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The Reinvention of Historical Discourse in Zakes Mda's The Heart of Redness and Mike Nicol's This Day and Age

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The Reinvention of Historical Discourse in Zakes Mda's The Heart of Redness and Mike Nicol's This Day and Age

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A research report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts by coursework and research report.

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DECLARATION

This research report is my own work. It is submitted to the Faculty of Humanities of the University of the Witwatersrand for the degree of Master of Arts by coursework and research report. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at another university.

Carolina Francesca Saccaggi

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CHAPTER 1:
CONTEXT

In this chapter my aim is to set the scene for the discussion of the two novels mentioned in the title of this research report: Zakes Mda's The Heart of Redness (2000) and Mike Nicol's This Day and Age (1992). Both novels engage with history in unique ways, and it is this engagement which I wish to examine. In order to do this it is necessary to contextualize both the novels themselves and my engagement with them. Both novels form part of a body of fiction normally characterized as "post-apartheid fiction". Although This Day and Age was published before the formal ending of apartheid in 1994, the end of apartheid is often situated with the release of Nelson Mandela from jail in 1990, as this clearly marked the end of the National Party's stranglehold on power and the coming of change.

In this chapter I look at the nature of fiction during and after apartheid. My comments are not meant to provide an exhaustive discussion of the field, but rather to highlight certain aspects which are of interest to the reading of the two novels. Interrupting this discussion of fiction is an examination of the TRC and the questions it raises concerning amongst other things history and truth. The choice to insert this into a discussion of fiction, not to offer it as a separate section, is a conscious one and relates to the general identification in this report of fact and fiction, and the conflation between the two at points. To begin with a discussion of just what exactly South African literature is.

SOUTH AFRICAN LITERATURE

What constitutes South African literature, and whether it is even possible to speak of such a thing is a question to which there is no simple answer. On the surface it would seem fairly straightforward, surely South African literature refers to literature that is produced in the country known as South Africa. However, as Leon de Kock points out, geography is not enough to construct a national literature. Instead, the idea of a national literature

implies some commonality of origin, language, culture, history and nationalism. Indeed, it implies the existence of a nation. Each one of these conditions for nationality fractures upon inspection in the South African context. Arguments around what constitutes South African literature have to deal with the presence of various languages, nationalisms, cultures, histories and genealogies.[7]

To use language as an example, the South African constitution enshrines the existence of eleven official languages. Writing in each of these languages is different. These language differences go beyond mere linguistic differences to core differences in methodology, ideology and subject matter.[8] However, even within one language there are vast differences:

> …South African English Literature … [is] internally fractured, consisting … of white and black writers operating from divergent backgrounds, literary traditions and orientations. South African Literature in English consists of colonial, liberal and radical writing by whites, while writing by blacks include texts that range from colonial complicity to a variety of national liberation ideologies encompassing non-racialism, Pan-Africanism, Black consciousness, Socialist and all the shades in between as well as others, including liberal varieties. [9]

However, as De Kock points out, it is this body of work in English which is most likely to be characterized as South African fiction by an international market or audience.[10] It is written in a language which is understood beyond the borders of this country, and therefore is most easily exported, and accessible, to the international public.[11]

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[7] De Kock, L "South Africa in the Global Imaginary: an Introduction" Poetics Today 22(2), 2001, 263-298, p.263

[8] Van Vuuren, H "Introduction: Literary Historiography, with Specific Reference to the Problems of the South African Context" Journal of Literary Studies 10(3/4) 1994, 261-278, p. 272

[9] Oliphant, A. W "Fabrications and the Question of A National South African Literature" Journal of Literary Studies 20(1/2), 2004, 5-24, p. 24

[10] De Kock, L. "South Africa in the Global Imaginary", p. 265

[11] O'Brien, S & Szeman, I "Introduction: The Globalization of Fiction/ the Fiction of Globalization" The South Atlantic Quarterly 100:3, 2001, 603-626. In this introduction to the special edition of the South Atlantic Quarterly O'Brien and Szeman enter into a detailed discussion on the nature of the globalization of English literature

This definition of South African fiction is only one of several possible definitions. Another definition of South African fiction might focus on work produced in Afrikaans as being the central feature of a South African Literature, as it is characterized by a firm sense of identity, and of rootedness in the country. The work of N.P. van Wyk Louw, and J. Kannemeyer did a lot to raise this strand of literature to prominence as "Die Afrikaanse Nasionale Letterkunde".[12] At the same time, this discourse would serve to relegate writing in African languages to a lesser status. However, increasingly, attention is being paid to this body of fiction, examining it and bringing it to the fore as another brand of literature in South Africa.[13]

To return to the question which opened this section, what exactly is South African literature? As will be abundantly clear from this brief discussion, it is impossible to advance any simplistic answer to that question. Any attempt soon becomes tangled in a web of complexities and contradictions. It is an attempt to do the impossible:

> Introductions to South African literary culture conceived as an entity have a peculiar trademark. They apologise for attempting to do the impossible and then go ahead anyway…what the apologies and spatial gestures about more, elsewhere, and other tend to conceal is the fact that the body of literature is given shape – monumentalized in a sense – not in gestures pointing to supplementarity but in the supposedly provisional selections immortalized in print…[14]

In essence, what it amounts to is a matter of choice. The field is so large and undefined that it is impossible to comprehensively cover everything. There will always be omissions, both conscious and unconscious. There is a need to be aware of these omissions, but a danger in being paralysed by them. In order to be valuable it is not necessary to be comprehensive. Valuable statements can be made in provisional and limited ways, as long as a constant awareness remains of the choices which are being

[12] The Afrikaans National Literature.
[13] De Kock, L "South Africa in the Global Imaginary" p. 267
[14] De Kock, L "South Africa in the Global Imaginary" p. 263-65

made through highlighting certain things at the expense of others. This then, is my apology for what I will attempt below.

In order to study the two novels on which this research report is based, some sort of platform or context is needed. What follows is my selection of trends which occur in the literature surrounding South African fiction in the apartheid and post-apartheid periods.

However, I have tried to integrate my discussion of the literature with a discussion of the historical context in which it was produced, as well as with overarching theories which will be used throughout this research report.

LITERATURE UNDER APARTHEID

Apartheid, for better or worse, was the central issue from 1948 to 1990[15]

The National Party Government, which came to power in 1948, instituted a policy known as apartheid[16]. This was to influence the life of every person living within the boundaries of South Africa, as the government sought to systematically regulate almost every aspect of existence in accordance with race: abode (Group areas act); education (Bantu Education Act) and even sex (Immorality Act); and it also set about defining racial categories in South Africa. It was such a totalizing system that, to this day "Apartheid's all encompassing legacy pervades every aspect of our lives."[17]

> APARTHEID: by itself the word occupies the terrain like a concentration camp. System of partition, barbed wire, crowds of mapped out solitudes … At every point, like all racisms, it tends to pass segregation off as natural – and as the very law of origin … Even though it offers the excuse of blood, color, birth…

[15] Attwell, D "African Literature in English: South Africa" in Cambridge History of African Literature: forthcoming, p. 27

[16] Literally translated as apartness, more commonly referred to in English as Separate Development.

[17] James, W & Van de Vijver, L "Introduction" in W. James & L. van de Vijver (Eds) After the TRC: Reflections on Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa Cape Town/ Athens: David Phillip/ Ohio University Press, 2000, pp 1-5, p. 1

> racism always betrays the perversion of a man, the 'talking animal'. It institutes, declares, writes, inscribes, prescribes. A system of marks, it outlines space in order to assign forced residence or to close off borders. It does not discern, it discriminates. (Derrida, 1985: 292)[18]

The question then becomes, what happened to fiction during a period such as this? Wood cites Nadine Gordimer, South African Nobel Prize winning author, as narrowing the options open to writers of fiction down to two binary oppositions: deal with social reality, or run the risk of being considered irrelevant.[19] Wood once again:

> … the South African situation has been perceived as so huge, all-important and dramatic that many South African writers seem to think that to write something gripping and powerful, all they need to do is reflect the situation in as straightforward a manner as possible.[20]

Thus, the role of fiction became conceptualized by many as being to expose the atrocities of apartheid, or as Bethlehem puts it: "opposing through exposing".[21] Wood, using the words of Lewis Nkosi, refers to this very scathingly as "journalistic fact parading outrageously as imaginative literature."[22]

It is this journalistic nature of literature under apartheid that has been frequently commented on as characteristic of the era. This is not to suggest that all writing under apartheid followed this pattern, but merely to highlight a particular form of fiction that rose to prominence, and which is relevant to the concerns of this report. In the face of large scale censorship of the press, and wholesale dissemination of propaganda and lies by the government, fiction came to be conceptualized as a place where truth could be

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[18] Derrida, J (1985) 'Racism's Last Word', Critical Inquiry 12: 291-9 cited in Duvenage, P (1999) 'The Politics of memory and forgetting after Auschwitz and apartheid" Philosophy and Social Criticism 25,3,1-28

[19] Wood, F "Why Don't South Africans like Fantasy?" New Contrast 20(2) 1992, no 79, pp33-39, p. 34. Wood is referring to an essay be Gordimer entitled "The essential gesture"

[20] Wood, F. "Why Don't South Africans like Fantasy?" p. 34

[21] Bethlehem, L "'A Primary Need as Strong as Hunger': The Rhetoric of Urgency in South African Literary Culture under Apartheid" Poetics Today 22(2), 2001, 365-389, p. 367

[22] Wood, F. "Why Don't South Africans like Fantasy?" p. 34

told: "the primary obligation is to tell the truth"[23]. David Attwell has referred to literature under Apartheid as a "literature of witness". [24] Within this context, it seems that the goal of a literary work would ideally be transparency and it would strive for absolute clarity. There is no room in this discourse for ambiguity and uncertainty. Any ambiguity runs the risk of being perceived as irrelevant.

Brink has highlighted how this sense of urgency[25] led to a prescription of the preferred style of fiction: realism. This was used as if somehow the realism of the approach guaranteed the reality of the contents.[26] A certain type of content was also felt to be preferable. Subject matter had to be important and simplistic, so that it could be understood. Simple binaries[27] of good versus evil, collaborating versus resisting are characteristic of this type of fiction. Jolly and Attridge refer to this type of literature as "judgmental"[28] literature.

It is this idea that literature produced under apartheid has a specific function which Louise Bethlehem has identified as the trope-of-truth. She refers here to the assumption that life in South Africa is the same as literature produced about life in South Africa, and that therefore writing literature about resisting apartheid is the same as resisting apartheid. She differentiates this from the trope-as-truth, which is when the trope-of-truth is perceived to be not a literary convention, but a fact:

> .. the transformation of the trope-of-truth into the trope-as-truth depends on the contiguity between the text and sociohistorical context: a contiguity sustained by the postulate of an essentially mimetic literature on the one hand, and the supposed feasibility of transparent signification on the other. The notion of urgency, implicit as an anxiety concerning 'escapism' is called into play to

[23] Moss, 1987: 48-9 cited in Bethlehem, L "'A Primary Need as Strong as Hunger'" p. 366
[24] Attwell, D "South African Literature After Apartheid" unpublished lecture, John Carroll University: 27 January 2003, p. 8
[25] The term is used by Bethlehem. Bethlehem, L "A Primary Need as Strong as Hunger", p.365
[26] Green, M Novel Histories Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 1997, p. 18
[27] Mkhize, J "Literary Prospects in 'Post-Apartheid' South Africa" *Alter*nations 8(1), 2001, 170-187, p. 172
[28] Jolly, R & Attridge, D "Introduction" in D. Attridge and R. Jolly Writing South Africa Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp 1-14, p. 7

> close the gap between commitment to 'the greater human cause' and its textual articulations.[29]

The trope-as-truth is a buy-in to the trope-of-truth, a refusal to recognise the arbitrary nature of the sign. Andre Brink has written: "much of the international preoccupation with apartheid has in *fact* been stimulated and directed by South African *fiction*".[30] There is in this statement an easy switch between the terms "fiction" and "fact", an assumption that they stand in a relation to each other which is fixed and stable, rather then arbitrary and changing.[31]

What does the trope-as-truth mean for fiction in South Africa? The attempt to bind signifier and signified is an attempt to solidify the role of the author, the novelist and literature. It is about not being irrelevant. "The debate over imaginative literature versus journalistic fact is essentially a conflict over the means authors employ, in the given social context of Apartheid South Africa, to achieve symbolic power."[32]

There are of course, those authors who, during apartheid did not buy-in to either the trope-of-truth or the trope-as-truth. However, they did indeed, as Gordimer pointed out at the beginning of this section, run the risk of being considered irrelevant. That the work of J. M. Coetzee required such spirited defense against claims of anti-historicity is an example of this.

Apartheid ended in a negotiated settlement, a negotiated transition born out of a stalemate between two warring parties. In the late 1980's the African National Congress (and other

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[29] Bethlehem, L "A Primary need as Strong as Hunger" p. 374

[30] Brink, A "Reinventing the Real: English South African Fiction Now" New Contrast 21(81), 1993, 44-55, p. 44. Italics added

[31] Brink himself has theorized a lot about postmodernism, and the changing nature of such things as 'historical fact'. The interested reader is referred to the bulk of his articles, cited in the reference list of this research report. Quoting this section of his work is not meant to indicate any lack of critical engagement of the part of Brink, but rather to illustrate the point raised by Bethlehem.

[32] Bethlehem, L " A Primary need as Strong as Hunger" p. 370

resistance movements) were unable to topple the National Party apartheid government, but the government was unable to quash the resistance and the country was practically ungovernable. Therefore, both sides met at the negotiation table and the result was that apartheid ended without a clear victor, but as a compromise between the two parties.

In many ways the compromises allowed the divisions and inequities of apartheid to persist, especially with regard to the wealth gap in the country which has grown steadily, cementing the existence of a rich white upper class and a poor black lower class,[33] although the era has also witnessed the rise of a black middle class.

The process leading up to, and following, the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as President in 1994 was therefore a complex one, as the country tried to build a new future based on a transition that was partial, gradual and protracted. Bethlehem's concerns about the trope-as-truth in relation to literature echo general concerns in the country, which tend to be critical of easily held assumptions, especially as regards the nature of the past and our ability to evaluate, or even access that past. These debates have centered around the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the key feature of the South African public sphere in the years immediately following the 1994 election. Issues around history, memory and truth are so integrally linked to the discussion which I wish to pursue about the nature of post apartheid fiction that it seems almost impossibly artificial to proceed with a discussion of that fiction until after the context of the transitional process has been addressed.

[33] Irlam, S "Unraveling the Rainbow: The Remission of Nation in Post-Apartheid Literature" The South Atlantic Quarterly 103(4), 2004, 694-719, p. 697

THE TRC: TRUTH, NARRATIVE AND HISTORY

> The TRC is a case study of how the past is constructed and presented, how it is contested, and what the role of history is in shaping values and institutions in civil society.[34]

The TRC (as it was commonly known) was not merely a feature of the transitional process, but an integral part of it as it fulfilled the condition of negotiation regarding the granting of amnesty.[35] However, the TRC was not only about amnesty. Brought into being by the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, no 34 of 1995[36] the TRC was tasked with:

> One, to provide for the investigation and establishment of as complete a picture as possible, of the nature, causes and extent of gross violations of human rights, committed from 1960 until the 10th May 1994 when President Mandela was inaugurated. So to provide as complete a picture as possible of what happened both inside South Africa and outside.
> Two, to ascertain the fate or whereabouts of the victims of such violations.
> Three, the granting of amnesty to persons who made full disclosure, that is, of all acts associated with the political objective committed in the course of the conflicts of the past.
> Four, affording victims an opportunity to relate the violations they suffered.
> Five, the taking of measures aimed at the granting of reparation to, and the rehabilitation and the restoration of the human and civil dignity of victims.
> Six, reporting to the nation about such violations and victims.
> Seven, the making of recommendations aimed at the prevention of the commission of gross violations of human rights in future.[37]

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[34] Bundy, C "The Beast of the Past: History and the TRC" in W. James & L. Van der Vijver (eds) After the TRC Cape Town/ Athens: David Phillips/Ohio University Press, 2000, pp 9 - 20, p. 10
[35] Bundy, C "The Beast of the Past", 2000, p10-11
[36] Geslin, N "Using past events to construct the present: voices at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings" Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies 19, 2001, 197-214, p. 198
[37] Lapsley, M "Confronting the Past and Creating the Future: The Redemptive Value of Truth Telling" Social Research 65(4), 1998, 741-758; p. 742-3

The TRC was thus an ambitious undertaking, tasked not only with the discovery of the past (points one, two and four), but with the evaluation of that past (points three and six), and the construction of a future (points five and seven). In many ways the TRC was designed to serve as a watershed between then and now, it was to be the dividing event between the apartheid South Africa of the past, and the rainbow nation (the chairperson of the TRC, Desmond Tutu's phrase[38]) of the future South Africa. It was to create a moment through which history could be judged. In point of fact the TRC was tasked with examining only a very specific aspect of the past. This concerned the commission of gross human rights violations. Three subcommittees were established to deal with this concern.

The Human Rights Violations Committee was to hear the stories of victims, in order to ensure that they would be heard and rescued from silence. This committee traveled throughout the country and held public hearings, in which people were invited to share their experiences. In focusing on victims of human rights violations committed within a specific time frame the TRC narrowed the field of people who were eligible to testify to those who had experienced the extremes of the era: murder, rape and other brutal atrocities. Although it welcomed testimonies from all realms of the political spectrum, the majority of people who testified were black and victims of apartheid forces. However, a substantial minority did testify about abuses committed by people involved with the resistance movement. One of the major principles of this committee was that abuse was abuse, no matter who had perpetrated it and for what goal; in this way atrocities committed by the enemies of the apartheid regime were viewed in the same light as those committed in defence of the regime

The Amnesty committee was to hear the testimonies of perpetrators and decide on the granting of amnesty. Amnesty was to be provisional on three factors: first, on the action having taken place during the specified period; second, the action needed to have been

[38] Harris, B "The Archive, Public History and the Essential Truth: The TRC Reading the Past" in C. Hamilton; V. Harris; J. Taylor; M. Pickover; G. Reid & R. Saleh (eds) Refiguring the Archive Cape Town: David Phillip, 2002, pp161- 178; p. 166

politically motivated; and third, full disclosure must be made of all abuses of human rights committed. Thus, although amnesty would make the crimes "forgotten" in the legal sense, it also inscribed them into a historical record.[39] It was this amnesty process, where truth was exchanged for amnesty[40], which sparked a large amount of debate around the TRC. What is of interest to our discussion is the dual processes of remembering and forgetting at play within amnesty, and the way in which this points to ambiguities and complexities around issues of memory and records, which will be explored more fully later.

The Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee would make recommendations concerning the reparations which were to be made to those identified as victims of gross human rights violations by the TRC. This was probably the least recognised committee of the TRC as it did not hold public hearings, nor was it entitled to make decisions (as the amnesty committee did). Instead, it was limited to making recommendations to the government, which would be contained in the final report.

The TRC undertook this work between 1995 and 1998 (with the amnesty committee continuing after the initial submission of the report in 1998). In the first year alone over five thousand seven hundred statements were compiled[41]. The TRC published a 5 volume report, which summarized its findings and conclusions. This report was handed to the President of South Africa in 1998.

Debate around the TRC has been heated and complex, with almost every aspect of its functioning, mandate and conclusions heavily criticized from numerous perspectives. It would not seem extreme to say that the TRC dominated South African public life in the nineties. This paper does not pretend to offer a comprehensive interpretation or even critique of the TRC. The brief sketch given above is felt to be an adequate background to

[39]Braude, C "The Archbishop, the Private Detective and the Angel of History: The Production of South African Public Memory and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission" Current Writing 8(2) 1996, 39-65; p. 59

[40] De Vos, C. M "What price truth? South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission in critical perspective" Politikon 29(2), 2002, 209-223; p. 210

[41] Boraine, A "Introduction" In A. Boraine, J. Levy, & R. Scheffer (eds) Dealing with the Past: Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa (2nd ed) Cape Town: IDASA, 1997, pp ix- xii; p.x

the actual interest of this report in the TRC; and that is in the TRC's relation to history, memory, narration and truth, and how this relates to broader theoretical discussions, and also to literature.

"Perhaps no country in history has so directly and thoroughly confronted its past in an effort to shape its future as South Africa has."[42] In it doing so, it attempted to answer several questions around what the past was and how we can understand it in the present. The rest of this section will concern itself with these questions, answers and critiques.

What is truth?

> According to the body of the report, truth has many problematic facets: truth is a narrative construction; truth is constructed from a point of view; truth is just beyond our reach; truth is historically interpreted; and truth is never settled, it is always in the process of being established[43]

> At the heart of the debate on the commission is, of course, the question of the complex relationship between truth and fiction.[44]

Although the official title of the commission was the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, it was normally and commonly referred to as the Truth Commission[45], hereby highlighting what many felt to be the main goal of the commission: the task of discovering the truth about gross human rights violations committed in the period under discussion. However, this concept of truth started to disintegrate as soon as an attempt was made to grasp it. "The task of determining the 'truth' about the past based on thousands of conflicting testimonies is a helplessly muddled enterprise that nevertheless

[42] Gibson, J. L "Overcoming Apartheid: Can Truth Reconcile a Divided Nation?" Politikon 31(2), 2004, 129-155; p. 129
[43] Henderson, W "Metaphors, Narrative and 'Truth': South Africa's TRC" African Affairs 99, 2000, 457-465; p. 41
[44] Villa-Vicencio, C "On the Limitations of Academic History: The Quest for Truth Demands Both More and Less" in W. James & L. van de Vijver (eds) After the TRC: Reflections on Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa Athens/Cape Town: Ohio University Press, David Phillip, 2000, 21-31; p.22
[45] Mamdani, M "A Diminished Truth" in W. James & L. van de Vijver (eds) After the TRC: Reflections on Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa Athens/Cape Town: Ohio University Press, David Phillip, 2000, pp 58-61; p. 58

requires the commissioners to make absolute determinations of guilt and responsibility … (the TRC) minimizes this uncomfortable demand by emphasizing the need to present multiple perspectives and versions."[46] In the end, the commission itself identified four broad types of truth. I will briefly define these, and then move on to a broader discussion of how this multifaceted understanding of truth relates to issues of fiction and literature.

Firstly, the TRC identified a category of legal or forensic truth. This is the type of truth which is most commonly associated with the judicial system and consists of verifiable, objective facts. It is this type of truth which is often assumed to be the most desirable form of truth for conclusions to be drawn. The TRC has been accused of privileging this concept of truth in its report by foregrounding the factuality of victims' narratives, rather then their emotional content.

The next type of truth is personal or narrative truth. I will only refer to this briefly within this section, as I wish to address the issue in detail in the next section. Narrative truth refers to the truths held by the person who is relating the story, as such they are subjective and non-verifiable.

Social or dialogic truth refers to the truth which is commonly accepted, and constructed by communities to make sense of events which involve their communities. It emerges through dialogue between various entities.[47] For example, within a community social truths might exist about how people should be treated, and the role that the community played in resistance. This is closely tied to the concept of *ubuntu*, which suggests that people are interdependent and impact on each other. In a way this could almost be seen as a contrast to personal truth as it elevates the truth of many over the truth of one[48].

[46] Graham, S "The Truth commission and Post-Apartheid Literature in South Africa" Research in African Literatures 34(1), 2003, 11-30; p.11

[47] Geary, A "'Tell all the Truth, but Tell it Slant': A Poetics of Truth and Reconciliation" Journal of Law and Society 31(1) 2004, 38-59; p. 5; p. 53

[48] Driver, D "Truth, Reconciliation and Gender: the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Black Women's Intellectual History" Australian Feminist Studies 20,47, 2005, 219-229. This article explores the notion of *ubuntu* in relation to the testimonies of women before the committee.

Finally, healing or restorative truth is a type of truth which has a function: healing truth is truth which allows one to overcome the past and move forward into the future. As such it is future orientated and performative: "it is a truth that denies the objectivity of truth, it is truth in the services of a particular project".[49]

Thus, the TRC highlights many different aspects of the truth. It has been argued, as indicated above, that the TRC elevated certain types of truth over others. The significance of this for our purposes is that it points to the contingency of truth. Rather than being an absolute, truth can be debated and is open to a multitude of interpretations, depending on what the reader's own agenda is. Each of the truths promulgated by the TRC does not necessarily stand in a symbiotic relationship with the others. In fact, at times the truths may actually be conflicting. A person may have a personal truth that they were excluded from the community and ostracized, and this would run counter to the community's truth about the role it played in helping the oppressed. Sanders refers to this as a mode of thinking which avoids "any opposition of truth and falsehood … kinds of telling … are equivalent neither to truth or falsehood, nor yet opposed to either."[50]

The point is that although the two truths may seem contradictory, neither of them is a falsehood, and both are, in a sense, the truth.

> Truth, for common sense is that which distinguishes literature from history and from other forms of scholarly and juridico-legal discourse adopting similar methods of verification and criteria for what counts as facts. Although that notion of truth is of vital importance to the commission, on the face of it the report ventures further than common sense when it conceives of truth. One gets the sense that the commission has learned something about the nature of the truth and though it has not yet found a language in which to do so, is eager to impart this knowledge.[51]

[49] Geary, A. " Tell all the Truth but Tell it Slant", 2004, p. 53
[50] Sanders, M "Truth, Telling, Questioning: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Antjie Krog's Country of my Skull, and literature after apartheid" Modern Fiction Studies 46(1), 2000, 13-41; p. 21
[51] Sanders, M "Truth, Telling, Questioning", 2000, p. 16

This leaves us treading very close to the poststructuralist[52] notion of the multiplicity of truths, rather than the existence of a single overarching Truth. Poststructuralism has been characterized as being a suspicion of master narratives[53] and of metatheory, even though it could also be read as being a metatheory itself. Instead, everything is felt to be contingent and provisional, based not on some universal truth, but on the unique circumstances and relationships of power which exist at a particular time. It is not my purpose in this report to offer a complete, or even coherent, description of the field of poststructuralist thought. Indeed, that would be an impossible undertaking as the field is fractured and contested[54], as befits a domain which necessarily is suspicious of final answers and solutions, it does not have "a single and determinate meaning."[55] Instead, I will briefly touch on various ideas, as they seem relevant to the project at hand. The aim of this discussion is to anchor this type of theorizing firmly within the South African context, most obviously in relation to the discussion of the Truth Commission. What the TRC's own grappling with the nature of truth points to is the fracturing of master narrative in the face of multiple truths and experiences.

What is narrative?

> Poetry is more philosophical and more weighty than history, for poetry speaks rather of the universal, history of the particular.
>
> - Aristotle[56]
>
> People definitely did want to tell their stories.
>
> - Desmond Tutu[57]

[52] The terms poststructuralism, postmodernism and deconstruction are frequently used interchangeably, and there is a large degree of overlap between the three. Thompson differentiates between the three on the following grounds. Postmodernism refers originally to an artistic movement (especially in architecture), poststructuralism to a philosophical discourse growing out of structuralism, and deconstruction to the philosophical activity which poststructuralists concern themselves with: the deconstruction of texts. In Lyotard's The postmodern condition (1979) the two theories (poststructuralism and postmodernism) join in a mutual suspicion of master narratives. This is obviously a very simplistic explanation, but hopefully will show how closely linked the three terms are. For a more detailed explanation see Thompson, W Postmodernism and History Houndsmill: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004; pp 6-16

[53] Munslow, A Deconstructing History London and New York: Routledge, 1997; p.15

[54] Harris, V "A Shaft of Darkness: Derrida in the Archive" in C. Hamilton; V. Harris; J. Taylor; M. Pickover; G. Reid & R. Saleh (eds) Refiguring the Archive Cape Town: David Phillip, 2002(a), 61-81; p.61

[55] Thompson Postmodernism and History 2004, pp24

[56] From Aristotle's Poetics cited in Finley, M. E. The use and abuse of history London: Hogarth Press, 1986; p. 11

Broadcast on the radio, televised and extensively examined, the Human Rights Violations Committee heard the testimonies of what it termed "ordinary people". These people were invited to share their personal and private stories with the whole county, and often with the world. It is with this telling of stories that the TRC came to be most commonly identified by the general public.[58] For a student of literature this is a fascinating occurrence, as the basic form of fiction is the story, which is now seen publicly as a means of transmitting fact.

The purpose of telling these stories seems to have been twofold. Firstly, it was an attempt to inscribe the private into the public: to place the personal memory in the public sphere, to make personal memory public. Through so doing the construction of personal truth as public truth becomes possible, the process of writing a collective memory is begun: "aspects of the historical and ethical past must be put on the public record in such a manner that no one can in good faith deny the past."[59] This is part of the process of creating an accepted history, which will be discussed in more detail in the next section. It should be noted however that this process relied strongly on memory and "memory is always transitory, notoriously unreliable, and haunted by forgetting, in brief, human and social".[60] In addition, that memory which was presented was of necessity only a small portion of the memory which would exist surrounding that period, as certain key players could not, or would not testify.[61] A further point around the sharing of memory is that it is not only about the narration of the person testifying: "the narrated memory is … produced through the complex dynamics of the telling, sharing and listening to and acknowledgement of narrated memories".[62]

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[57] Tutu, D No Future without Forgiveness London: Rider, 1999; p. 82
[58] Sanders, M "Truth, Telling, Questioning", 2000, p.15
[59] Boraine," Introduction", 1997, p. 13
[60] Huyssen, A. Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003; p. 28
[61] James, W & Van de Vijver, L "Introduction" in W. James & L. van de Vijver (Eds) After the TRC: Reflections on Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa Cape Town/ Athens: David Phillip/ Ohio University Press, 2000, pp 1-5; p.1
[62] Gruenebaum-Ralph, H "Saying the Unspeakable: Language and Identity after Auschwitz as a Narrative Model for Articulating Memory in South Africa" Current Writing 8(2), 1996, 13-23; p. 16

Secondly, and this is the aspect on which I wish to focus for the remainder of this section, the bearing of personal testimony was conceptualized as a place of catharsis. Closely related to psychoanalytical understandings of "the talking cure", there was an idea that telling leads to healing, and that by allowing the silenced to speak one allows for the re-inscription of them into society, one restores their dignity.[63] The linking of sharing or narrating of memory to healing and the creation of dignity and the future is what fascinates me in terms of my engagement with the TRC. "In few countries in the contemporary world do we have a living example of people reinventing themselves through narrative".[64]

Antjie Krog's much celebrated semi-fictional work on the TRC Country of My Skull can be directly related to this issue in her attempt through the narration of her experience of the TRC, interwoven with testimonies of the TRC, to find her truth:

> I'm not reporting or keeping minutes. I'm telling … I cut and paste the upper layer, in order to get the second layer told, which is actually the story I want to tell … I am busy with the truth … my truth … seen from my perspective, shaped by my state of mind at the time and now also by the audience I'm telling the story to.[65]

Krog's work highlights the idiosyncratic and highly individualized nature of narrative. In particular, near the end of her work she presents the testimony of a shepherd. However, she cuts the lines in order to make it read as poetry, and then proceeds to conduct an in-depth critical analysis of it exactly as if it were poetry. In doing this she highlights that everything is open to interpretation, and that it is impossible to read an emotionally laden statement as if it were a mere series of facts. This testimony became celebrated for the way in which it revealed a clash of epistemologies and knowledge systems.

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[63] Boraine, A. "Introduction", 1997, p. xvii
[64] Ndebele, 1998, "Memory, Metaphor and the Triumph of Narrative" p.27 cited in Graham, S "The Truth Commission and Post-Apartheid Literature" 2003, p. 12
[65] Krog Country of My skull, 1998, pp170-1/225 cited in Sanders, "Truth, Telling, Questioning" 2000, p. 27

This conflation of emotion and fact, of feeling and truth links back once again to the point made earlier about the multifaceted nature of truth. However, it is no new statement that literature (for example Krog's work) is not the truth, imaginative literature has customarily been seen as invented, not discovered. As pointed out near the beginning of this work, under the apartheid regime it became easy to forget this, and to regard the creation of fiction as the recording of fact.

However, this suspicion of the ability to accurately represent anything at all, in the form of simplistic mimesis, affects not only literature but its close cousin history. History and literature are closely related in their shared reliance on the narrative form: this happened *then* that[66]. This is not the place to enter into what is a rich debate on the relationship between history and fiction, but in short through the technique of emplotment[67] (to use Hayden White's term) history strives to tell a particular story; and what this story is depends on what the historian wants it to be. The way in which historians write history is therefore related to their own beliefs and ideas. Thus, history is not an objective practice, "an approach which purportedly seeks to present the world as accurately as possible through employing positivist methods - trying to keep an objective distance from the field of study and ensuring that data are reliable, replicable and representative."[68]

Importantly, the narrative nature of history[69] is not something which is incidental to the writing of history, instead it is at the very heart of the nature of history: "the content of history, like that of literature, is defined as much by the nature of the language used to describe and interpret that content as it is by research into the documentary sources."[70]

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[66] Lemon, M. C. The Discipline of History and the History of Thought, 1995. Cited in Munslow, A Deconstructing History London and New York: Routledge, 1997, p.10

[67] White's entire theory of emplotment is complex, and on the whole irrelevant for the discussion in this paper. Complete explanations (from differing critical perspectives) can be found in W. Thompson Postmodernism and History, 2004 and A. Munslow Deconstructing History, 1997.

[68] Witz, L Apartheid's Festival: Contesting South Africa's National Pasts Bloomington &Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2003; p. 7

[69] Currie, M "Introduction" in M. Currie (ed) Metafiction London & New York: Longman, 1995, pp 1-18; p.13

[70] Munslow, A. Deconstructing history, 1997, p. 19

The argument is not that there is no such thing as the past, but rather that the past can never be ultimately knowable in the present, and so history will always be the historian's interpretation and invention of that past, not the past itself. To state it succinctly: History is not the same thing as the past. "History may have 'happened' somewhere, but it issues as recorded 'event', as text".[71] This is neither a new, nor a particularly contested point[72], although various theories argue in different ways and "few historians today would argue that we write *the* truth about the past".[73] What is new in this deconstructionist approach is the focus on the importance of the narrative nature of history as contributing to the knowledge produced by it; as such, narrative is not incidental to history, but a key component of it.

The process of writing history is just as much about creation and invention as it is about the discovery of facts. In this way fiction and history actually have a lot in common. This is not to suggest that there is no distinction between them, but to suggest that they are not binary opposites, but discourses which constantly "interrupt"[74] each other.

