This relative modality renders culture an enunciatory space that anchors interracial interactions, cross-cultural encounters negotiated at the boundaries of signification. Such a liminal culture, or more precisely reality, emerges as an act of enunciation, "a process by which objectified Others may be turned into subjects of their own history and experience" (p. 178). This operation of self-realization enables the subaltern Other to articulate his subjectivity, establishing his identity in reference to postcolonial hybridity. The latter allows him to reclaim his selfhood within cultural syncretism that challenges and deconstructs the ideological structures that underpin white-supremacist ideologies.

The postmodern condition enables the black Other to re-establish his referentiality and wholeness, reconstructing his agency beyond rigid racial dichotomies. Said otherwise, it offers him the opportunity to develop into an active agent in his surrounding world, retaining his human subjectivity. This existential self-becoming arises from the cultural and political complexity of postmodern societies, hybrid communities that destabilize conventional dualities between whiteness and blackness. These anti-binary settings annihilate Eurocentric narratives by advocating ontological fluidity, cultural plurality, and racial diversity. Multiculturalism, particularly, not only challenges race-driven Manichaeism but also unveils the diversity of black experiences with limitless identities. It, as bell hooks (2015) stresses in *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics*, reveals "multiple experiences of black identity that are the lived conditions which make diverse cultural productions possible" (p. 29). This cultural multiplicity discredits essentialist formations that promote white superiority and black inferiority. It, in other words, delegitimizes white-supremacist structures that sustain a racialized dualism between whites and blacks, ideological discourses that "see black folks as falling into two categories: nationalist or assimilationist, black identified or white identified" (p. 29). By eliminating such reductive classifications, postmodern thought disrupts the hegemonic formations of racism, contesting racial categories and asymmetries. It, hence, envisions a non-racial and non-ethnic human condition, an alternative context that allows diverse cultures, ethnicities, races, and forms of belonging to coexist within the same space. This postmodern reality "with its decentered subject ... can provide the occasion for new and varied forms of bonding. To some extent, ruptures, surfaces, contextuality, and a host of other happenings create gaps that make space for oppositional practices" (p. 31). Such destabilization of fixed identities, in brief, deconstructs ethnocentric narratives that promote racial discrimination and social exclusion. It creates opportunities for subaltern communities to articulate their experiences, envisioning a cosmopolitan social reality where human subjects co-exist through reciprocal and dialogic relationships based on mutual recognition.

3. 'Neo'Colonial Hegemony in Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness*

3.1 White Dominance

The hegemonic logic of white supremacy emerges as a structural reality in 'neo'colonial settings, exclusive contexts marked by hegemonic hierarchies that privilege whites over blacks. This race-driven Manichaeism establishes the representational framework of Zakes Mda's (2002) *The Heart of Redness*. The latter delves into the past and present of the amaXhosa, investigating tensions between tradition and modernity. It revolves around a spiritually driven division within the Xhosa community under the colonial enterprise, a tribal conflict that continues to shape the social structure of present-day Qolorha. This historical novel explores the social structure of 'neo'colonial South Africa, unveiling the dynamics of white dominance, be it social, political, cultural, or military. It, in other words, discloses the racialized subjectivity of Africans under 'neo'colonialism, an oppressive enterprise that enables whiteness to terrorize black people physically and non-physically. It particularly demonstrates how British officers exercise their authority over the indigenous population. Sir Harry Smith, an esteemed British officer, wields power in the region, subjugating all inferior native inhabitants, be they chiefs, soldiers, or commoners. He, as the narrator states, is "The Great White Chief [who] commanded the elders and even the chiefs to kiss his staff and his boots" (p. 18). He manifests as an authoritative despot who derives delight from intimidating local people, rendering them subservient to him. He regards the colonial enterprise as a personal challenge, the challenge of civilizing primitive Xhosa folks and reclaiming the wild villages of South Africa that stumble in turmoil and upheaval. He, as the text shows, "was running wild all over the lands of the amaXhosa, doing whatever he liked. He vowed that he would restore law and order throughout British Kaffraria and Xhoseland" (p. 18).

