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Mhlahlo, Ayabulela

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Abstract: The Riddle of Reality in Credo Mutwa's Cosmogonies

Ayabulela Mhlahlo

This research report aims to explore how Credo Mutwa's riddle of reality can open up a different reading of African/a metaphysics – a reading that leans towards Edouard Glissant's notion of (radical) *obscurity* (Glissant **Poetics of Relation** 1997, 193). It is from this place of radical obscurity – and through the black radical imagination – that we can, I believe, begin to conjure new (or perhaps recover old) paths of wisdom. This study, then, wonders how Mutwa has imagined and constructed a riddle of reality by presenting multiple first principles in his metaphysical frameworks through his cosmogonies. Traditionally, the mythographer of any given culture weaves up a concrete and grounding myth, which encloses the ethical substance of his/her culture (Obiechina *Amos Tutuola and the Oral Tradition* 1968, 86). Mutwa defies this rule and instead opts to riddle multiple foundational concepts of reality - such as time, ontology and the surreal – rather than weave up a definitive structure or pattern, or conjure up a foundational principle, of reality. In this way, Mutwa invents a new category of thinking about and narrating the metaphysical wonder we call 'reality'. Instead of making the concept ('reality') or even the epistemic category ('metaphysics') *substantial* or concrete or even a matter of certitude, he warps and weaves it into, and perhaps as, multiple riddles – a play of narrative/ a deception of ideas/ a trick of narrative/ a concealment of secrets/ an unsettling of certitudes/ an opening of (and to) infinitudes. The research report wraps itself around and plays along with Mutwa's cacophony of narrative construction. Credo Mutwa has narrated many cosmogonies that are fundamentally different in structure, event and consequence. We shall focus on three: *The Sacred Story of the Tree of Life* in **Indaba, My Children** (Mutwa **Indaba** 1998)**,** *Kintu* and *The Song of the Stars* in **Zulu Shaman** (Mutwa **Zulu Shaman** 2003). *The Sacred Story of the Tree of Life* tells of how Ninavhanu-Ma, the Goddess of Creation, came into being and how she came into the act (and art) of creation. *Kintu* is a tale of the trickster, and first Ancestor of Man, and how he tricked his way into possessing Fire. *The Song of the Stars* tells of how the Red people/ the First Men fugitively made their way towards inhabiting the Earth. All three unravel a distinct definitional texture of reality: *The Sacred Story of the Tree of Life* presents reality as being textured/ riddled by quantum time; *The Song of the Stars* presents reality as the surreal conjuring by a sleeping goddess; *Kintu* narrates reality as a multidimensional ontology. If the reader seeks a coherent concept of reality in Mutwa's cosmogonies, she never finds it. But what she finds instead are a collection of images and ideas that may be more productive than the search for a coherent structure of reality in the cosmogonies – a collection of image-ideas which enclose, or simply just *hold*, infinite possibilities weaved into the riddle *of* reality. The importance of this study lies in its pursuit to understand the multiple concepts of reality that Credo Mutwa enclosed in his cosmogonies. Since Mutwa's work has been understudied, this project seeks to explore the multi-layered and complex riddle of reality that Mutwa poses in his work. The central question then becomes: how do Mutwa's cosmogonies open us up to a different metaphysics/ mysticism of reality? A metaphysics that does not enclose reality in substance, but one that transforms itself into a mysticism of incertitudes and infinitudes? A mystical-metaphysics that reconciles us with an idea of reality that shape-shifts? For the purposes of black theory, Mutwa's work, particularly his cosmogonies, is important because it explodes the metaphysical compulsion of theory (the vision-of-the-world), and rather drives theory towards the depth of radical skepticism – what we may otherwise call the re-opening of the black figurative imagination.