> Historical fiction makes different demands in relation to history writing in different contexts. What distinguishes these categories [fiction and history], after all, is institutionalized practice, not formal essences; which is not to say the distinction does not exist, only that it can at times be significantly reassessed.[75] Recent critical readings of both history and fiction have focused more on what the two modes of writing share than on how they differ. They have both been seen to derive their force more from verisimilitude than from any objective truth; they are both identified as linguistic constructs, highly conventionalized in their narrative forms, and not at all transparent either in terms of language or structure; and they appear to be equally intertextual, deploying the texts of the past within their own complex textuality.[76]

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[71] Tiffen, H "Post-colonialism, Post-Modernism and the Rehabilitation of Post-Colonial History" Journal of Commonwealth Literature 23:1, 1988, 169-181; p. 173
[72] Thompson, W. Postmodernism and History 2004, p.19
[73] Munslow, A. Deconstructing history, 1997, p. 1
[74] Maharaj, G "The Limit of Historical Knowledge: The Subaltern and South African Historiography" Current Writing 8(2), 1996, 1-11; p. 11
[75] Green, M Novel Histories, 1997, p.15
[76] Hutcheon, L "Historiographic Metafiction" in M. Currie (ed) Metafiction London & New York: Longman, 1995, pp71-91; p. 72

This is, of course, not a new idea at all. The idea that history is something which is somehow ultimately truthful and objective, and that we are able to study it as something which is separate from our lived experiences, is in essence only one possible way of understanding history, albeit one which has enjoyed a lot of support.[77] Many other possible understandings of how history works exist, and two of these are explored in the body of this report. Here it is necessary to state that this challenge to history is therefore a wide ranging one, and as such it cannot simply be subsumed under the Western category of postmodernism. To do this would be to attempt to appropriate for the centre that which originates in the margin, and thereby repeats the colonial episteme.[78] "Approaching South African scholarship through … [Western thought] … suggests that it is somehow derivative or parasitic on 'modes' of thought [sic] drawn from elsewhere … even if South African scholarship does draw on these resources, it claims them as its own, and transforms them into a new problematic."[79]

This relates to our discussion of the TRC and literature after apartheid in the sense that our reading of the process should not be done simply in terms of western "theory" but should pay attention to the complex processes at work between the TRC and literature. The process of the TRC's search for truth through documentation and recording is not that different to Krog's search for the truth through her novel. It points to a suspicion of the ability of normalized, linear, rational history to tell us anything meaningful about the past. Instead, other discourses are being turned to. This should not necessarily be seen as threatening to the production of knowledge. Instead, it should be seen as empowering, as Brink points out: "if stories offer several versions of history, that is, of 'given' events … the imperative of choice is even more urgent, and certainly more richly textured and more rewarding."[80] The invitation is to move beyond the simple discovery of facts to the

[77] White, H Metahistory, 1973, pp1-2 cited in Tiffen, H "Post-colonialism", 1988, p. 169
[78] See H. Tiffen "Post-colonialism", 1988 for a detailed discussion of the challenges to the unifying discourse of postmodernism posed by post-colonial writing.
[79] Gearey, A. "Tell all the Truth, but tell it slant" 2004, p.44
[80] Brink, A "Stories of history: Reimagining the past in post-apartheid narrative" in S. Nuttall & C. Coetzee (eds) Negotiating the Past Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp29-42; p. 41

ability to not just represent the past but to imagine it.[81] Thus, there should be no fear "that somehow literature will steal the soul of history".[82]

Who writes History?

> There remains a basic anxiety for historians in the face of deconstruction; namely that, in making the text ultimately undecidable, it abolishes the grounds for privileging any one interpretation, and therefore makes the writing of conventional history impossible.[83]

The TRC was to ultimately fulfil its mandate through the submission of a report to the president of the country, documenting its findings. This report was submitted in 1998 (with an appendix detailing the findings of the amnesty committee added later) and totalled a mammoth five volumes. However, as over 5700 statements from victims were taken, and over 3500 amnesty submissions, as well as information gathered from "political parties, reports prepared by historians, journalists and others"[84] was used the report necessarily involved a process of selection and summarization. "[T]he concept of truth in 'truth and reconciliation' … does not simply mean information, because there is interpretation, there will be interpretation…the Commissioners, the people in charge, those who have the power in fact to build the archive and to publish the archive and to interpret the archive, have, of course, their own interpretations."[85]

It is here that the TRC engages most strongly with the concept of history. The TRC report necessarily privileged some aspects of the past over others, some interpretations of events over others. Thus it highlights even while it obscures. The report is an exercise in

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[81] Brink, A "Stories of History", 1998, p.30-1
[82] Munslow, A. Deconstructing history, 1997, p.151
[83] J. Caplan, "Postmodernism, Poststructuralism, and Deconstruction: Notes for Historians," Central European History, 22 (1989), 272-3 cited in Etherington, N "Putting the Mfecane Controversy into Historiographical Context" in C. Hamilton (ed) The Mfecane aftermath: reconstructive debates in Southern African History Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1995, pp13-19; p. 15
[84] Graybill, L. S "The Pursuit of Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa" Africa Today 45(1), 1998, pages unknown; p. 4 of downloaded version
[85] Derrida, J "Archive Fever in South Africa" in C. Hamilton; V. Harris; J. Taylor; M. Pickover; G. Reid & R. Saleh (eds) Refiguring the Archive Cape Town: David Phillip, 2002, pp 38-82; p. 50

creation as it sets about creating a coherent whole out of the information it has accumulated. "Apartheid's hidden history was 'unearthed' and buried, and simultaneously revealed and revised as an essential 'building block' for the new nation. This paradox of the past being exposed and submerged, of history's simultaneous exhumation and burial (and reburial) lies at the heart of the workings and public representations of the TRC".[86] Verne Harris states the paradoxes even more bluntly: "There is no remembering without forgetting. There is no remembering that cannot become forgetting. Forgetting can become a deferred remembering. Forgetting can be a way of remembering."[87]

The TRC is subject to what have been referred to as the twin processes of the archive: selection and collection. Through the very act of recording, of inscribing the past, the TRC's report also selects what constitutes, for it, that past. "[I]t is not a matter of what really happened but of how, what has happened has been constructed by the TRC to form the basis of a new social order"[88] Therefore, the report of the TRC actively constructs history. "Archives produced, as much as they recorded, the realities they ostensibly only describe."[89] Michael Green points out that this type of recording is an attempt to close the book on the past, to make it, in the colloquial sense of the term, "history".[90] However, as Judith Butler points out "this past is not actually past in the sense of 'over' since it continues as an animating absence in the present".[91]

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[86] Rassool, C; Witz, L & Minkley, G "Burying and Memorialising the Body of Truth: The TRC and National Heritage" in W. James & L. van de Vijver (eds) After the TRC: Reflections on Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa Athens/Cape Town: Ohio University Press, David Phillip, 2000, pp115-127; p. 116

[87] Harris, V "A Shaft of Darkness", 2002 p.75

[88] Klopper, D "Narrative Time and the Space of the Image: The Truth of the Lie in Winnie Madikizela-Mandela's testimony before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission" Poetics Today 22(2), 2001, 453-474; p. 460

[89] Stoler, A. L "Colonial Archives and the Arts if Governance: On the Content in the Form" in C. Hamilton; V. Harris; J. Taylor; M. Pickover; G. Reid & R. Saleh (eds) Refiguring the Archive Cape Town: David Phillip, 2002, pp83-102; p. 95

[90] Green, M Novel Histories, 1997, p.4

[91] Butler, J "Afterword: After Loss, What Then?" In D.L. Eng & D. Kazanjian (eds) Loss Berkeley: University Press of California, 2003, pp 467-473; p. 468. Butler is referring to loss generally, but the comment seems specifically apt in relation to the TRC

The TRC report has the power to highlight what it sees as the truth of apartheid, what it views as the processes which led to and contributed to apartheid, and what it sees as the correct manner to deal with the legacy of apartheid. By the same token, it excludes that which it feels to be of less importance.[92] It is important to bear in mind that this does not imply that a process such as the TRC actively constructed falsehood in any way, that it manufactured for its own purposes "facts" and "evidence". Instead it points to the idea that nothing is a fact until it has been "proven" to be one, and that therefore facts and evidence are meaningless until they are invested with meaning[93]; which is what the TRC set about doing. To use an old image: "Historical facts are like a sack (or sock) - they don't stand up until the historian puts something into them."[94]

I have already highlighted in the previous section the constructed and contested nature of history; what the further discussion about the TRC highlights is the processes through which this construction takes place. The archive is the site of struggle over the past: over what gets to be recorded, and what is forgotten. "It is impossible to avoid intervening in the past because of our translation of its traces into usable historical facts, akin to mixing colours and producing shapes on a canvas".[95] In many cases, as with the TRC, an archive comprises a sanctioned or official history, against which all minor or oppositional interpretations and inventions are forced to compete. To use the South African example once again, the TRC's report meticulously and voluminously documents the nature of human rights abuses under apartheid. "In this sense the work of the TRC was self-referential. It archived the evidence it required to support the history that it produced and, by archiving its evidence, it guaranteed the veracity of the history."[96] The TRC does not claim to have produced an entire history of the country, but it does claim to have "provided unambiguous, and by its accounting, definitive answers"[97] to some questions

[92] Bundy, C "The Beast of the Past", 2000, p. 15
[93] Munslow, A. Deconstructing history, 1997, p. 7
[94] The image is attributed to Carr What is History? 1961; cited by Thompson, W Postmodernism and History 2004, p. 21
[95] Munslow, A. Deconstructing history, 1997 p. 115
[96] Harris, B "The Archive, Public History and the Essential Truth" 2002, p.163
[97] Gibson, J. L "Overcoming Apartheid: Can Truth Reconcile a Divided Nation?" Politikon 31(2), 2004, 129-155; p. 135

surrounding apartheid - such as that apartheid was evil, and gross human rights were committed, and as such to have "fixed" history to a certain extent.[98]

However, the TRC's report narrows the history of apartheid down to the binaries of perpetrator versus victim: those who acted and those who were acted upon. Thus, the sufferings experienced as a result of forced removals and pass laws, to name but a few, are relegated to a backburner;[99] and any attempt to elevate them as the main features of the apartheid era finds itself in opposition to the mainstream discourse around the actuality of lived experience under apartheid. "By focusing so selectively on some of the horrors of the apartheid past, its hearings, paradoxically, have the effect of diminishing the full iniquity of the past."[100] Jeffrey accuses the TRC of only telling "half the story".[101]

In addition, the "history" of the country is constructed as positive and linear: a progression from the landing of Van Riebeeck in 1652[102], and the beginning of white domination, to the liberation of the election of 1994. "The flattening of South Africa's racial past around an originating moment and finite ending"[103]. This type of discursive understanding serves to mask the constructed nature of history, attempting to replace it with an archive of indisputable facts. Thus, alternative histories must be written. One way of doing this is through fiction, as the examination of the work of Mda and Nicol will illustrate.

> At the start of a new millennium, South Africa is set apart from most other nations by its embrace of a future through the negotiating of its past … South Africans are searching for meanings in myriad narratives of the past. Sadly, for most - and this criticism has been leveled at the TRC itself - the search is for closure - the closing down of meaning - rather than for a releasing of

[98] Harris, B. "The Archive, Public History and the Essential Truth" 2002, p.162
[99] Sanders, M. "Remembering Apartheid" Diacritics 32(3/4), 2002, 60-81; p. 64
[100] Bundy, C. "The Beast of the Past",2000, p. 19
[101] Jeffrey, A. The Truth about the Truth Commission Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1999; p. 21
[102] It is interesting to note that it was the Apartheid Government who elevated the arrival of Van Riebeeck to the status of a founding moment (see Witz, L. Apartheid's Festival, 2003) and thus the TRC's report, which explicitly refers to Van Riebeeck as marking the beginning of 350years of racial rule, does not dispute the apartheid government's construction of racial history in the country.
[103] Witz, L. "Apartheid's Festival" 2003, p.4

> meanings. For some the meanings are borne by 'facts', the 'truth' of what happened. For others 'fact' and 'fiction', 'history' and 'story', coalesce in imaginative space.[104]
>
> So, while individual statements may be true/false, narrative as a collection of them is more than their sum. The narrative becomes a complex interpretative exercise that is neither conclusively true nor false.[105]

As should be clear from the above discussion, the three questions raised by my engagement with the TRC do not have simple answers. Instead, each of the three terms is fractured and flawed, indicating absence of an absolute understanding, rather than a unitary and coherent whole. I have chosen to frame my discussion of the theoretical problems involved with these terms in relation to the debates which have emerged around the TRC in order to emphasize the relation between theory and practice, and the way in which understanding and elaboration of these theories is part of a dynamic process in which nothing is constant. Importantly, I have highlighted three issues: the relationship between history and fiction, the essentially constructed nature of history and the need to write counter to the officially sanctioned discourse of history. It is against this backdrop of change and uncertainty which I wish to proceed to a discussion of the literature of the post-apartheid period.

LITERATURE AFTER APARTHEID

> Post apartheid writing … has made ambiguity its particular subject[106]

In 1990 Nelson Mandela was released from prison after 27 years in jail. Watching him walk to freedom[107] for many, myself included, symbolized the beginning of a new era in

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[104] Harris, V "The Archival Sliver: A Perspective on the Construction of Social Memory in Archives and the Transition from Apartheid to Democracy" in C. Hamilton; V. Harris; J. Taylor; M. Pickover; G. Reid & R. Saleh (eds) Refiguring the Archive Cape Town: David Phillip, 2002, 135-160; p. 149
[105] Munslow, A. Deconstructing history, 1997, p. 10
[106] Attwell, D "South African Literature After Apartheid" unpublished lecture, John Carroll University: 27 January 2003; p. 6
[107] This is an approximation of the title of Mandela's autobiography. Mandela, N Long Walk to Freedom London: Abacus; 1995

South Africa.[108] The immediate urgency, that "primary need as strong as hunger" which Bethlehem characterizes as the "trope-of-truth" is no longer in place. Brink writes, rather simplistically, that now fiction can finally be approached as fiction.[109] This is a problematic formation, as it implies that somehow under apartheid fiction was not fiction but something else – fact perhaps? What is important here is a move away from the trope-as-truth; from the belief that literature can be about simple reflection, to a more nuanced understanding. This can be linked to the more nuanced and provisional understandings of truth that have sprung up in relation to, and in opposition to, the TRC.

The collapse of the trope-as-truth has, in a way, left fiction stranded, forced to articulate for itself a new position in society. By this I do not imply an unproblematic acceptance of the trope-of-truth: there are significant flaws in the theory that it is ever possible to unproblematically reflect a given social circumstance in a work of fiction (or in any way). What I am suggesting is that in the writing of fiction after the apartheid era there is a tendency, by authors and critics, to move away from the trope-as-truth and to begin to examine what exactly fiction is. This can be related to (but not in any simplistic mimetic way) the concerns around representation raised by the theories discussed above: "Foucault [and others] dismisses the crude myths…brute factualism, disinterested historians, objectivity, progress, stability, continuity, certainty, roots, and the demarcation between history, ideology, fiction and perspective. He rejects, in his own words, empiricism's will to truth".[110]

For Andre Brink this has resulted in a moment of crisis[111] for literature in South Africa. It can no longer function as a substitute for the press, but must now find a new place for itself. What is this new position? According to David Attwell it is about articulating the transition:

> South African literature since 1990 has taken upon itself the task of articulating … the experiential, ethical and political ambiguities of transition: [1] the

[108] Harris, V. "The Archival Sliver" 2002, p. 142
[109] Brink, A "Reinventing the Real" 1993, p.44
[110] Munslow, A. Deconstructing history, 1997, p. 124
[111] Brink, A "Reinventing the Real", 1993, p. 44

> tension between memory and amnesia… [2] it emphasizes the imperative of breaking silences necessitated by long years of struggle, [3] the refashioning of identities caught between stasis and change, and [4]the role of culture or representation in limiting or enabling new forms of understanding[112]

The previous discussion of the nature of the transitional process springs into stark relief as one realises that each of these points made by David Attwell relates in a very substantial manner to what I identified in the previous section as some of the concerns and debates to arise out of the process of the TRC. Concerns around truth, narrative and history abound in fiction written after the apartheid era. The four tendencies identified by Attwell above combine in various ways in fiction since 1990, taking different forms according to the specific novel. In the remainder of this section I wish to focus on the work of some critical authors, highlighting what they have seen as trends in recent South African fiction.

Andre Brink, critic and novelist, has written extensively about what he sees as an imperative in South African fiction to articulate silence. This is an imperative to tell the stories which were previously quashed by the urgency of the master narrative. Brink's point is valid, as the stories of the previously silenced and marginalised - women and homosexuals, to name just two examples - are increasingly being inscribed in fiction. However, the idea that it is possible to simply write the "true" story by inserting the absent players is not all in keeping with the prevailing problematic of South African fiction post-apartheid. The ability of fiction to represent at all is being brought into question, and thus simply writing the stories of the disempowered does not seem to be a viable alternative. Indeed, Brink's statement seems rather naïve in its assumptions that one can simply, through fiction, set about creating the society one desires. He has written: "as we approach democracy, the ideological map of our country needs to be redrawn",[113] and the implication is that fiction must play a role in redrawing it by being morally responsible.