This commanding disposition characterizes all colonial British soldiers who attempt to instill the fantasy of white supremacy into the cultures of their colonies. Sir George Cathcart is one of these infamous officers who impose strict regulations on native people. He appears to be a fierce commander, showing no empathy towards the Xhosa community. When he encounters difficulties hunting down guerrilla soldiers, or rather forest fighters, who hide in the mountainous thick bushes, he resorts to the scorched-earth strategy. In other words, he decides to devastate the entire Xhosa landscape to terminate the war:

Sir George Cathcart would stop at nothing to win it. If he could not defeat the amaXhosa people in the field of battle, he was going to starve them into submission. He ordered his soldiers to go on a rampage and burn amaXhosa fields

and kill amaXhosa cattle wherever they came across them, instead of spending their time hunting down guerrillas in the crevices of the Amathole Mountains. (p. 24)

This viciously brutal war strategy results in catastrophic atrocities against the native population. Dead black bodies lie scattered throughout the landscape. Such decaying corpses belong to miserable individuals who, as the general describes them, lack social and cultural refinement. These indigenous people, within colonial ideology, are portrayed as savage beasts and thus deemed worthy of complete extermination at the hands of the almighty god-like master, the white man.

In the midst of such turbulent war conditions, British preachers aim to brainwash native people, converting them to Christianity. They deliver religious speeches about their liberating religion as well as their mighty god, intending to save all human beings, including black people. These "gospel men walked on foot between country towns and villages, preaching about a man called Christ" (p. 48). They constantly warn local people of their sinful, primitive rituals, traditions, and beliefs, urging them to pursue the path of Jesus Christ. One of their native followers, Goliath, keeps advising his people, "I urge you, my countrymen; change from your evil ways, for they are the ways of the devil. Become amaGqobhoka ... civilized ones. Throw away your red ochre blankets! Wear trousers! Throw away red isikhakha skirt! Wear dresses!" (p. 49). These preachers pretend that virtue and goodness reside in the white man's prestige, attributing evilness and maliciousness to blackness. Such missionary people, however, emerge as racist individuals, mistreating people of different skin color. They use their religious profile as a pretext to subjugate Goliath, a black man who volunteers to serve them. The latter willingly chooses to accompany British missionaries as he idolizes whiteness. He carries their luggage and facilitates communication with native people. Still, he experiences ill-treatment:

For eighteen months they walked all the way from Grahamstown to Graaff-Reinet, and then to Colesberg on the banks of the Orange River. Occasionally when Goliath lagged behind because of the heavy load, Meeiman cautioned him against the sin of laziness. When they came to a stream, Goliath washed the holy man's clothes. (p. 48)

Goliath, eventually, turns into an obedient servant for these white preachers. The latter, who supposedly sermonize on human rights and values, dehumanize him. They treat him as an animal-like person because he is a black man. They, in simple terms, deprive him of his dignity and agency, demonstrating their race-driven violence that stems from their white-supremacist logic.

The colonial enterprise evidently revolves around the civilizing mission. In other words, British forces invade South Africa, or rather the entire continent, under the pretext of enlightening the barbarian inhabitants of the wild jungle. Led by Sir George Grey, as the novel describes, the British army attacks the Xhosa tribes that rest within the high ranges of the Eastern Cape. The aforementioned general seems to be famous for his savage tyranny and victorious militarism. He manages to conquer a large number of African countries on the pretense of cultivating indigenous people, encouraging them to eliminate their primitive mode of living and embrace Western sophistication. Sir George Grey, hence, "had arrived with great enthusiasm with a mission to civilize the natives ... Of course he had to take their land in return for civilization. Civilization is not cheap" (p. 84). He aims to annihilate signs of primitiveness in the Eastern Cape, enlightening its barbarian residents who still maintain an unsophisticated lifestyle. This salvation process comes at a profound cost: the dispossession of the land. The amaXhosa are obliged to relinquish their estates and houses so as to benefit from the civilization brought by Sir George and his soldiers. This man supposedly intends to elevate indigenous people to a higher stage of human development. Therefore, he, as Ned and Mjuza insist, emerges as a righteous white officer who makes every endeavor to destroy the primitivism and backwardness of the amaXhosa. He is a great man whose only motive is "to change the customs of the barbarous natives and introduce them to British civilization" (p. 85). Imperial powers, in this regard, plan to destroy the darkness, or rather the redness, of the Xhosa community. They attempt to transform these primitive subjects into decent human beings who act in accordance with the laws and traditions of the white man, symbolizing the utmost stage of human flourishing.

3.2 Primitive Blackness

Zakes Mda's (2002) *The Heart of Redness* fluctuates between two temporally different narratives, a past story highlighting the amaXhosa period and a present story revolving around Qolorha-by-Sea and its people. Both narratives disclose the primitiveness of local inhabitants, as depicted by whites during and after the colonial enterprise. These indigenous people emerge as unsophisticated subjects denied fundamental education and essential learning. Bhonco, for instance, is an illiterate man who struggles to read and write; in addition, he remains unaware of his exact birthdate. He, as the narrator explains, is "now at sixty-plus or perhaps seventy, he doesn't know his real age- his hair is snow white" (p. 9). He, like most people of the village, lacks the notion of age and time, living in a timeless reality.

These timeless, ignorant people believe in metaphysical fantasies that eventually lead to their demise. They are witchcraft practitioners who are deeply involved in black magic. During the war against colonial powers, the Xhosa people resort to

mystical rituals to overcome foreign invaders. They plead with their spiritual prophet, Mlanjeni, to help them repel the British forces. This sorcerer supposedly "doctored the military men for war so that the guns of the British would shoot hot water instead of bullets" (p. 19). Nevertheless, his spell proves to be defective. British soldiers have the upper hand on the battlefield, shooting everyone to death; "people were disappointed with Mlanjeni prophecies. The imperial bullets did not turn into water" (p. 21). Rather, they are living bullets that penetrate native soldiers' bodies, rendering them dead.

The amaXhosa, despite the aforementioned disappointing incident, continue believing in dark witchcraft and black magic. Nongqawuse claims that she encounters some ancestral spirits that urge her to tell her people to kill their cattle in order to terminate their everlasting battle against British soldiers. Her uncle, Mhlakaza, believes her prophecy and orders his fellow villagers to sacrifice their earnings and supplies, including fields, harvests, and livestock. He emphasizes:

The existing cattle are rotten and unclean. They have been bewitched. They must all be destroyed ... The new people who will arise from the dead will come with new cattle, horses, goats, sheep, dogs, fowl and any other animals that the people may want. But the new animals of the new people cannot mix with your polluted ones. So destroy them. Destroy everything. (p. 55)

This destructive prophecy splits the whole village into two parties, believers and non-believers. Twin Twin is one of the few people who reject the prophecy. "He refused to slaughter his cattle ... he said that the prophetess was a liar who had been brought by the white people to destroy the black race" (p. 62). Unfortunately, the majority of Xhosa people choose to kill their domestic animals and eventually themselves. They turn out to be inexperienced people who are easily deluded by the cunning of the white man.

The inhabitants of Qolorha, in the present narrative, still cling to superstition and witchcraft like their ancestors; they strongly object to all forms of development in the village, especially if it includes foreign intervention. They even disapprove of the implementation of a casino project by a multinational company despite its supposedly beneficial impacts on the village. The narrator explains:

A big company that owns hotels throughout Southern Africa wants to build a casino on the Gxarha River mouth. They want to introduce water sports in the great lagoon. Tourists will come from all over the world to gamble ... But it seems some people in the village are against these developments. (p. 66)