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[112] Attwell, D & Harlow, B "Introduction: South African Fiction After Apartheid" Modern Fiction Studies 46(1) 2000, 1-9, p. 3. I have added the numbers into the quote, without altering the wording, in order to emphasize the different points which are being made

[113] Brink, A. "Reinventing the Real", 1993, p.51

Brink's formulation is simplistic, and it seems almost as if he is caught in the very ambiguity which David Attwell characterizes as being so prominent in post-apartheid fiction. Brink is not by any means a naïve realist; in his critical work and his fiction it is obvious that he has engaged with postmodern and poststructural theory at length. However, on reading his work one gets the feeling that behind this postmodern rhetoric there remains a need to be relevant, and important. This is not intended as a personal critique of Brink himself, but as a reflection on the nature of literature under apartheid which, through the trope-as-truth, elevated the role of the author to one of a freedom-fighter, a truth-teller and a revolutionary. Nixon writes that since apartheid, doubt has been cast on the writer's social status, public role, motivation and imaginative focus.[114] As an author who has work spanning the two periods under discussion, Brink's writing reveals the difficulty in coming to terms with these new roles. As Brink himself notes, subsequent to the demise of apartheid the writer must now write in the absence of a clearly defined enemy to write against.[115] Irlam writes of a tendency in literature after apartheid to move away from the grand narrative and to begin to articulate the personal and private, a literature of community rather than of nation. As examples he cites texts such as Brink's Devil's Valley.[116]

Aside from the articulation of silences identified by Brink, what else characterizes post-apartheid literature? Nuttall and Coetzee, in the introduction to their volume write, very tellingly, that: "… the struggle against apartheid is being seen as the most significant and attractive lens through which to view the past"[117]. Brink too speaks of "the struggle" as a key trope of South African fiction.[118] What this points to is that certain ways of reading the past become privileged over others. As discussed earlier, the TRC's report is one way

[114] Nixon, R "Aftermaths". Transition 72 (1997): 64-77; p. 64; cited in Attwell, D & Harlow, B "South African Fiction After Apartheid", 2000, p.28
[115] Brink, A. "Reinventing the Real", 1993, p.51
[116] Irlam, S "Unraveling the Rainbow", 2004, p. 704
[117] Nuttal, S & Coetzee, C "Introduction" in S. Nuttal and C. Coetzee (eds) Negotiating the Past Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp 1-15; p. 10
[118] Brink, A "Reinventing the Real", 1993, p. 46

in which a certain version of the past can come to be privileged.[119] Nuttall and Coetzee further note that:

> It…remains as a challenge to all who are, in some way, memorializing the past to keep multiple versions of the past alive and not to privilege, as has so often been done, a few master narratives that offer a sense of unity, at the cost of ignoring the fracture and dissonance.[120]

Thus, one of the key preoccupations in post-apartheid fiction is the past. This is an engagement not only with the official past but with "any number of histories of exclusion (the marginalised or 'other'), inclusion (the accepted as normal) and transgression (normal becoming abnormal)."[121] This involvement with the past has taken many forms. One of these forms is a mode which has been characterized as confessional fiction, in which the author's (or main character's, the two are often closely allied) own complicity in apartheid, or systems of power and subjection, is underlined. Examples include The Smell of Apples by Mark Behr and Ons is nie almal so nie by Jeanne Goosen. Heyns writes that: "these novels are in the nature of confessions made before the tribunal of history."[122]

As this statement hints, these novels are not by and large simplistic but are embedded in and in conversation with complex problematics regarding accountability, causality and responsibility which link them to a larger concern in South African fiction after the apartheid era with the nature of history itself. Indeed, history is present in many "bewildering … guises" in South African fiction.[123] History is viewed as something which is not merely there to be discovered but is open to challenge, contestation and even reinvention. In a different context Judith Butler has written of the paradoxes of the past:

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[119] This privileging of a certain version of history can be done both consciously and unconsciously for many reasons. The NP government systematically set about rewriting South African history in order to make it illustrate the dominance of the Afrikaner people, in order to legitimize their power in the present.
[120] Nuttall, S. & Coetzee, C. "Introduction", 1998, p.14
[121] Munslow, A. Deconstructing history, 1997, p.122. The quote refers specifically to the writing of history encouraged by Michel Foucault, but I find it relevant to writing practices in South African fiction.
[122] Heyns, M "The whole country's truth: Confession and Narrative in recent white South African writing" Modern Fiction Studies 46(1), 2000, 42-66; p. 50
[123] Green, M Novel Histories 1997, p. 8

"the past is irrecoverable and the past is not past, the past is the resource for the future and the future is the redemption of the past."[124] It is with these types of paradoxes that these works of fiction concern themselves. The two novels which the remainder of this report will focus on do this in a very focused manner by speaking to two specific historical episodes (this will form the focus of the next chapter). However, there are many other novels which engage with history in different ways: Zoë Wicomb's David's Story; Anne Landsman's Devil's Chimney; and Elleke Boehmer's Bloodlines to name just a few.

The final feature of post-apartheid fiction which I wish to allude to is the increasing move away from a realist mode towards move experimental and provisional articulations. This should come as no surprise: as fiction removes itself from the idea that it can in some way reflect reality, it necessarily also moves away from a style which attempts to do so, and moves into a more provisional mode. This type of fiction has been accused of simply borrowing Western modes of magical realism and postmodernism[125], but I hope that my exploration throughout the rest of this report of the work of Mda and Nicol will show that the style being used is not simply some imported flavour, but one which has been shaped and is shaping the South African context.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have attempted to set the scene for the discussion of the novels which will form the remainder of this research report. In doing so, I may have seemed to wander rather far from the novels themselves, into discussions of the TRC and of history and fiction in general. However, the purpose of this chapter has been to set these novels within the contexts in which they were produced. Written in 1992 and 2000 respectively, This Day and Age and The Heart of Redness span the post-apartheid era commented on in this chapter. These two novels engage with their respective historical and discursive

[124] Butler, J "Afterword: After Loss, What Then?" In D.L. Eng & D. Kazanjian (eds) Loss Berkeley: University Press of California, 2003, pp 467-473; p. 467
[125] Boehmer, E "Endings and new beginning South African fiction in transition" in D. Attridge & R. Jolly (eds) Writing South Africa Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp 43-56; p. 46

contexts in different ways. The issues which they engage with regarding history are related to general concerns in the country around the ability to represent and know the past. I have framed this discussion of the country's historical engagement via the TRC with a discussion of the forms which literature produced in the country has taken both during apartheid and after. The remainder of this report will concern the engagement of these two novels with history.

CHAPTER 2:
RELATIONSHIPS TO MAINSTREAM HISTORICAL TEXTS IN THIS DAY AND AGE AND THE HEART OF REDNESS

In this chapter, the aim is to explore the relationship between these two novels, and the historical incidents with which they are in conversation. In each case a brief summary of the incident will be given, as well as an explanation of the primary historical text which describes the incident. A detailed comparison will then be embarked on, which aims at tracing lines of similarities and differences between the mainstream and fictional accounts of events, in order to highlight trends in the presentation of history in the novels.

THIS DAY AND AGE

> … this is a story of shame, a grim chapter in the lives of prophets and presidents, indeed, in the lives of us. Because often history records only what it wants to, never mentions the cries of peacocks or the resonance of dragonfly wings … A story of once upon a time on an island in the great river…[126]

It is not a radical statement to say that This Day and Age takes as its primary intertext the historical texts surrounding the Bulhoek massacre of 24 May 1921. In this massacre, a group of more than 800 armed South African policemen and soldiers[127] opened fire on over 3000 unarmed members of a millenarian religious group known as The Israelites, led by a prophet called Enoch Mgijima.[128] This resulted in the death of 183 Israelites, and the wounding of a similar number; only one policemen was stabbed, as the Israelites carried only knobkerries. The massacre was the end point of mounting tensions between

[126] Nicol, M This Day and Age: A Novel New York: Vintage International, 1992, p. 241.
[127] Nicol, M "Bulhoek" New Contrast 21(2), 1996, No.82, 74-77; p. 74
[128] Edgar, R. "The Prophet Motive: Enoch Mgijima, the Israelites, and the background to the Bulhoek Massacre" International Journal of African Historical Studies 15(3), 1982, 401-422; p. 418

the Israelites and the government over the issues of land use and squatting. The Israelites had rallied to a point in the Eastern Cape, near Queenstown - a mountain known as Ntabaleng[129] or Kamastone - to await the millennium on the command of their prophet, Enoch Mgijima. The government, under the leadership of General Jan Smuts, claimed that they were squatting illegally, and wanted them to move. They refused to move, and the tragedy of the massacre resulted. Simply put, these are the "facts" of Bulhoek, as they are commonly accepted in historical discourse, especially as proclaimed through the work of the historian Robert R. Edgar, who wrote his PhD thesis on the subject, a work entitled: The Fifth Seal: Enoch Mgijima, the Israelites and the Bulhoek Massacre, 1921.

Nicol's novel also has at its centerpiece a massacre similar to the one which occurred at Bulhoek. The followers of a prophet are massacred by people sent by the government because they refuse to leave their land and turn their prophet over to the authorities. However, it should be made clear, even at this early stage that the text is not a description of the Bulhoek massacre, but a fictional account of the massacre; as such, it is not simply mimetic of the massacre as described in the historical texts, but is in dialogue with them.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, our access to the past is always filtered through representations of that past. The past is not directly accessible, it is past and cannot be recovered. What are accessible are various versions of the past, in this case the work of Robert Edgar, which offers extensive understandings and ideas surrounding the Bulhoek massacre. This is not to imply in the least that the Bulhoek massacre itself was a fiction, or that it never happened. Instead, what is meant is that while the Bulhoek massacre did occur, we have absolutely no access to it, what we do have access to are the works of Edgar, which as historical writings are necessarily involved in a complex process of invention. The acknowledgements in Nicol's novel indicate that he is familiar with the work of Robert Edgar, and therefore it seems appropriate to examine the relationship between the texts.

[129] Edgar, R. "The Prophet Motive", 1982, p. 401

Edgar's work on the Bulhoek massacre consists primarily of three texts: his thesis submitted to the University of California in 1979, an article published in the International Journal of African Historical Studies in 1982 and a pamphlet entitled Because they Chose the Plan of God published in 1988. I was able to access only the two more recent publications: the article[130] and the pamphlet.[131] The article concerns the rise of Enoch Mgijima detailing, amongst other things, his religious associations and beliefs. The pamphlet is a much more simplistic work, and reads as if it were intended for high school level students. It is a simple synopsis, covering the period from Enoch Mgijima's birth to the massacre, and then includes a few pages on contemporary responses to the massacre. Read in conjunction the two texts offer a sense both of the depth of the study conducted by Edgar, and the general thrust of his arguments. The conversation between these texts of Edgar's and This Day and Age is one which involves a large degree of both difference and overlap. This Day and Age does not intend to offer a linear description and explanation of events leading up to Bulhoek. However, it does seem to flirt with the attempt at total understanding of the event which Edgar attempts to offer, at times it repeats parts of Edgar's text verbatim (for example, letters) at other times it seemingly ignores entire aspects (for example, Enoch's membership of a church).

This type of flirting has resulted in This Day and Age being accused of taking too many liberties with the events of the massacre. Comparing This Day and Age to the Latin American novel The War of the End of the World (1981) by Mario Vargas Llosa, Zelia Roelofse-Campbell is scathing about This Day and Age's failure to accurately represent the massacre: "In the specific case of This Day and Age, Mike Nicol recreates the millenarian episode of Bulhoek, but in a totally fictional manner. Consequently it is very difficult to reconcile historical fact with the narrative."[132] There is an assumption here that this would be desirable, that a fiction should be able to somehow accurately represent a fact. A further example is where Vargas Llosa's novel is praised for "communicating

[130] Edgar, R. "The Prophet Motive: Enoch Mgijima, the Israelites, and the background to the Bulhoek Massacre" International Journal of African Historical Studies 15(3), 1982, 401-422
[131] Edgar, R. Because they chose the plan of God Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1988
[132] Roelofse-Campbell, Z. "Enlightened state versus millenarian vision: A comparison between two historical novels" Literator 18(1), 1997, 83-92; p. 84

to its reader the authentic texture of the events which really happened at Canudos"[133] while Nicol's novel is slated because: "one cannot say that it reveals the historical truth of Bulhoek …this reader would have welcomed a more historically accurate account"[134]. The unfavourable comparison continues throughout the article: "Reading Vargas Llosa's work of narrative fiction one is left with a very clear understanding of the historical events of Canudos … one cannot derive such understanding of the Bulhoek massacre from Nicol's work".[135] I have cited from this article at length because it seems to represent most fully the type of criticisms that are often leveled at This Day and Age; similar ideas are echoed by Peter Horn, who finds it strange that Nicol does not use his novel as a political tool: "when insights into the inequities of apartheid and racist capitalism become hallucinatory voices denounced as delusions, the reality of exploitation and inequality must be asserted … it is strangely perverse to write a novel ostensibly about political people… but without a political discourse."[136]

My concern with these formulations is not that I think Nicol's work is better than the work of Vargas Llosa, or even more historically accurate; what concerns me is that this criterion is being used at all as a means by which to examine the novel. The last chapter discussed Bethlehem's conception of the trope-of-truth and the trope-as-truth, the shift when fiction is felt to somehow be no longer fiction but a way of representing reality, and a political tool. The desire that This Day and Age should represent reality, or be politically responsible, is a desire to fasten signifier to signified, a desire to attach the writing about the past to the past itself, so as to cement a relationship which is unambiguous, directed and purposeful.

The discussion around the TRC in the previous chapter highlighted the impossibility of ever accurately representing the "reality" of the past, at most we can offer a version of it, a version that is by nature always constructed and fictitious. This is as true of the work of a historian such as Edgar, as it is of the work of a novelist such as Nicol. The degree to

[133] Roelofse-Campbell, Z. "Enlightened state versus millenarian vision", 1997, p.86
[134] Roelofse-Campbell, Z. "Enlightened state versus millenarian vision", 1997, p.96
[135] Roelofse-Campbell, Z "Enlightened state versus millenarian vision", 1997, p. 91
[136] Horn, P. "Afterwords" Southern African Review of Books 6(3), Issue 31, 1994, 11-13; p.12

which interpretation takes place, and the consciousness with which it is done might vary, but it nevertheless takes place. History and fiction are not identical, they make different types of truth claims. Therefore, to try to evaluate a fiction as if it should somehow relate to some external definition of truth is only to perpetuate a myth about the existence of objectivity in any text.

Two works of Edgar's will serve as examples: the pamphlet Because they Chose the Plan of God, and the article "The Prophet Motive: Enoch Mgijima, the Israelites, and the background to the Bulhoek massacre". In both texts, Edgar sets about outlining the causes and the circumstances which led up to the eventual massacre. He mentions several things, but in particular his work seems to indicate two possible causes. Either the massacre is a result of social forces (The Mfecane, the Land Act, the resulting poverty); or it is the inevitable result of the prophecies of Enoch Mgijima. Throughout his work Edgar highlights the first set of causes - the linear, rational, Western ones - and promotes them as the eventual causes of the massacre. For example, he characterizes "the period of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries [as] one of deterioration and decline for most Africans[137]" and suggests that this is a direct contributing factor to the rise of the prophet Enoch Mgijima. The possibility that the massacre at Bulhoek could have happened because God really spoke to Enoch Mgijima, and had commanded him to gather his people at Bulhoek is not even entertained, despite the fact that it is this understanding that the Israelites themselves are most likely to advance as the "true" understanding. Nicol, in a different context, alludes to the possibility of this second interpretation of the massacre when he refers to the presence of present day followers of the prophet Enoch Mgijima.[138] It does not matter which one of these interpretations is true. What does matter is that they are both available interpretations, but that Edgar chooses one; in this way his version of the events at Bulhoek is as much invented as it is discovered, constructed as it is found.

Therefore, to criticize This Day and Age for not reflecting the reality of Bulhoek is to make the assumption that it is possible to assert the priority of one set of truth claims over

[137] Edgar, R. "The Prophet Motive", 1982, p. 406
[138] Nicol, M. "Bulhoek", 1996, p. 75

another, and that this would be desirable - to my mind both assumptions are flawed. The first because it denies the role of any author in construction (as outlined above) and the second because it fails to see that simple reflection, even if it were possible, would deny much about the complex processes which go into the construction of any understanding.

At several points Nicol reproduces, almost without alteration, segments of letters and songs which are contained in Edgar's pamphlet and which he claims are "genuine" newspaper articles and songs from the time. Examples include the article supposedly written by the editor in the novel (p. 185) but which also appears under the heading "The Daily Dispatch, Dec. 13, 1920: Editorial" (p. 20) in Edgar's pamphlet; the songs sung by the Israelites (p. 29 in Edgar's pamphlet, p. 264 in Nicol's novel) and the letter signed by the Nightbomber (p. 23 in Edgar's pamphlet, and p. 193 in the novel). There are also other overlaps. An example is that we are told that the massacre in the novel takes place on the President's birthday[139], and the Bulhoek massacre took place on Smuts' birthday. The name of the officer who carried out the massacre was Truetor (according to Edgar), in the novel it is Trotter. Enoch Mgijima's father Jonas desired a male heir[140] and prayed to God for one, after which Enoch was born; Enoch Hemelswerd, the grandfather of Enoch Mistas, also desires a male heir to save his line. These similarities mean different things in the two texts. For example, that the massacre takes place on Smuts's birthday is seen as simply ironic in Edgar's text, and is used as a way of dating the events; in the novel it takes on a much greater meaning as the terror and horror of the massacre are contrasted with the pomp and ceremony of parade.

Perhaps the most obvious instance of the novel appropriating the "reality" of the massacre to itself, however, is in the letter signed by the Nightbomber, mentioned above. In this letter, apparently published in the Johannesburg Star, May 11, 1921, an individual identifying himself as the Nightbomber urges the President (government) to drop bombs on the prophet's group. In the reality of Edgar's text this does not happen, it is not part of history; but in the novel it does, bombers attack the village. Thus, it seems almost as if

[139] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p.5
[140] Edgar, R. "The Prophet Motive", 1982, p. 405

this letter is more "real" in the fictional context than it is in the "real" one, where the ideas it contains remain a fiction and not a reality.

In his acknowledgements, before the novel begins, Nicol records the following comment: "for some stories, images and ideas I am indebted to the work of a number of historians"[141]. This is the core of the novel's relation to history: the use of stories, images and ideas that are not necessarily tied to the normal historical understanding of them. In this way Nicol is able to use the image of the Nightbomber and transfer it into his novel in such a way as to make it an integral part of the plot, because This Day and Age is not about plotting events, but about imagining them. "This Day and Age posits an alternatively performed historiography to the publicly available national historiographic narrative and examines the way in which prevailing myths may be destabilized by the … literary text."[142] This use of the Nightbomber is not the only occasion where historical events are understood in a different manner in the novel. Below I wish to explore three more of these occasions.

I have mentioned before the way in which mainstream historical accounts (such as that of Edgar) tend to sideline the discourses of myth, prophecy and religion as being capable of causing events. In this novel "the familiar facts of [the] South African past and present are elbowed out of cent[re] stage by a fantastic reassessment of ancient systems of belief and local lore confronting the officially sanctioned records of either Afrikaner or liberal historiography and envisioning a future open to different ontological inscriptions of the present." [143]

In Edgar's work, despite an in-depth analytical description of Enoch Mgijima's various religious affiliations[144] and beliefs, no credence at all is offered to the idea that it could be these things which caused the Bulhoek massacre. On the contrary, they are seen as being themselves caused by a range of social events; for example, an assertion is made that

[141] Nicol, M This Day and Age , 1992, not numbered
[142] Pordzik, R "Nationalism, Cross-Culturalism, and Utopian Vision in South African Utopian and Dystopian Writing 1972-92" Research in African Literatures 32(3), 2001, 177-197; p. 189
[143] Pordzik, R "Nationalism, Cross-Culturalism, and Utopian Vision" 2001, p. 189
[144] Edgar, R. "The Prophet Motive",1982, p.409 -

poor people are likely to join millenarian sects because they wish to escape the dismal circumstances in which they find themselves.