These conservative people prefer to maintain their rudimentary lifestyle, communing with their natural surroundings, which remain undamaged by white intervention. Dalton, despite being a white Afrikaner, votes against the project too. He "is only white outside. Inside he is a raw amaXhosa who still lives in darkness" (p. 67). Liberal people, on the other hand, support advancement projects, blaming the objectors for the underdevelopment of the village. Xoliswa insists, "Some sentimental old fools want to preserve birds and trees and an outmoded way of life" (p. 67). This unrefined mode of living suits many inhabitants of the village who refuse to adopt the civilized living standards of the white man. They, as Xoliswa states, "want us to remain in our wildness! To remain red all our lives! To stay in the darkness of redness" (p. 70).

3.3 'Non'Symbolic Violence

Zakes Mda's (2002) *The Heart of Redness* reveals the symbolic as well as physical violence that the amaXhosa and Qolorha inhabitants undergo during the colonial and neocolonial periods. Following their tragic defeat due to the malicious prophecy, the guerrilla fighters and the local residents experience different forms of subjugation induced by British settlers and invaders. The latter brutalize and assault Xhosa people, violating military conventions and regulations. Durban, a British officer, summons the local chief to negotiate peace, but he eventually cuts him into pieces. He, as the narrator explains, "had invited the king to a meeting, promising him that he would be safe, only to cut off his ears as souvenirs and ship his head to Britain" (p. 77). This viciously atrocious violence and immorally dehumanizing brutality underlie the dynamics of the entire colonial enterprise, an imperial project that operates within the structures of power and coercion. All British soldiers derive great pleasure from inflicting pain on native people. They revel in punishing and torturing both guerrilla fighters and commoners. In an ambush, Twin, Twin-Twin and the guerrilla fighters come across "a small group of British soldiers were cutting off the ears of a dead umXhosa soldier" (p. 19). These violent deeds of absolute brutality spring from a deep resentment towards black people, a racialized hatred that entices British people to administer abuse and maltreatment upon local villagers. Twin further explains, "They take those ears to their country. That's what they call souvenirs" (p. 20); these human mementoes from the Dark Continent emerge as priceless objects that are meant to be preserved in a museum as valuable antiquities. They might also be the subject matter of scientific research, as Dalton tells Camagu:

'We were not going to eat your father,' said John Dalton, prisoner of war, in his perfect isiXhosa. 'We are civilized men, we don't eat people.' ... He did not seem to be afraid. He seemed too sure of himself. 'These heads are either going to be souvenirs, or will be used for scientific inquiry.' (p. 20)

These unsubstantial justifications, nevertheless, intend to rationalize the atrocious violence of white soldiers against indigenous people, unmitigated brutality representing the inhumane obscenity and the wickedness of colonial powers. The latter torment the inhabitants of their colonies under the pretext of entertainment or science. They, in other words, subject black people to various forms of discrimination, disguising their violence as an action of civilization and enlightenment.

British forces resort to violence as well as bribery to assert their dominance over the entire land of the amaXhosa. They subjugate local villagers by irresistible force, whereas they buy off people in authority. They, as the narrator shows, "bribe Chief Xikixa with a bottle of Brandy and he gives them the land" (p. 68). Not only Chief Xikixa but also other treacherous chiefs willingly cooperate with British intruders. They choose to abandon their territorial, cultural, and historical heritage to please their superior British masters. This high treason facilitates the colonial enterprise, enabling British forces to invade the entire nation in a short period. Such disloyalty continues to mark present-day South Africa. White tourists manage to manipulate indigenous people with both coercion and trickery. The so-called chiefs, despite their legal authority, still experience their subjectivity under white domination. They tend to idolize and serve white people, who readily exploit their submissiveness. In this respect, the history teacher tells Camagu:

Competition for the prime land by the sea has intensified. The white folks now bribe the chief with cellphones and satellite dishes. Haven't you heard? The chief has even named one of his daughters No-cellphone. His wife is pregnant. If the baby is a boy he will be named Satellite. A girl will obviously be NoSatellite. (p. 68)

This chief evidently worships white men, admiring their advanced technologies and inventions. He seems to be willing to surrender his African identity and esteemed position to satisfy the demands of his fearsome masters, the whites. These white people succeed in subjugating African people, be they chiefs or commoners, obliging them to act in accordance with their agendas and interests.