> Multiple disasters which occur over a short time place cumulative stress on a society, impairing its ability to stabilize or regenerate itself, destroying the legitimacy of its leadership, and subverting the ability of its basic institutions to find solutions to its crises. It is in environments like these that millennial concepts that offer immediate and ultimate solutions to insoluble problems can flourish.[145]

It is secular, post-enlightenment, academic reasoning which flourishes in Edgar's text; and not the faith based or mythic thought to which fiction is able to lend power. It is never suggested that poor people might have joined Enoch's sect because he was, in fact, a prophet. I am not saying that this is the truth, just that it is an alternative discourse, and one that is strongly denied in mainstream historical discourse.

Nicol prefaces his novel with two quotes which emphasize the role of God (or the mythical) in history, and how people who are caught up in events often use this view of themselves as driven by God to justify the events which occur. Specifically, he quotes Enoch Mgijima: "When people rally around the word of God, people must die", and Prime Minister D. F. Malan: "We hold this nationhood as our due, for it was given us by the architect of the universe. His aim was the formation of a new nation. The last hundred years have witnessed a miracle behind which must lie a divine plan. Afrikanerdom is not the work of men but the creation of God."[146] Through his use of these quotations as epigraph, Nicol indicates, even before he starts his narrative, that history in this novel is not necessarily going to be understood in a normalized, non-mythical, secular, rational manner, as it is in the work of Edgar. An example of this is the narration of the lives of Enoch Hemelswerd and his followers, who seem to be acting out

[145] Edgar, R "The Prophet Motive",1982, p. 419
[146] Nicol, M This Day and Age 1992, both quotes found on page immediately following table of contents

some type of Edenic pastoral ideal, before this becomes tainted, and only a male prophet can save them.[147]

This type of non-Western a-rational[148] notion of causality is entertained in Nicol's novel. Nicol does not identify Enoch Mistas as belonging to any formal religion but he does present him as a prophet. As will be explored in greater detail in chapters three and five, This Day and Age rejects Western notions of causality and linearity and hazards that it is possible that events could be caused by things other then "social forces" such as poverty and landlessness (Edgar's explanations)[149] and could be caused by things such as prophecy, omens and luck. Thus, in regard to its representation of the Bulhoek massacre This Day and Age is willing to entertain notions of multiple causality, of causes which are neither rational nor linear.

Something else which This Day and Age reintroduces into the narrative of the massacre is the presence of violence. In a scholarly text such as that of Edgar's it is very easy to lose track of the actuality of violence which is the subtext in a sentence as simple as "200 Israelites died". The description of the massacre in the novel is vivid. Of particular interest is the last sentence in the chapter describing the massacre: "And there, on an island in the great river that runs through the driest part of the country, the soldiers massacre all the people of the prophet."[150] This sentence is written in the present tense, as something which is happening now, at the moment that it is being read. In this way the massacre is not something that is confined to the past but something which continues to happen, and appears to be happening anew every time it is read.

This Day and Age re-inscribes violence into the narrative not only in relation to the massacre itself, but to general events: the burning of Maria and Dead Das's story, to name but a few. What this reintroduction of violence points to is an attempt to avoid the

[147] Nicol, M This Day and Age 1992, p. 16
[148] I use this word in preferences to the more commonly accepted irrational and nonrational, as both of these words seem to me to be slightly pejorative; as they set up a binary hierarchy between rationality and its opposite, irrationality.
[149] Edgar, R "The Prophet Motive", 1982, p. 411
[150] Nicol, M This Day and Age , 1992, p.266

reification of history as something that can be simply discussed critically and analytically, and to draw it back to the issues of pain and loss on an individual level that invariably accompany it. In this way I feel that the novel does have a way to defend itself against accusations of relativism, as it acknowledges the suffering and pain of the body.

A further feature of the novel is the way in which it condenses history. The time period of the Bulhoek massacre may be the chief historical intertext of the novel, but it is definitely not the only one. Throughout the novel we are presented with "snippets" of other periods, other events and other times. In this way, the massacre is portrayed not as an isolated incident but as part of a large pattern of history, in which events are complexly caused by and related to each other. In a similar manner, the two chief protagonists - the President and Enoch Mistas - cannot simply be mapped onto the persons of Jan Smuts and Enoch Mgijima, instead "the [P]resident could be an amalgam of a number of former South African presidents; similarly Enoch Mistas could be symbolic of a number of black leaders…"[151]

Time-frames other than the backdrop of the 1913 Land Act which occurred just prior to the massacre are indicated.[152] The world from which Enoch Hemelswerd and his followers escape is a compressed version of the entire period of colonialism and other forms of oppression. It features everything from slavery to the use of social works budgets for personal gain, from the import of exotic spices from the East to the rise of a dictator president.[153] Through doing so it serves to extend its re-examination of history beyond the Bulhoek massacre, to the entire period of colonialism and apartheid.

Other significant events, especially as regards prophecy, are also included in the "history" of the novel. Thus, the prophecies and times of Nongqawuse and Mlanjeni are referred to:

> She told him about a time of great dissatisfaction, when cattle coughed
> a yellow froth from their muzzles and died bellowing, nostrils wide, tongues

[151] Lalor, M. F. Conditions of Possibility for Contemporary South African White Writing in English Pietermaritzburg: Unpublished Masters Dissertation, University of Natal, 1993; p.45
[152] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p.121
[153] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 13

> thick with flies, little more than covered skeletons rotten, putrefied. For this was the time of a strong sun that hardened the earth against the maize, corn and all tubers; turned brother against brother, father against son, burned witches in their huts, made men mad who found but dust in the rivers. A time that set fire to the pastures and the hills, and led to the slaughter of cattle. A time when people looked to their prophet and heard his command to cleanse themselves, to purge the plague from their cattle and the sorcerers from their midst.
>
> Prepare yourselves … because the new people are coming to cultivate the fields, bringing with them healthy cattle, and they will return the land to those from whom it was stolen and put to death all tyrants. Power will be ours.[154]

Those familiar with the discussion of the cattle-killing in the next section will notice how closely the prophecy given here mirrors the events as described by Jeff Peires in his book The Dead will Arise (1989). What is interesting, however, is that as this passage progresses it moves steadily away from the account given by Peires. By the end of the quote given above, the cattle-killing has moved beyond the salvation of the people, to a desire to punish oppressors and gain ultimate power. It is this type of slippage in the narrative, the easy switching between what is commonly accepted as "true" by mainstream discourse, and what is invented by the novel, which characterizes much of the action of the novel. The historical time periods specifically mentioned above are only a few of the historical incidents which can be identified during the course of the novel. Others include: "the Bambatha Uprising (1906), the Bondelswarts rebellion (1922), Sharpeville (1961), Soweto (1976)… the high apartheid era… the Botha and De Klerk reformist eras…"[155] as well as a decided reflection of the South Africa of 1992.[156] In essence, "Nicol transforms South Africa into a mythical realm which takes on something of every place and time."[157]

[154] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 22
[155] Lalor, M. F Conditions of Possibility, 1993, p. 45
[156] Meihuizen, N "Inside and Outside of History" Current Writing 4(1), 1992, 149-151, p. 151
[157] Meihuizen, N. "Inside and Outside of History", 1992, p. 151

In this way This Day and Age becomes not only about writing about the Bulhoek massacre, but instead it is about "using this incident, in the various version, myths, exaggerations and effacements of it, as a paradigmatic instance of how historical discourse is constructed."[158] It must be emphasized that this conflation of historical time-periods is a purposeful technique of the novel and not, as Peter Horn seems to suggest, an indication of Nicol being unaware of the different time periods to which these events belong.[159]

This discussion of the relationship of This Day and Age to the texts of the Bulhoek massacre and other historical time-frames, has been intended to highlight a variety of ways in which the description given in This Day and Age questions normalized understandings of the way history functions. This will be discussed further in the next chapter, but for now the discussion will turn to The Heart of Redness and an examination of how it interacts with historical texts.

THE HEART OF REDNESS

It is commonly known that much of the historical account of the Xhosa Cattle killing of 1856-7 contained in Zakes Mda's novel The Heart of Redness, as well as the events immediately preceding it, are based to a large extent on the account of Jeff Peires, in his book on the subject: The Dead will Arise. Mda makes no secret of this, and acknowledges it in his dedication: "I am grateful to … Jeff Peires, whose research - wonderfully recorded in The Dead will Arise and in a number of academic papers - informed the historical events in my fiction".[160] In the word "informed" in this statement of Mda's there is a slippage between historical events and fiction, an indication of an interaction between the two which suggests that although fiction may be informed by a mainstream historical account it is nonetheless not merely subordinate to it.

[158] Lalor, M. F Conditions of Possibility, 1993, p. 46
[159] Horn, P. "Afterwords", 1994, p.11
[160] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 2000, page entitled: "Dedication", not numbered

In this chapter I wish to trace the faultlines between The Dead will Arise and The Heart of Redness, two works which each in their own way try to trace the course of an event which shook the Xhosa nation, and which continues to have repercussions to this day. Peires acknowledges that his version of events is just one possible interpretation: "it must be possible to write histories of Nongqawuse from other perspectives than mine[161]". Thus, when I interrogate this text in relation to The Heart of Redness it must always be borne in mind that I am not somehow comparing the "reality" of the past to a fiction, rather I am comparing a history to a fiction.

On a very superficial level, it would seem that the narrative of the past contained in Heart of Redness is virtually identical to that which is offered in The Dead will Arise. It follows the course of a period in the life of the Xhosa nation: from the rise of the prophet Mlanjeni, the Riverman, through the war of Mlanjeni and the defeat of the Xhosa, the governorship of the Cape by Sir George Grey, to the lungsickness epidemic, the rise of Nongqawuse the prophetess, the split between Believers and Unbelievers, the killing of the majority of the Xhosa cattle, the expectations of the coming of the Russians, the First, Second and Great disappointments, and the resulting suffering of the Xhosa nation.

Each of these episodes takes place in both of the texts, although there is often a differential focus (which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter). A further distinction between the two texts is that Peires's account tends to be more detailed, but this is probably just as a result of his text being both longer, and more focused on the time period than Mda's which moves between two time periods.

The main focus of Mda's novel are his fictional characters Twin and Twin-Twin and their wives, children and descendents; however, many of the other characters in Mda's text are historical figures, who are vividly portrayed in the work of Peires. This is not only true of the characters who are central to the unravelling of the course of events of the cattle killing - characters such as Nongqawuse, Mhlakaza, Mlanjeni, Sarhili and Grey - but

[161] Peires, J. B. The Dead will Arise: Nongqawuse and the Great Xhosa Cattle-Killing Movement of 1856-7 Johannesburg/ Bloomington and Indianapolis/ London: Ravan Press/ Indiana University Press/ James Currey, 1989; p. 322

even those characters who are peripheral to the events. Characters such as the Unbeliever Ned, the son of Sarhili who works at the Native Hospital; Gawler, a regional magistrate; and Maquma the believing chief all appear in both Mda's and Peires's works.

There is often an explicit textual overlay between the two texts. This frequently involves statements which Peires cites as being uttered by specific historical personages. So, for example, the text of Nongqawuse's prophecy which Mda offers in his novel[162] is practically identical to that given by Peires[163], who takes it from the statement of Gquba, recorded in 1888. These textual overlaps are not mere laziness on the part of Mda, instead they point to the close alliance between the historical texts and the novel. It is this alliance which necessarily makes Mda's questioning of historical discourse even more pertinent when it does occur.

Allow me to examine some of these questionings, in order to begin to trace differences between the two texts. In the sixth chapter of the novel King Sarhili has been having doubts about the truth of Nongqawuse's prophecies following the First and Second disappointments. However, he has been convinced by her explanations and says "I met with my father among the wild mielies … He gave me the spear that was buried with him. I have it now."[164] This is an almost direct quote of a statement offered in Peires, and purported to be made by King Sarhili: "I have seen [my father] Hintza face to face. I went to Umhlakaza's and met my father one night amongst the wild mielies …he gave me the assegai which was buried with him - I have it now."[165] The difference is that Peires takes pains to contextualize the statement, showing that it is an exaggeration carried by an unofficial messenger. By doing this he allows the statement to lose much of its power, so that in Peires's text it seems as if it were just another incident of someone supporting the cattle-killing. Its insertion, without explanation or qualification, into the text of Mda's novel, allows the statement to retain a lot of the potency which might have led to its resonance with Believers.

[162] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness , 2000, p. 60
[163] Peires, J. B. The Deal Will Arise , 1989, p. 79
[164] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 152
[165] Acc. 793 Statement of Yosi 3Nov 1856. cited in Peires, J.B. The Dead will Arise, 1989, p. 106

Another character that we meet is Sir Henry Smith, one of the governors of the Cape. He wishes to be known as the Great White Chief of the Xhosas, and insists that all the Xhosa kneel down and kiss his boots. The utter humiliation that this causes is very neatly summed up in Mda's novel with the following bitter, simple statement: "He watched in humiliation as the Great White Chief commanded the elders and even the chiefs to kiss his staff and boots. And they did. And so did he."[166] This type of humiliation cannot persist and in the end, with the help of the prophet Mlanjeni, war breaks out. During the war, both the novel and Peires's text use the word extermination to refer to the order given by Harry Smith regarding the war of Mlanjeni. In Mda's novel we read: "exterminate the savage beasts"[167], while in Peires's text it is rendered as "extermination is now the only word and principle to guide us"[168]. At first glance it seems as if Mda is merely echoing the work of Peires. However, the phrase used by Mda is very reminiscent of another famous literary phrase: "Exterminate the brutes"[169], found in the novel Heart of Darkness. The title of Mda's text The Heart of Redness also suggests that his text is in conversation with Conrad's novel. Thus, even when something seems to be simply a reflection of an historical event, it is also complexly related to other texts and other issues which form part of the web of textuality in which the novel is embedded.

Johan Jacobs gives a detailed description of the various texts which The Heart of Redness could be seen as interacting with:

> …the obvious allusion to Conrad's Heart of Darkness in the title of Mda's novel requires that its presentation and analysis of nineteenth century British colonialism as well as the impact of globalisation in present day South Africa also be read in the light of Conrad's canonical fictional treatment of European colonialism in Africa. The genealogical tree of the Xhosa 'descendents of the headless ancestor' that Mda provides at the beginning of the novel, invites one to consider it as a South African offshoot of Gabriel Garcia Marquez's novel

[166] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 18
[167] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 20
[168] Peires, J. B. The Dead will Arise, 1989, p. 12
[169] Conrad, J. Heart of Darkness New York: W. W. Norton & Co. Norton Critical Edition edited by R. Kimbrough, 1971; p. 51

> One Hundred Years of Solitude, with its similarly twinned and recurrent family names and characteristics. Closer to home, Zoë Wicomb's novel, David's Story, also published in 2000, might also serve as an aleatory South African intertext with its comparable genealogical tree setting out the aboriginal Griqua ancestry of the protagonist, David Dirkse.[170]

An in-depth analysis of these various intertexts falls outside the scope of this research report. I highlight them merely to indicate the complex relationships in which the novel is inscribed, and that it is therefore very simplistic to view this text as a simple fictional rewriting of the work of Peires.

Thus, any obvious similarity between the two texts should not be taken at face value. A deeper interrogation reveals that The Heart of Redness is no naïve imitation of the historical discourse contained in The Dead will Arise. It does not simply overlay the historical work of Peires with a fictional narrative, without challenging the historical assumptions themselves. Instead, by matching the events so closely, Mda allows the text space in which to interpret events differently, and by so doing gives his text an entirely different feel to Peires's text. "Mda merges fact and fiction to weave a multi-layered, open-ended narrative that jars and questions."[171]

For the remainder of this chapter I wish to focus on these differences, and look at the way in which Mda sets about interrogating the very Western notion of history contained in Peires's text. Peires is by no means a naïve traditional historian who imagines that his text, his interpretation, of the events of 1856-7, is necessarily the only correct or right one. In another article, Peires speaks very candidly about the existence of multiple truths. The article concerns him conducting research concerning the origins of the cattle-killing movement. He found that among many of the Xhosa today, it is commonly believed that it was Governor Sir George Grey who fooled the child Nongqawuse, and so brought

[170] Jacobs, J. U. "Zakes Mda's The Heart of Redness: the Novel as *Umngqokolo*" Kunapipi 24, 2002, 224-236; p. 228
[171] Mazibuko, N "Calling the Magenta Sun: A Writing of Africa's Women as Symbols and Agents of Change in the novels of Zakes Mda" Paper presented at the conference "Writing African Women: Poetics and Politics of African Gender Research" held at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa; January 19-22, 2005; p. 3

about the cattle-killing movement in order to weaken the Xhosa, whom he could not defeat in battle. Peires set about examining this belief and found that, according to historical records, it could not possibly be true and, thrilled at his revelation, tried to convince several Xhosa people of this. His was met with complete disinterest in and denial of his interpretation. This led him to realise that it does not really matter what the "truth" of a situation might be, what matters is the emotional truth and integrity of an explanation. The Xhosas' claim that Sir George Grey had destroyed the Xhosa through the cattle-killing was not incorrect, as it was definite that although he had not initiated it he had refused to help when the Xhosa were destitute, thereby cementing their fate. It was also true that the Xhosa had not been ultimately defeated by the English in battle, and that it was only through the cattle-killing that the Xhosa came to lose their lands and homes. Thus, Peires realises that his version of what is true is not necessarily definitive and that the version of the Xhosa, although not "true" by his standards, is equally able to account for the results, and as such is, in its own way, also the truth.[172] Another commentator has made the point very eloquently: "any serious attempt at historiography cannot be divorced from a statement of values, however much it may be disguised."[173]

Thus, an event can have truth in many ways, and many different factors impact on the supposed truthfulness. Mda's account in The Heart of Redness does not, of course, make any claims to truth, it acknowledges itself as a fiction, and should be read as such. However, it does interact in fascinating ways with the type of history of the period offered by Peires, and this will be discussed below.

The first difference which I wish to highlight between the two texts is the differential emotional content of the two. Peires's text is by no means a dry historical account, instead it is vivid and evokes very movingly the circumstances which existed. However, through its adherence to the "big picture" of the cattle-killing, it tends to focus on

[172] Peires, J. B "Suicide or Genocide? Xhosa perceptions of the Nongqawuse catastrophe" in J. Brown, P. Manning, K. Shapiro, J. Weiner, B. Bozzoli & P. Delius (eds) History from South Africa: Alternative visions and Practices Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991, p. 30-38

[173] Pakendorf, G "Looking back into Old Times: Hans Grimm, J. B. Peires and the Fiction of the Great Cattle-Killing" in E. Lehmann & E. Reckwitz (eds) Mfecane to Boer War: Versions of South African History Essen: Die Blaue Eule. Papers presented at a symposium at the University of Essen, 25-27 April 1990, pp. 101-119; p. 101

overarching trends and general ideas, rather than on individual and specific circumstances, events and characters.

In Mda's text, the focus is moved from nebulous groups of "Unbelievers" and "Believers" to a conflict between two brothers: Twin and Twin-Twin. At several points in the novel, incidents which are referred to in Peires's text as happening, are made specific and made to happen to the brothers. For example, during his discussion of the war of Mlanjeni Peires refers to the British practice of shrinking the heads and taking the skulls of Xhosa warriors for scientific purposes. In The Heart of Redness this terrible crime is perpetrated against the twin's father - Xikixa - by a group of British soldiers who include the future merchant James Dalton. As a result of this occurrence, Xikixa is unable to be a successful ancestor, as without his head he cannot give direction to his descendents. Thus the actions of the British soldiers have far-reaching effects because of the Xhosa cosmology, something which is not brought out in the "historical" account.

This is not the only instance where this happens, since at several other places in the text Mda inserts what are in Peires's text just general comments, into the lives of his characters. In many of these cases, as discussed above, the incidents then have far reaching effects. Two further examples should suffice to make the point. The first concerns the wife of the Unbeliever Twin-Twin, and the second the wife of the Believer Twin. Before the war of Mlanjeni both Twin-Twin and his brother believe in the prophecies of Mlanjeni. One of the teachings of Mlanjeni is that the Xhosa must stop their witchcraft and stop trying to destroy each other. Mlanjeni is capable of detecting witches and plants two poles in the ground near his house, which an innocent may walk through but which cannot be passed by witches. In this way, witchcraft can be rooted out of the community. This much is contained in Peires's text, but Mda takes it one step further. Twin-Twin's senior wife is accused of witchcraft, and when she tries to walk through the poles she is transfixed, and therefore identified as a witch. Twin-Twin rushes to save her and he is severely beaten by a group of Mlanjeni's followers, against Mlanjeni's wishes. The beating leaves scars on Twin-Twin's back, scars which reappear

on each subsequent generation of Twin-Twin's descendents, marking them out. Thus, the action of the witch hunters continues to mark Twin-Twin's lineage.

In Twin's case, he falls in love with a Khoikhoi woman Quxu, known in the novel as Qukezwa. She is one of the Khoikhoi women who prostitute themselves to the British soldiers in order to gain ammunition to further the Xhosa war efforts. The presence of such women is mentioned by Peires, but he does not elaborate on the immense interpersonal suffering and conflict that such women would necessarily have experienced. Mda shows how they are despised and ridiculed by the Xhosa, despite the fact that their actions are only undertaken to benefit them. Twin and Qukezwa's love story leads to the birth of a child, Heitsi, and through him their line continues. Indeed, in the present day there is in the text another Qukezwa, who shares many of the traits of her ancestor.

In all three of these examples, Mda has taken what are in Peires's texts just general comments and turned them into incidents in his characters' lives. These incidents have continued to affect the characters in the novel long after they have actually happened, all the way through the middle generations and now to the ongoing feud between the believers and unbelievers. Thus, one of the ways in which Mda reinterprets history is by making it not just something that happened to nameless, distant people, but something immediate, which continues to impact on the lives of his present day characters. As shown above, this refers not just to the ability of historical events to impact on the future (for example, it is generally accepted that the cattle-killing shaped the course of the Xhosa nation). It is also shown to be related to specific incidents, such as the decapitating of the ancestor and Bhonco's scarring, which continue to impact on the lives of their descendents in very personal and individual ways.

There are other ways aside from specific historical incidents where Mda enters into discussion with Peires. Often it concerns the interpretation of an event. In particular, they might have many of the same incidents in the cattle-killing, but their interpretation differs vastly. Peires, on the whole, while sympathetic to what he sees as the various social causes which resulted in the cattle-killing, is unambiguous in his evaluation of that

movement: he refers to it at one point as having an "evil logic"[174]. He says of the prophecies of Nongqawuse that "the mysterious strangers were nothing more tangible than the imaginary friends of Nongqawuse's day-dreams, and … the prophecies originated in the fantasies of two young girls playing in a bush".[175] In short, he is unequivocally convinced that the cattle-killing was based on a falsehood from start to finish, and that the Unbelievers were correct in their evaluation, and the Believers incorrect. Mda, on the other hand, shies away from such an easy distinction.

The cattle-killing is not viewed as evil in the novel The Heart of Redness. Instead, it is perceived in a very sympathetic light as a movement by people trying to regain a paradise for themselves. At no point in the narrative of the cattle-killing does Mda (or the novel) take sides, there is absolutely no evidence within the text of The Heart of Redness that the Believers were wrong, and that the ancestors were never going to rise. Instead, mention is made of the common belief among the Believers that the only reason the prophecies were not fulfilled was because of the disobedience of the Unbelievers. This view is not supported by the novel either. That is, it is never conclusively stated that the Unbelievers are wrong. Instead, the novel allows the uncertainty of the period to persist into the present, presenting the two paths as two alternative choices which were made, and neither bears the burden of either correctness or incorrectness. Any interpretation of the novel which assumes the correctness of either Believers or Unbelievers[176] is oversimplifying what is actually a complex relation to history. In a later chapter, I will embark on a discussion concerning what Mda's novel offers as a resolution to the conflict between the Believers and the Unbelievers, a joining between modernity and tradition as epitomized by the marriage of Camagu and Qukezwa. This marriage of tradition and modernity is a way of producing a new African subject. What must be emphasized at this point is that this later resolution does not indicate that the initial choice of Unbelief was incorrect, Mda is advocating a way forward, not a way of judging the past. I will return to this discussion in more detail later in this work.

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[174] Peires, J. B. The Dead will Arise , 1989, p. 241
[175] Peires, J. B. The Dead will Arise, 1989, p. 311
[176] See, for example, the review by Dlomo, V "Literature and Transformation" *Alter*nation 8(2), 2001, 229-231; p. 229

Another facet of the cattle-killing which is made clear in Mda's work is that the paths of Belief and Unbelief were ways of reacting to a problem which was affecting the Xhosa, it was about them, not about the English or about any other grouping. Thus, unlike in Peires's text which splits its focus equally between how the events were experienced by whites and blacks, Mda's text is only concerned with the experiences of the Xhosa themselves. The only time when the English enter the narrative is when they trespass into the world of the Xhosa. This is specific to the period of the cattle-killing, and does not apply to the period of the present in the novel, where we are presented with detailed discussions amongst white people about emigration, and where the character John Dalton plays a vital role.

In the end, Mda's text does not, to my mind, agree with what seems to be Peires's final analysis of the prophecies:

> It is important to note that the idea of cattle-killing was widespread before Nongqawuse started to speak. This shows that the central beliefs of the movement were a logical development of existing Xhosa religious concepts, namely (1) that the dead do not really die, but live on; (2) that the cattle sickness was a sign from the ancestors that they were troubled and wished to communicate with the living; (3) that if all impure and evil things disappeared, the world would be a perfect place; (4) that all living things on earth originated from the uHlanga, and that the creative power of the uHlanga was not yet spent. The success of the movement also depended on the common belief in the Christian notion of resurrection … and in the new Xhosa/Christian concept of Sifuba-Sibanzi (the Broad-Chested One), the expected redeemer…Nongqawuse's ideas were thus not original. She succeeded where other prophetesses had failed because her claims were supported by King Sarhili … so many factors affected the decision of a Xhosa homestead head whether or not to kill his cattle that it is impossible for any generalization to be absolutely valid. Certain distinguishable tendencies did operate. Chiefdoms which had been sorely afflicted by lungsickness were more likely to adopt the prophecies of the Cattle-Killing than chiefdoms which had not. Women, who performed the toilsome and socially unrewarding labour of cultivating the soil, were liable to be responsive to a message which promised them

> a future free of agricultural work. Those who had long collaborated with the colonial authorities were more likely to resist belief than those who had always been hostile. But there were significant exceptions even to these limited generalizations, and concerning factors such as age, status and religious belief it is impossible to generalize at all.[177]

It is not with any single aspect of this analysis which Mda's novel takes issue, but with the entire thrust: with the idea that the Cattle-Killing, the defining moment in Xhosa history can be narrowed down to such mundane social causes, can be categorized and defined so neatly, without any attention to the intricacies of the process. What The Heart of Redness does is take the period of the cattle-killing and make it about more than just a tragedy in which people were fooled by their own desires for a better future. Instead, it is about individual choice, about loyalty to the old ways (in whatever form that might take) and about commitment to ideas and people.

Peires speaks in his text about the distinction between the Unbelievers and the Believers as being characterized by the Xhosa people as a distinction between the hard and the soft. The hard are the Unbelievers: they are hard in several ways, because they fail to heed the call of the ancestors, they care about their own well-being at the expense of others and they persist in their Unbelief despite repeated pleas to reform. The Believers are soft, which in this context refers to them caring more for the orders of the ancestors than for their own temporal well-being, being willing to sacrifice what they have now in the hopes of a better future for all. This distinction, Peires suggests, might be useful in understanding why some of the Xhosa became Believers and why some became Unbelievers.

Mda also makes mention of this split within the text of his novel,

> The amaXhosa people called the Believers amaThamba - those whose hearts were soft and compassionate. The clever ones, whose heads caught fast. The generous ones. The Unbelievers were called amaGogotya - the hard ones. The unbending

[177] Peires, J. B. The Dead will Arise, 1989, pp313 - 315

> ones. The selfish and greedy ones who wanted to hoard their cattle and thereby rob the entire amaXhosa nation of the sweet fruits of the resurrection.[178]

But the development of his novel suggests that this understanding can be used to explain much more than just individual choice regarding the issue of cattle-killing. The split between the hard and the soft seems to be indicative of a split between those who demand progress for its own sake, and those who wish to remain in the state of redness which is so characteristic of Xhosa society. Mda's novel plays with this distinction between the hard and the soft during both the time periods which he discusses, and by so doing he anchors the cattle-killing to issues which are integral to Xhosa society. "Mda's outline of the epic tragedy of the Xhosa does not only allow him to outline two basic modes of thinking in the nation, it also gives him scope for a sardonic critique of British imperialism."[179]

I am not suggesting that Mda's text positions itself in opposition to the historical account of Peires, but rather that it chooses to interact with it at many different levels and in various ways, and in that way it allows the cattle-killing to be viewed from a different perspective. The cattle-killing period is not only one of a national tragedy caused by people who were fooled by prophecies which they wanted to be true, instead it is also a period marked by the need to choose between the soft and the hard, between embracing modernity and retaining respect for the old ways. This is not an easy choice, as the action of the novel bears out, and often what might have seemed to be the correct choice at first (Unbelief, as the ancestors do not appear) might turn out to not work out as well as planned. This is evidenced by the sad end of Twin-Twin's descendent Bhonco who has come to desire progress for its own sake. However, these issues concerning the characters in the novel will be discussed in more detail at a later stage.

The discussion of the relationship between Peires's text and that of Mda has served to emphasize that although the two are similar in many ways there are also significant differences in the way they interpret and understand events. These are differences which point to differing conceptions of history. It is this specific conceptualization of history in

[178] Mda. Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 98
[179] Lloyd, D "The modernization of redness" Scrutiny2 6(2), 2001, 34-39; p. 35

the text of The Heart of Redness which will guide our discussion of that novel for the remainder of this research report.

CHAPTER 3:
HISTORY IN THIS DAY AND AGE

The previous chapter has explored the relationship between This Day and Age and the "real" history of the Bulhoek massacre, as interpreted by Robert R. Edgar. In this chapter, the interrogation of the history portrayed in This Day and Age continues. In this chapter a very detailed examination of the novel itself, and the way in which it positions itself with regard to issues of accountability, causality and agency, will be offered.

When dealing with a great tragedy such as the Bulhoek massacre, it is usual to seek for answers and blame, to ask: What when wrong? How did this happen? Whose fault is it? This is neatly spelled out in the prologue entitled "Afterwards":

> … afterwards there were causes, effects, explanations and excuses, blame, relief, the truth according to one, the way it was according to another, rumours, gossip, stories about what happened or what might have happened or what people say happened.[180]

It is interesting that in this formulation every one of these forms of knowledge is given equal weight. There is no indication that any one of these forms of knowledge is necessarily right or true, instead they are all presented as ways of trying to understand, to make sense of that "brutal moment" that separates "the time that was before and the time that came afterwards"[181]

Of course, in a very real sense, this research is also being written in the time of afterwards - the novel is written, and I have read it - it cannot change, and it cannot be other, it is up to me to interpret it and to ascribe to it my own "causes, effects, explanations and excuses"[182]. In many senses that is a very difficult enterprise as it requires interpretation, it requires my own insertion into this research.

[180] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p.3
[181] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p 3
[182] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p.3

Ultimately, as any good researcher would, I wish to make meaningful comments about the novel's engagement with causality, accountability and agency; that is, with those things which are specifically the concerns of history. In order to do that I have decided to take a somewhat circular route, as befits a novel which is at times maddeningly obtuse as it switches between stories, refuses to offer solutions, and in other ways frustrates the reader who is in search of answers.

THE INNOCENT AND THE GUILTY

The obvious place to start would be by examining those who are guilty of the massacre; however, I have decided to start not with guilt but with innocence. I have done this because it seems to me that it would be too simplistic to view this novel as one of guilt for historical processes, the issues are far more complex than that.

We are offered three characters that are described to us as being innocent, and in each case the word is used in a very traditional sense. The three innocents are Tasmaine, Simple Martha and Bywooner Malan. Tasmaine is innocent in the sexual sense: she is an eternal virgin. Simple Martha is innocent in that she appears to be mentally handicapped. Bywooner Malan is innocent in a legal sense: he is accused of being a government agent, and he is not. However, the presence of innocence in each of these cases does not necessarily result in freedom from responsibility or guilt.

In Tasmine's case she is spurned by Enoch as a result of her innocence and is accused by him of being worthless. Her inability to have sex and bear children is felt (by him) to invalidate her as a human being. The action in the novel seems to indicate that she agrees with his evaluation, as she continues to serve him despite his harsh treatment of her. This is not the place to enter into a discussion of the portrayal of women within the novel; instead I have raised this point about Tasmine primarily to indicate that, in her case, the presence of innocence is related to lack and it is not rewarded but punished.

Simple Martha, who is described by her brother Enoch as "innocent … innocent in a way we can never be"[183] is the first child born to Fat Eddie and Ma Fatsoen, the result of Ma Fatsoen's wild ride on New Year's Eve. Unique about her is that from the moment of her birth, she appears to be possessed of agency; she chooses when she wants to be born[184], she makes herself deaf to stop hearing Fat Eddie's stories[185], and later she chooses to leave her mother and make her life with the sheep and goats[186]. In a novel fraught with issues of agency it is vital that the character that perhaps most of all epitomizes innocence is the character who also seems to have most control (and agency) regarding her destiny. I will return to the issue of agency later in this chapter, for now it is just important to note that this innocent is anything but helpless.

The third of our triad of innocents is Bywooner Malan. He is innocent not in the sense that he is a good man, indeed, it is indicated that he has done many bad things in his life-time, but in the sense that he is not what he is accused of being: a government agent. However, it seems that his innocence in this matter is irrelevant. Despite his proclamations of innocence, he is still tried as the government agent, his identity is related to general opinion about him, not to his own personal truths.

Bywooner Malan is also advised that he should simply stop protesting that he is not the agent, and accept that he is because, as Jabulani Mximba puts it: "you may as well die someone, someone who's got people worked up enough to judge him"[187] Thus, in this case it seems that innocence or guilt is irrelevant and that it is better to merely accept the hand you are dealt.

This discussion of innocence has furnished us with three examples of innocence, and three consequences and features of innocence. This is not to suggest that this is an exhaustive discussion, or that what I have said regarding these characters is a complete exploration of them. What I have tried to do is outline three ways in which innocence

[183] p.166
[184] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 61
[185] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 62
[186] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 85
[187] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 255

functions and exists within the novel in order to highlight that the concept is fractured and contradictory. Within the novel simply being innocent is not enough to guarantee any result or occurrence, instead, a complex interplay of forces is at work.

I have chosen to begin my discussion of history in This Day and Age by focusing on innocence because it is something which is not often discussed in relation to the novel. Instead, discussions and debates tend to focus on issues of responsibility and accountability: on guilt. It is possible to view the complex bands of causality and responsibility in the novel (see below) as removing guilt from individuals. My purpose in highlighting the various meanings of innocence at play within the novel is to introduce that idea that the novel explores various constructions of concepts, rather than just taking them at face value. This is true of the novel's involvement with innocence, as discussed above, and it is also true of the binary opposite: guilt.

On a very simplistic level there seem to be two leading contenders on which to heap blame for the massacre in This Day and Age. These are Enoch Mistas and the President. It would seem as if all we would have to do would be to look at the facts, and by so doing we could ascertain who the guilty party is.