Not only affluent people but also common people in Qolorha experience their subjectivity, or rather their objectivity, in the presence of white people. The latter visit the village to discover the richness of Xhosa culture. They frequently ask some villagers to display their musical folklore and traditional dances. Nomanage and no Vengeli, two indigenous girls, entertain white visitors in their huts by singing and dancing in traditional clothes. "Their work is to display amasiko - the customs and cultural practices of the amaXhosa - to the white people who are brought to their hut" (p. 96). These artistic shows of Xhosa traditions carry within their folds a radicalized denigration not only of the performers but also of the entire village. These two female local dancers are treated and regarded as commodified objects that are meant to be displayed for an audience. In other words, they are dehumanized, metaphorically turning into chained animals in a wild zoo, where white men pay a visit to enjoy views of human animality. Such a demeaning practice irritates many people in the village, like Xoliswa:

Xoliswa Ximiya is not happy that her people are made to act like buffoons for these white tourists. She is miffed that the trails glorify primitive practices. Her people are like monkeys in a zoo, observed with amusement by the white foreigners with John Dalton's assistance. (p. 96)

Xoliswa disapproves of the degradation that her people undergo because of white people. The latter both subjugate and objectify the amaXhosa, exoticizing their cultural references. This symbolic domination reflects the asymmetrical relationship between whites and blacks, a hierarchical interaction governed by power dynamics. This hegemonic logic underpins 'neo'imperial discourses that territorialize the black Other. The latter encounters not only ideological formations that marginalize his reality but also experiences different forms of physical subjugation. This 'non'symbolic violence springs from a segregated setting sustained by racially conditioned 'neo'colonial structures that promote a white metropolis and a black periphery.

4. Rhizomatic Interraciality in Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness*

Zakes Mda's (2002) *The Heart of Redness* not only discloses the turbulent chaos that dominates the colonial amaXhosa era but also uncovers the fragile peace that momentarily settles conflicts between blacks and whites in present-day Qolorha. The latter, which used to be a battlefield witnessing brutal violence and bloodshed, emerges as a wonderland attracting foreign people. The latter cross the sea to discover its mystical nature and eccentric inhabitants. These Western visitors demonstrate their eagerness to explore the splendid scenery of Qolorha, including its extraordinary valley which is regarded as a site of miraculous phenomena. They, as the narrator states, "come to enjoy the serenity of this place, to admire birds and plants, or to go to the Valley of Nongqawuse to see where the miracles happened" (p. 6). These explorers show willingness to spend their time, money,

and effort to embark on an expedition in the ominous jungle of the Eastern Cape. This journey, despite its risks, allows them to enjoy the natural scenery of the formerly named Xhosa land.

These Western tourists do not hesitate to start a profound relationship with the native inhabitants of Qolorha. Some of them place absolute trust in the hotel's workers, depending on them to take care of their children. They decide to leave their babies under the supervision and care of native babysitters whenever they want to go on their expedition trips or surfing rides. The narrator explains, "They book in at the Blue Flamingo, and leave their children with part-time nannies while they walk or ride all over the valley, or swim in the rough sea" (p. 6). These tourists, apparently, discard the stereotypical thoughts of their colonial ancestors on the amaXhosa, transcending the rigid boundaries of race, identity, and culture. They choose to rely on local residents to look after treasured babies. This interracial trust demonstrates the professionalism and dedication of the Blue Flamingo Hotel's staff. NoPetticaot, Bhonco's wife, one of the babysitters supervising tourists' babies, is known for her commitment at work; she nurtures babies with passion and competence. Hence, despite her age, she manages to secure herself a job at a hotel where younger girls are generally preferred. This horizontal interaction and cooperation between tourists, hotel managers, and babysitters dismantles hierarchies and imbalances between whites and blacks. In other words, it creates a non-hierarchical condition that diminishes cultural differences, a liminal space where people belonging to different races live in harmony and peace.