However, the problem seems to be that when we look at the "facts" as presented by the novel, either one of the two could be wholly innocent of the massacre, or wholly guilty, or any shade in between. Thus, a more in-depth study of accountability and responsibility will have to be undertaken than a simple litany of events. Before I do this though, it would seem appropriate to examine the case for and against each of these characters in greater detail. It should be noted that within the novel neither of these characters is presented simplistically, instead "we are never given a coherent account of their various attributes, and are never quite certain how to conceive of them."[188]

[188] Lalor, M. F. Conditions of Possibility for Contemporary South African White Writing in English Pietermaritzburg: Unpublished Masters Dissertation, University of Natal, 1993; p. 51

It seems self-evident that the President must have played some role in the massacre; he was the one who ordered the air strike and had the prophet's group investigated. However, to simply leap from this to the conclusion that he is therefore guilty of the massacre would be premature. Instead, we have to take a look backwards and see what precipitates his actions. He is a sick man, suffering from painful boils; he epitomizes what seems to be a rotting state. The President is shown to be a man out of control, the rotting body is emblematic of the extreme disorder and dismay which the state is in under his rule. This does not necessarily mean that he is not responsible for the massacre but what it does point to are the complexities which exist within the issue of responsibility.

The President himself says to one of his aides that "small things make great presidents. We all know that is how history remembers"[189]. This seems to indicate that it would not be useful to tally up the actions of the President and thereby try to determine his guilt or innocence. In the end, it is possibly Maria's evaluation which is fairest:

> He was a man like other men, she began, neither good not bad, neither weak nor strong. He was often wise and often foolish. He could love and he could hate. He could be hated and he could be loved. He was healthy yet pus boiled in his veins, he was both handsome and uglier than the crows, he told lies when he told the truth and truth when he told lies. He was a man like other men living through it.[190]

This suggests that it is not the President's personality which should be interrogated in order to determine his guilt, but some other force. Something else which he is being forced to "live through".

The other possible guilty character in the novel is Enoch Mistas. From the moment that he is born, Enoch is heralded as a saviour by his village. He is special, he is different and he will save the village from disaster: the disaster that would have been sure to have destroyed them if a boy of the Hemelswerd line had not been born. In a later chapter I wish to focus exclusively on the issue of prophecy and prophets and how they influence

[189] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 8
[190] Nicol, M This Day and Age , 1992, p. 208

the course of history. However, that later focus means that in this chapter I am forced to do something rather artificial; to focus on Enoch, and to try to avoid speaking about the issues of prophecy which play a major part in his life.

Throughout the novel we are presented with various differing evaluations of Enoch Mistas. His conception, birth and childhood are marked by various wonderful occurrences. For example, his mother calls him "a miracle";[191] the band of children who follow him around are willing to be "his disciples"[192]; and they all witness the presence of a halo around his head; in addition, he displays Christian stigmata when his palms bleed "as if iron nails tore the skin"[193] As an adult he inspires unwavering faith and loyalty in his followers, who regard him as a saviour and a leader. In the end, he does not die but ascends through the roof of the tabernacle. These positive descriptions of Enoch Mistas contrast very strongly with other occasions within the novel where he is portrayed as wicked and evil. Near the end of the novel the field marshal says that he is not a prophet, but "[a] renegade, bandit, outlaw, anarchist, saboteur, blasphemer, homosexual, devil-worshipper, the scourge of the nation".[194] It is not only his enemies who have harsh words for Enoch. At one point his mother refers to him as "[y]ou devil's sperm, you vile fanatic"[195]; and Maria's dislike and distrust of him is pervasive throughout the entire novel. At times his own actions seem to speak out against his transcendental qualities. He is an extremist, and seems to have no problem killing those who he feels deserve it, as evidenced by his treatment of Bywooner Malan, and his childhood hatred of Maria. In addition, his treatment of Tasmaine, who adores him, is utterly contemptible.[196]

Thus, there are many aspects to the description of Enoch Mistas. What follows is an attempt to plot the intricacies of his involvement in the massacre which forms the centre point of the novel. Maria, the fortune teller, accuses him of being responsible for the

[191] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 71
[192] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 81
[193] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 88
[194] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 270
[195] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 86
[196] For many of the references and quotations within this paragraph I am indebted to Lalor, M. F. Conditions of Possibility, 1993.

blood of many, "I know what he's going to do, I know the deaths he'll be guilty of".[197] Yet at other points in the novel she claims that he can not change his future, and that as such he is not guilty of the deaths. She says: "Enoch can't help himself. He's just doing what he has to do."[198] In short, she says he "turns everything he touches red".[199] This seems to imply that although he is involved in so much bloodshed, it is outside of his control, it just happens.

Enoch makes very similar claims about himself, he says: "I have seen too much … I am not innocent … There was no alternative … I was chosen, my way is the way of the righteous, and I, too, am innocent. I have been exonerated"[200] Here, within the course of a few sentences Enoch both acknowledges and denies any role in the happenings which contribute to the massacre in the novel. There seems to be a sense in which personal agency is irrelevant, it does not matter what choices are made, because the outcome is inevitable. This seems generally true when referring to Enoch as he seems to be not acting as himself, but rather acting out some great historical pattern, which is predetermined (in part, the novel suggests, by prophecy) and which he is helpless to escape.

In this regard the colonial, P. T. George makes a very interesting observation regarding Enoch Mistas, he says that: "he is being propelled by history, and he is every bit able to withstand such taxing demands"[201]. Once again there is a duality here: an image of someone being propelled against their will, coupled with the idea that you will have to be strong in order to be propelled.

These are separate examples of two views of Enoch Mistas: as active agent, or as passive passenger. However, to state it like this is to narrow the issue down to simple binaries, a mistake that is often made when considering the novel, and which has resulted in much

[197] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 78
[198] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 89
[199] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 31
[200] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 166
[201] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 162

negative criticism. Instead, I have tried to outline many of the complexities involved in the representation of the character Enoch Mistas.

To summarize the discussion up to this point, we have looked at characters perceived as innocents, and at characters that could be perceived as guilty, and in each case we have seen how such simple unitary terms and binary oppositions collapse. It might seem odd that I have begun this chapter on the portrayal of history in the novel with a discussion of characters, and guilt and innocence. This has been a conscious choice; human agency, the ability of individuals to control and shape the future, is a vital component of any traditional historical leaning, the basic idea of cause and effect. It is with this central idea that This Day and Age plays, removing causes from effect and disallowing linear reasoning from one to the other. This is centrally located in its portrayal of characters as playing pieces in a game that seems to be beyond their control. Some commentators have objected to this: "the novel itself describes history as something which happens to helpless victims who have only an illusionary ability to act."[202] The description above has shown how characters are inscribed in history, what the discussion below will attempt to show is that the result of this inscription is not simply to turn characters into victims, but to question the entire notion of history itself.

LINEARITY, CAUSALITY, RESPONSIBILITY

Ostensibly , the novel follows a very linear thread, moving from the President's inauguration, to the birth and childhood of Enoch Mistas, his calling as a prophet and then the subsequent building of tensions which eventually result in the massacre. On closer inspection, however, we find that this time frame is not nearly as simple as it might appear to be. "While the basic plot is discernable, it[s] sequence is disrupted at various junctures by unpredictable shifts, both backwards and forwards, in time."[203] Near the end of the novel, the passage of time in the novel is described as being one "where the past

[202] Horn, P "Afterwords" Southern African Review of Books 6(3), Issue 31, 1994, 11-13; p. 11
[203] Lalor, M. F. Conditions of Possibility, 1993, p. 49

interfered with the future and the present was nowhere."[204] This disruption of time is explored in more detail in the following paragraphs.

In the early stages of the book we are told about the burning of Maria, and the first encounter between the prophet's people and the police, as they appear in visions to Maria and the President. This in and of itself is not remarkable, as they are offered in the context of prophesy which is a central idea in the novel. What is remarkable is that they are not told again; later in the novel, when the burning of Maria actually takes place it is not described, but we are made to remember it from the President's description. In this way an event which is to happen in the future is described in the past so that it is then not represented in the present. This is a definite disruption of linear time.

This is not the only event which is narrated out of sequence. Michael Lalor refers to several other places where this happens. Our knowledge of the President's death predates the actual event. In the vision of Maria and the President, near the beginning of the novel, we are told of the group of soldiers who flee from Enoch's followers, which actually only occurs much later. Before the birth of either Simple Martha or Enoch, we are given a glimpse of them as children. Chapter five, which occurs before the massacre is described, takes place after the massacre has already occurred.[205]

This type of foreshadowing appears throughout the novel, and is often closely related to the issue of prophecy, as mentioned above. Another fascinating example is the repeated images of dragonflies which are used throughout the novels. The dragonflies are first mentioned by the president in connection with his dreams[206], and he dismisses them as being of absolutely no importance. However, the dragonflies appear throughout the rest of the novel; first becoming explicitly linked to Simple Martha, and through her to Enoch and the prophet's people. Enoch finally informs us that: "Dragonflies … are the angels of the Lord made visible. They will be there on the morning of Judgment day."[207]

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[204] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 251
[205] Lalor, M. F. Conditions of Possibility, 1993, p. 49-50
[206] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p.20
[207] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 259

Finally, the airplanes that attack the people are mistaken by Simple Martha for dragonflies. In this way, the image of the dragonflies reappears throughout the novel, with differing levels of meaning attached to it at different times.

Foreshadowing, as mentioned above, is not the only example of the linearity of time being disrupted. Near the end of the novel, an episode occurs which seems to defy all concepts of time. When Jabulani encounters the government agent and the group he is with he walks with them and talks to them. Then, after numerous traumas, he gets the government agent to Enoch Mistas. Enoch and the government agent get along well and the government agent becomes Enoch's right hand man, down to being allowed to share Enoch's selection of the women. This is what Maria tells the President.[208] We are told that the "ghost" (for want of a better word) of the government agent speaks to the President and tells him "what he wanted to hear of life amongst the redeemer's people".[209]

Suddenly the scene changes and it seems as if none of this actually happened. The agent is killed before he reaches Enoch and Jabulani offers Bywooner Malan as an alternative, he makes him the government agent. The rest of the action of the novel then proceeds with this outcome. The story the government agent tells (through Maria) seems to have been completely disregarded. Yet, one is reluctant to dismiss it as a lie, in a novel in which prophecy is the force which drives events it seems foolhardy to ignore what is told by the prophet. In particular, a specific incident makes it impossible to just dismiss the first story as fantasy. The agent speaks of Enoch Mistas parading women like cattle, and in an entirely separate narrative, the dispatch from Captain Hedley Goodman,[210] a similar event is mentioned. Therefore, these two accounts lend credence to one another, although it seems impossible that both the version of the story of the government agent and that of Bywooner Malan can be valid. I am not saying that either one is necessarily true or false in the context of the novel, but that the novel allows both versions of events weight, and as such it is disruptive of linear time.

[208] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 218
[209] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p.218
[210] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p.122

A third way in which linearity is disrupted is through the insertion of various stories into the narrative. Although its intertexts with the Bulhoek massacre play a vital role in the novel, these are not the only stories in the novel. Just to list a few of the chapter headings, in the novel we have: His Story, This Story, Bedtime Stories, A Tall Story, Fairy Tales, The Tale of Woe and Another Story. Each of these carries equal weight within the text, it is a polyphony of voices and stories, not a single narrative; although the stories do interrupt each other, and ultimately meet around the massacre they are separate and distinct. "The novel moves circuitously along the highways and byways of a fascinating multitextuality … to a climax in a massacre."[211] In many of these stories, a time-frame seems to exist which is not the same frame as that in which the main activity of the novel occurs.

For example, the story of Tasmine (in the chapter entitled Fairy Tales) takes place in the unending sense of time which is common to such tales. It begins with the word "Once"[212], invoking the fairy tale "once upon a time". It continues in a similar vein, with time being measured in terms of "every night"'[213] … "and then one night"[214], rather than clearly defined weeks and months. The story therefore has a fairytale sense of inevitability. It has all the classic components of a fairy tale: the wicked stepmother, the patient and longsuffering heroine, and even (eventually) a prince (in the shape of Jabulani) who whisks her away on a white horse (in this case, an ostrich). I mention this because it seems to me that this part of Tasmine's story happens in the timeless world of fairytales; and this is reinforced by the many fairytale elements, and fairytale language which is used through the chapter, and is very different to the rest of the text. Thus, it is almost as if time here moves at a different pace and according to different rules then it does in the rest of the novel, thereby disrupting linearity.

[211] Roberts, S. "Mike Nicol. This Day and Age" Review World Literature Today 68(1), 1994, 199; p. 199
[212] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p.125
[213] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p.125
[214] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 125

Another instance where time is made to work in a specific way is during the description of the President's death. We are told the exact moment that his death occurs, it is marked out for us very specifically in terms of "the day after" and then "only hours after" and finally "mere minutes after"[215], so that it would seem as if it is clearly positioned in terms of time. However, the fact that it is presented in the very beginning of the novel although it is constantly referred to as happening "after" makes it seem as if it is something which was always inevitable. This inevitability makes the careful delineation of time irrelevant, as it was going to happen at that moment anyway, regardless of the other events which are mentioned.

I have outlined ways in which linearity in the novel is interrogated: through foreshadowing, through contradictory stories and through the insertion of side narratives into the main narrative. It should also be noted that the idea of linearity of narrative is threatened throughout the novel by the initial assertion that the story begins with afterwards. To say this is to place an ending at the beginning, which is to once again seriously disrupt any attempt at reading the novel as if it contained a linear series of events, or a linear view of history. The entire notion of cause and effect relies on linearity, and if linearity is so disrupted in the novel, what then becomes of causality?

When referring to the construction of causality within the novel we are speaking not only of the events which lead up to the massacre, but also about other events which are complexly caused. It has been mentioned before, but it is worth reiterating that when speaking of causality in this novel it is pointless to try to use categories of linear reasoning, of cause and effect. Rather, the novel's events are caused and set in motion by things which may seem unclear, unconnected or arbitrary. So while human agents may (and often do) play a role in events, they do not necessarily cause them.

Often in the novel we are offered no cause at all. A prime example of this seems to be Enoch's hatred of (and eventual assault on) Maria. From the moment he first sees her Enoch hates Maria, and the text never hints as to the reason. Maria accepts Enoch's

[215] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p.5

hatred as if it is reasonable, but there is no reason to it. It is almost as if Enoch is going to burn Maria and therefore he hates her, a sense in which effect precedes the cause. The effect of what he will do to her causes him to hate her.

Often events seem to be completely unconnected and arbitrary, yet they are causally related. The most obvious example of this is the motif of peacock feathers. Maria warns the President never to pick up a peacock feather,[216] but he disregards her advice and near the end of the novel we are told by his aide that he picked up a peacock feather. This seemingly unimportant event therefore is the cause of the massacre; not the President's financial policies, security policies or showdowns with the prophet's people.
None of that is important, it is his disregarding of the warning and seizing of the peacock feather which determines the future. Thus, the old superstition concerning the unluckiness of peacock feathers is shown to be more important in the development of events then any of the normally considered "causes" of events. The President himself remains completely unaware of this. In the exchange mentioned above, when Maria asks him what he dreams of he assures her that if he dreams of "dragonflies and peacocks, it means nothing, absolutely nothing."[217] As the course of the novel testifies, this is not true as both dragonflies and peacocks play an important role in the development of events in the novel. I have already mentioned the issue of the peacock feather, while the motif of dragonflies which runs throughout the novel and connects events has been discussed in connection with issues of linearity in the novel.

Another example of a similar event is when Ma-Fatsoen insists on getting married in a hot wind, and everything then goes wrong for the village from that point on. Therefore, the cause of the village's distress is Ma Fatsoen's decision to marry in a hot wind, two things that would seem to be entirely unconnected. The hot wind is mentioned as "shriveling the wings of dragonflies"[218], a comment that should alert us to danger, because as mentioned earlier dragonflies are closely connected with the development of the circumstances of the massacre. Thus, although Pastor Melksop wishes to dismiss the

[216] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 21
[217] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 20
[218] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 49

warnings as "old wives' tales, superstition"[219] we know that within the novel such things do have relevance, and should not be ignored. A further indictment on the marriage is that it is never consecrated with prayer, once the ceremony was finished "no man woman or child was in a mood for prayer."[220]

The question is, of course, what would have happened had these events not occurred? If the President had not picked up the feather would there not have been a massacre? If Ma-Fatsoen was married a day later would the future have been different? The questions are unanswerable, and yet I would hazard a guess that if they could be answered the answer would be that neither Ma-Fatsoen nor the President could make the choice, to say that would be to ascribe to a view of human agency as active and decisive, a view which is foreign to the novel.

Thirdly, causality can often be relatively fortuitous in the novel. A specific case is that the massacre is discovered by the editor (and therefore the public) only because a girl happens to find a paper disposed of by the President, and the editor happens to be interested and therefore looks into the matter. Events are as much (if not more) the result of luck, as they are of planning. Causality in This Day and Age is therefore arbitrary, unclear, dependent on luck and in general unstable and arational. Far from being a logical concept within the novel causality seems to revel in its own illogical construction, refusing to be tied down to any one specific cause.

The impossibility of causality leads to the question of responsibility. When you remove customary cause from an event, one necessarily also removes the normal assumption of responsibility. For example, if the massacre is caused by the President picking up a peacock feather, is he then responsible for it, even though he was completely unaware that his action would lead to the massacre?

[219] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p.49
[220] TDAA, p. 52

There are other things the President is guilty of, for which he is responsible, which on the surface seem to bear no relation to the incident of the peacock feather. For example, when he sends the government agent to investigate the prophet's people, he surely puts in place the chain of events which leads to that man's death. Is he therefore responsible for this one death because of his own conscious decision, but responsible for the deaths of hundreds at the massacre due to an unintentional action, the picking up of a peacock feather? Or are the two linked around the person of Enoch Mistas? Thus, within the novel the idea of responsibility is complex, as it would seem that, while conscious choices can have disastrous effects, so too can arbitrary actions. Of course, we need to take a step even further back when dealing with issues of responsibility, to speak to the issue of human agency within the novel which has haunted much of this chapter. In the novel, can characters make decisions? This brings us back full circle to the issues we were discussing at the beginning of the chapter regarding guilt and innocence.

As mentioned before, it is the prototypical innocent, Simple Martha, who seems most able to make decisions, to have agency and yet at the same time this agency is not necessarily coupled with knowledge. For example, at one point Martha decides that she is going to live with the sheep and no longer with her mother; she seems to takes this decision impulsively, without any knowledge of why she wants to do it or of what she hopes to gain by it. In many ways then this is a decision taken to which there is attached no responsibility. The old adage that we must suffer the consequences for our actions seems not to apply to Simple Martha, as her decisions are taken, and then things happen that are not necessarily caused by her.