White people visit Qolorha not only for entertainment but also for settlement. A large number of British citizens choose to settle permanently in South Africa. The Dalton family, for instance, decides to establish residence in such a primitive place, Qolorha. Nowadays, Dalton is a successful trader, managing an extremely large store called Vulindlela Trading Store. "This store is a big stone building with a red corrugated iron roof crowned by an array of television and radio aerials and a satellite dish" (p. 7). This businessperson is a descendant of British origin, but he prefers to live in Qolorha, immersing himself completely in the culture of the amaXhosa. Physically, Dalton "is stocky and balding, with hard features and a long rich beard of black and silver-gray streaks. He always wears a Khaki safari suit. He looks like a parody of an Afrikaner farmer" (p. 8). He is marked by a white complexion that defines him as a foreign man, yet his clothes present him as a local inhabitant of the village. He usually wears traditional Xhosa attire. Besides, he considers himself an African man, a hardcore amaXhosa who derives delight and pride from maintaining indigenous customs and traditions. He also masters isiXhosa better than the native people themselves do. The narrator, in this regard, stresses:

Dalton is a white man of English stock. Well, let's put it this way: his skin is white like the skins of those who caused the sufferings of the Middle Generations. But his heart is an umXhosa heart. He speaks better isiXhosa than most of the amaXhosa people in the village. In his youth, against his father's wishes, he went to the initiation school. (p. 8)

This white-black man disposes of his white prestige, adopting an African identity. He manages to integrate into the local community, starting a successful business. Eventually, he becomes an affluent inhabitant of the village and an authentic African person who valorizes amaXhosa heritage. He, expressing his Africanness, decides to undergo circumcision according to the regional practices. He "was circumcised in accordance with the customs of the amaXhosa people. He therefore knows the secret of the mountain. He is a man" (p. 8). This white man wholeheartedly embraces the cultural affinity of Africans, following an indigenous mode of living despite his white skin and colonial origins. He, in addition, shows respect towards native people, regarding himself as a member of their community. He despises the egotistically imperious disposition of white settlers, megalomaniac people who belittle African traditions and magnify their Western legacy. He, as the narrator maintains, "laughs at the sneering snobbishness of his fellow English-speaking South Africans" (p. 9). He disapproves of their race-driven repulsive attitude towards Africans, criticizing their arrogance and superiority. In brief, Dalton denounces his white people who tend to "glorify their blood-soaked colonial history" (p. 9), choosing to behave as an authentic African person celebrating and defending blackness and redness.

Dalton develops a profound attachment to Qolorha, a land forcibly invaded by his imperial compatriots. He actively participates in the village's public affairs. When a large foreign company proposes building a casino near the sea, Dalton supports the residents who oppose the project in order to preserve Qolorha's cultural heritage and natural environment. He also refuses to leave the village in spite of its unrefined infrastructure and wild surroundings. When an emigrant pays a visit to his store and tells him that "everyone is leaving" this underdeveloped place, Dalton firmly disagrees, "Not everyone! The Afrikaners are not leaving" (p. 139). He, standing as an Afrikaner, demonstrates a strong bond with the Xhosa space, hesitating to abandon it. He himself confesses, "I am staying here. I am not joining your chicken run. This is my land. I belong here; it is the land of my forefathers" (p. 139). Such an unshakable connection with the African land renders him an indigenous inhabitant representing authentic African-ness. This African-British man chooses to stay in Qolorha despite its lack of modern structures, unlike some 'true' African people who decide to leave their hometowns in pursuit of opportunities abroad. In confronting a prospective emigrant, Dalton stresses his conception of the Afrikaner as fundamentally rooted in Africa:

He raises his voice and says, "The Afrikaner is more reliable than you chaps, he belongs to the soil. He is of Africa. Even if he is not happy about the present situation he will not go anywhere. He cannot go anywhere."... "Whenever there is any problem in this country you threaten to leave. You are only here for what you can get out of this country." (p. 139)

Dalton, like other Afrikaners, manages to integrate into the culture and nature of Africa, destabilizing the racial and cultural boundaries inherited from colonialism. Said otherwise, he abandons the Eurocentric conventions that underlie his Western legacy, living in communion with black subjects, people who are denigrated by his own white community. He, in brief, emerges as an anti-racist person who embraces a sense of belonging deeply rooted in interconnected interracial subjectivity. He, as Zim states, "is not really white [...] it is just an aberration of his skin. He is more of an amaXhosa than most of us" (p. 147). This identification with African communities disrupts essentialist oppositions between whiteness and blackness, revealing the possibility of a hybrid identity that challenges racialized hierarchies and asymmetries.

Cultural hybridity, which establishes the foundation for an interracial existence grounded in peace and harmony, struggles to unfold within the novel's past narrative which highlights the colonial dynamics of South Africa. This imperial context incites violence between indigenous people and colonial powers headed by Sir George. The latter stands as a racist tyrant who manages to subjugate the natives under the claim of civilization. He conquers the Xhosa land in an attempt to destroy its darkness, eradicating the primitiveness, chaos, and barbarism of its inhabitants. This annihilation of redness supposedly contributes to the establishment of peace throughout the Dark Continent, encouraging Africans and non-Africans to coexist. He himself states, "All decent human beings want peace. It is possible for us to live together in harmony" (p. 125). Sir George, despite his despotism, invokes a prospect of reconciliation between white and black populations. This promise of peace underlies a fading possibility of an eternal resolution, ceasing the ongoing war between the two opposite poles. The latter, though they are racially different, share interconnected physicality and spatiality. Accordingly, they can open themselves to possibilities for connection, forming a cooperative community that sustains unity and cohesion. This intersubjective society lays the groundwork for a shared mode of being in which individuals maintain a conciliatory and peaceful way of life, a lifestyle devoid of conflicts and disagreements, be they interracial or intraracial.

5. Conclusion

The paper explores the representation of 'neo'colonial hegemony and rhizomatic interraciality in Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness*, investigating the dynamics of both racialized and transcendental forms of otherness. This fictional narrative, as the study shows, discloses oppressive hierarchies within 'neo'colonial contexts, hegemonic settings that are immersed in racism. The latter produces an exclusive social structure marked by violence and segregation, a stratified reality where white people brutalize the black Other symbolically and physically. The research, furthermore, addresses the politics of anti-racism in the selected literary work, highlighting a non-discriminatory state of being rooted in mutual recognition. The novel suggests the possibility of a lasting reconciliation between blacks and whites, a resolution that eliminates racial boundaries. It not only critiques essentialist categories but also reconfigures difference in the light of intersubjectivity. The paper, hence, demonstrates how race intersects with power, hegemony, and violence to racialize blackness. It, at the same time, reimagines African identity through a decolonized critical model that moves beyond the patterns of Eurocentrism.

The article, in this sense, carries considerable implications. It offers valuable insights into the representation of racial difference in postcolonial African fiction, enriching existing literary criticism. It participates in broadening the scope of the theoretical postcolonial framework, discussing the intersection of race, otherness, power, hegemony, and hybridity. It also encourages race-focused debates in educational contexts, fostering intercultural and intracultural awareness. Moreover, the study advances an Afrocentric system of thought that seeks to deconstruct white-supremacist ideologies, foregrounding existential relativism and cultural pluralism. It articulates the struggles of marginalized African communities, and it contributes to the revitalization of indigenous literatures, arts, cultures, and identities. In conclusion, the paper advocates rhizomatic interaction and interracial harmony, interrogating and challenging racial, social, cultural, political, and economic imbalances and inequalities that continue to influence contemporary postcolonial realities.

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