Within the novel we do have several examples of people who seem completely devoid of agency: Fat Eddie cannot stop Ma Fatsoen's wild New Year's rides, Tasmine in the fairy tale cannot control her destiny, and P. T. George seems powerless to leave Enoch and his people before the massacre, even though he claims he wants to. I cannot think of any such clear-cut examples of characters always acting with agency in the novel. What this discussion leads me to conclude is that while there might be some form of accountability

and responsibility, it bears practically no relation to normal understandings of responsibility (and this is tied up with the complex notion of causality).

However, we are offered one possible explanation of how responsibility functions, in regard to a conversation between the colonial P. T. George and Enoch Mistas's sidekick, Jabulani Mximba. George wishes to leave the prophet's people before the massacre can take place:

> ...why do you desert him?..
> Because I am not responsible, I [P. T. George] shouted. I am not the government. I am not guilty of their ways. I have not caused misery and hardship. Nor did I tell these people to follow the redeemer. I am a traveler here. This is not even my country.
> We are all responsible, said Mximba. We are all responsible for everything.
> This was no logic I could argue against. I have John Stuart Mill behind my back: but what does Mximba know of him? I have Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*, I have the metaphysics of Aristotle, the learning of Aquinas, yet here, here under this violent sun, on this mountain, among these rocks, faced with these people and their history, such philosophy can be wiped out in an instant. And after that instant nothing is ever the same again.
> Mximba moved closer and leaned towards me. We are all responsible, he whispered. Even when it is not our fault … Even then, if one man says we are to blame, his word will have us numbered among the wrongdoers. And we will be guilty, but so will he.
>
> … I can see … why he insists on this tangle of responsibility. I am intrigued, though, that he feels this does not absolve him from guilt - as so many hard-done-bys believe - but rather implicates society in the sins he has perpetrated. As he would say: We are all responsible. We are all to blame.[221]

What is introduced in this rather long passage is a series of spectacular ideas about what it means to be responsible within the context of the novel. The first thing which is done is to advance the notion that Western ideas and explanations are simply not useful in

[221] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p 174-6

order to understand the course which events take in the novel. Something other is needed, something which is innate to the story being told, and not imported from elsewhere. Mximba seems to suggest that this new mode of explanation could revolve around an idea of collective responsibility. He relates this to a view of personality which is not solitary and independent but which is interdependent on others for its development. Thus, instead of blaming society for his ills, he sees himself as being part of society, and therefore lays blame on the entire entity, himself and society.

HISTORY, HIS STORY, THIS STORY

> … a much more powerful force had suddenly arisen which compelled men at will, and from which there was no release, neither rebellion nor escape, the force of history and historical necessity.[222]

In this chapter, I have interrogated the notion of history presented in This Day and Age. I have done this by looking at several issues or concepts in the novel: innocence, guilt, linearity, causality, responsibility. In each case, my discussion has led to ideas that revolve around complexities and numerous levels of explanation, rather than a single understanding.

It truly seems a good deal easier to say what This Day and Age does not subscribe to - simple binaries between guilt and innocence, linear narrative, notions of cause and effect and responsibility - than to propose what it inserts in their places. The novel does not offer the trade off of a single grand narrative for another, but rather allows such notions of grand narratives to collapse altogether. Inasmuch as a single explanation is advanced, this would concern the role of prophecy, an issue which is to be explained in much greater detail in chapter five.

What the interpretation of history in This Day and Age points to is the polyvocal nature of history, that things are never simple or logical, and that a vast array of seemingly

[222] Hannah Arendt, On Revolution cited at the beginning of Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992

unconnected thoughts, events and contingencies play into the construction of any period, of any pastness. To my mind, that is the point of the portrayal of history in This Day and Age: to mark it out as a construction, as an attempt to ascribe its own meaning and logic (or illogic) without attempting to tell "the truth" about an event, something that is in any case impossible.

Nicol ends the prologue with the following phrases: "My story. History. The struggle for truth continues ever afterwards… Afterwards is where stories begin,"[223] and that is exactly what this novel is, one of the stories of afterwards: positioned somewhere between history and my story.

That is where I wish to leave this chapter's discussion of history in This Day and Age, without any solutions, or any blanket statements. What the re-interpretation of history in This Day and Age seems to do is not so much construct an alternative discourse (except for the one around prophecy, see chapter five) but aim at collapsing the master discourse of history by attacking its cornerstones of linearity, causality and responsibility.

[223] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p.3

CHAPTER 4:
HISTORY IN THE HEART OF REDNESS

Splitting its narrative between two time periods, The Heart of Redness is a novel which is obviously concerned with the functioning of history in relation to the present. In the second chapter the ties between The Heart of Redness and historical accounts of the Xhosa cattle-killing were traced. Ultimately it was shown how, despite a very close correspondence with these texts, the novel also interrogates them in various ways. In this chapter, close attention will be paid to the various ways history is represented and interrogated in The Heart of Redness. Beginning with an examination of the split between the past and the present as a result of the Middle Generations, it then moves on to discuss the circular paths through which history moves in the novel.

THE MIDDLE GENERATIONS AND THE FEUD BETWEEN THE DESCENDENTS OF THE HEADLESS ANCESTOR

At the very beginning of the novel Mda offers us a family tree of the descendents of the headless ancestor, in order to explain the relationships between the main characters in the novel. There are two branches: the descendents of Twin and Qukezwa, the Believers; and of Twin-Twin and his many wives, the Unbelievers. Right across this diagram is drawn a line: the Middle Generations. Interrupting both sides of the tree, the Middle Generations seem to separate the past of the ancestors from the present of Zim and Bhonco. However, on closer reading it seems as if this split is not actually the important one and that it is instead the split between the Unbelievers and the Believers which determines the actions of the characters. We are told that "[everything came] back to the war between the Believers and the Unbelievers. They are in competition in everything."[224]

[224] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 2000; p. 3

The time of the middle generations seems almost to be a time outside of history, a time which plays no role in the central element of the lives of the people at Qolorha-on-Sea - the dispute between the Unbelievers and the Believers. Bhonco, the Unbeliever of today, gives the following description of the Middle Generations:

> Then came the Middle Generations. In between the forebears and this new world. The Middle Generations fleeted by like a dream. Often like a nightmare. But now even the sufferings of the Middle Generations have passed…It had to come back to the war between the Believer and the Unbeliever. They are in competition in everything … the cult died during the Middle Generations, for people then were more concerned with surviving and overcoming their oppression. They did not have the time to fight the perils of belief and unbelief.[225]

Bhonco emphasizes the unnatural nature of the Middle Generations, comparing them to a dream, a nightmare; he explains how the struggle to survive meant that the cult of the Unbelievers had to be pushed to the back for a time. Throughout his words runs the idea that these Middle Generations do not belong, they are a time outside of the logic of the events at Qolorha, they are foreign and alien.

The Middle Generations referred to by Bhonco are, in the Western linear conception of time, the periods of colonialism, and more particularly apartheid. Following the destruction of Xhosa sovereignty in the aftermath of the cattle-killing in the 1860's, until the 1990's the people of Qolorha were under the control of what Bhonco refers to as "[the people with the] white skins … who caused the sufferings of the Middle Generations."[226] This is a time outside the narrative of the novel, a time which is only "whispered".[227] This then, is the first point about the passage of time in the novel; that it seems to be split, or divided, by the Middle Generations. Instead, the time of the past and the time of the present appear to be linked, while the Middle Generations are excluded from this progression.

[225] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 1-4
[226] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 7
[227] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 1

It seems to me that the most obvious link between the past and the present, which is different to existence under the Middle Generations, is the ability of the Xhosa living at Qolorha-on-Sea to control their own destiny. In Nongqawuse's time this centres around the decision of whether or not to kill the cattle, while in the present day it seems to find its orientation around the bringing of developers into the village. In each case, the people in the novel have to make a decision which will shape their lives and those of their descendents. During the Middle Generations such choices could not be made, as the imperative was not about a decision but about attaining freedom from what was obviously an oppressive regime. Therefore, the Middle Generations are not real, they do not fall within the circle of history.

This reference to the circle of history brings me to my next point about the construction of history in the novel. Normally history is perceived as a very Western, linear entity running in a continuous "time-line" along which can be plotted significant events and dates, and the relationship between events and people can be explained by this linear construction. As the discussion of the relations of the Middle Generation to history should make clear, however, things are not that straightforward. Far from being a linear progression, the Middle Generations are shown by the text to be a moment apart. It is the split between the Unbelievers and the Believers which is felt to be the most important: "everyone is always at pains to stress that Twin's and Twin-Twin's lines are distinct, even though they are joined at the top by the headless ancestor."[228]

But it is not just this which makes a simplistic reading of the family tree impossible. Other elements are also missing, which give us hints as to the non-Western, non-linear nature of the history that is actually being represented. Single names are given and reported on the tree, differing from the Western convention of names and surnames necessarily denoting specific individuals. Perhaps even more importantly though, the family tree does not offer any dates. It lists names and indicates relationships, but does not give dates to mark the people as individuals; therefore there is nothing but their position on the chart to distinguish between the two Qukezwas, or the two Twins, or the

[228] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 69

two boys named Heitsi. This shows a degree of mirroring over the course of history which is not indicative of a linear progression. This idea of mirroring will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, many of the things which occur in the past continue to have an impact on the present. And, this refers not only to "social issues" such as poverty as a result of Nongqawuse's prophecies, but to issues that are more individualized and personal: Bhonco's scars, the inability of the headless ancestor to guide, the split-tone singing of the two Qukezwas. Allow me to focus in more detail on some of these points.

Bhonco's scars are given to his ancestor Twin-Twin by the supporters of Mlanjeni. As such, they are delivered for a specific purpose: because he is suspected of being a wizard. However, as time progresses the scars appear on the first male child in each subsequent generation, and they gradually gain meaning until they are referred to by Bhonco as "the scars of history".[229] They come to represent a heritage of Unbelief which binds the family together. They itch terribly whenever anything is wrong, thereby reminding Bhonco the Unbeliever of the way his life is linked to that of his forebears. He does not seem to need much reminding, as he is closely tied to his ancestors but it is significant that his scars pass to Xoliswa Ximiya, his daughter (as there are no male heirs to receive them) despite the fact that she refuses to acknowledge any relation to the ancestors. Thus, the scars bind the generations of Unbelievers together. Speaking of the Unbelievers like this, however, leads logically to what seems to be the key concern of history in the novel: the way in which the past and the present are linked by the feud of the Unbelievers and the Believers - or to state it another way, the hard and the soft.

They are separate from each other in a way that, in the novel, the past is never separated from the present. It is obvious that Bhonco feels closer to his ancestor Twin-Twin than he does to his contemporary Zim, and it is equally obvious that Zim feels the same way about him. Early in the novel we are told that the Bhonco and the rest of the Unbelievers spend a large amount of their time "moaning about past injustices and bleeding for the

[229] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 12

world that would have been had the folly of belief not seized the nation a century and a half ago and spun it around until it was in a woozy stupor that is felt to this day."[230] The past is therefore constantly with them, and they feel connected to it. In particular this is shown through the dance of the abaThwa, which the Unbelievers use to invoke pain and sorrow. When they use it:

> They are going into a trance that takes them back to the past. To the world of the ancestors. Not the Otherworld where the ancestors live today. Not the world that lives parallel to our world. But to this world when it belonged to them. When they were still people of flesh and blood like the people who walk the world today.[231]

This dance of the Unbelievers is very significant, as it shows the deep lines of connections between the past and the present, and the way in which events and emotions from either period can impact on the lives of people in the novel.

It seems almost as if the daughters of Zim and Bhonco are the extremes of Belief and Unbelief.[232] Xoliswa Ximiya, Bhonco's daughter, is the headmistress of the local secondary school. She is tall and thin and dresses in Western style suits and dresses, complete with high heeled shoes. We are told that she is beautiful, but that "[i]t is the kind of beauty which is cold and distant."[233] She has been to America and cannot stop talking about what a wonderfully advanced place it is and how much better things in South Africa would be if it were more like the "good old US of A". Her claims to great learning are however constantly undermined by the narrative voice. For example, when we are introduced to her we are told that: "People use her name and surname when they talk about her, because she is an important person in the community. A celebrity, so to speak. She is highly learned too, with a BA in education from the University of Fort Hare, and a certificate in teaching English as a second language from some college in

[230] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 1
[231] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p 81
[232] Lloyd, D "The modernization of redness" Scrutiny2 6(2), 2001, 34-39; p. 36
[233] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 71

America."[234] She despises her Xhosa heritage and background, considering the traditional dress to be a source of shame and embarrassment, instead she wears things such as "a navy-blue two piece costume with a white frilly blouse"[235], which seem completely out of place in the village.

Qukezwa, the daughter of the Unbeliever Zim, is named after the Khoikhoi wife of Twin, and is completely different to Xoliswa Ximiya. She is presented as round, soft and sensual: a living, breathing human being who is passionate and sensuous. It seems as if she has never left Qolorha, and she does not seem to want to. She loves the surroundings and seems to be deeply in touch with the natural environment. It is she who teaches Camagu to harvest shellfish from the sea, and who is aware of the danger of non-indigenous trees. She is playful, spontaneous and engaging, everything that the non-traditional Xoliswa Ximiya is not. She has a beautiful split-tone singing voice, which is a traditional singing style amongst the amaXhosa women. "Qukezwa was not burdened with beauty. She is therefore able to be free-spirited."[236]

The contrast between the two is highlighted in a section where Camagu goes from a meeting with Xoliswa Ximiya, and then encounters Qukezwa in the valley on his way home. While he is with Xoliswa Ximiya, the talk centres around jobs and her desire to escape from the village, Camagu dispassionately remarks that he finds her "quite attractive"[237] and they part with "a glass of orange squash, and a promise that he will see her tomorrow"[238]. As he walks home he encounters in Nongqawuse's Valley "a whirlwind [that] almost blows him off his feet. Then it turns back and stops right in front of him. It is Qukezwa riding bareback and reinless on Gxagxa. She giggles."[239] This second encounter is obviously very different from the dispassionate meeting over a glass

[234] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p.2-3
[235] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 10
[236] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 175
[237] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 100
[238] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 100
[239] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 100

of orange squash. It is this extreme difference which comes to prominence during the novel, as Camagu says: "Qukezwa is the best antidote to Xoliswa Ximiya."[240]

Camagu's journey to Qolorha and his courting of both Xoliswa Ximiya and Qukezwa at differing times, comes to form one of the central events of the novel. It is through Camagu, the interloper from Johannesburg, that we as readers are introduced to the debates and events at Qolorha. Camagu is an outsider, who does not belong at Qolorha. He himself comments at the beginning of the novel on the irony that he is "an exile in his own country"[241] because he is unwilling to conform to the new system of lobbying and networking, which is the only way of getting a job. He is about to leave the country for ever when a chance occurrence brings him to Qolorha. Once there, he gradually becomes part of the community, as he comes to grips both with the present life of Qolorha, and with the place's past. The early Camagu, disillusioned with life in Hillbrow is emotionally destitute: "Camagu used to see himself as a pedlar of dreams. That was when he could make things happen. Now he has lost his touch. He needs a pedlar of dreams himself, with a bagful of dreams waiting to be dreamt. A whole storage full of dreams."[242] It is dreams and more which he finds at Qolorha. His dreams start out highly erotic, tinged with NomaRussia, who he has followed, but they come to embrace Qukezwa, and a new way of life for him. "Disillusioned with the corruption and nepotism of the city, Camagu had come to Qolorha in search of a dream. And here people are now doing things for themselves, without any handouts from the government."[243]

HISTORY AND PROGRESS

It is through Camagu that we are introduced to the decision which needs to be taken by the village. They have to decide whether to support the building of a casino near their village. The Unbelievers seek progress for its own sake. They are so committed to

[240] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 195
[241] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p.28
[242] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 39
[243] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 198

progress and the perils of Belief that they refuse to believe in anything: grieving[244], happiness[245], or even progress (they do not believe in progress, rather Bhonco states that they "stand for progress"[246]). The Believers feel that one should fight to retain old ways and old values in the face of a changing world. Thus, our first glimpse of Zim is of him sitting under the trees, listening to the songs of the birds and thinking about his ancestors, and about "the joys of belief"[247] The decision is not an easy one, as each of the sides has some valid points to make.

Thus, history in the novel is not something which is confined to the past, rather it is something which is active and engaging, finding its expression in the way people live their lives and in the decisions they make. Throughout the novel, although change might take place at other levels, the positions of the two main modern upholders of the cult, Bhonco and Zim, harden. They are unable to find any middle ground (aside from one incident, a brief agreement over the fate of the headless ancestor). We are told that "things are getting out of hand … the war of the Believers and the Unbelievers has advanced beyond human prowess."[248]

Nowhere is this clearer then in the debate over whether or not to build a gambling city at Qolorha. The Unbelievers want the casino, they argue that: "You have seen how backward this place is. We cannot stop civilization just because some sentimental old fools want to preserve birds and trees and an outmoded way of life."[249] According to them it will bring jobs, money and, most importantly of all, progress to the village. The Believers seem to them bent on destroying this chance of happiness for the village.

The Unbelievers feel that the casino will destroy the village, and that it will not benefit the people at all, as the casino will bring in outsiders to do all the jobs. Qukezwa puts the argument forcefully: "This whole sea will belong to tourists and their boats and their

[244] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 104
[245] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 131
[246] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p.108
[247] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 41
[248] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 227
[249] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 75

water sports. Those women will no longer harvest the sea for their own food and to sell … Water sports will take over our sea! …What do the villagers know about working in casinos? … the owners of the gambling city will come with their own people who are experienced in that kind of work."[250]

Thus it is that the past comes to play a very prominent role in decisions that seem to only relate to the future and the present. To give just one more example: the way in which the chances of building the gambling city are finally thwarted is through getting the area declared a national heritage site, because it was the scene of the prophecies of Nongqawuse. In this way the prophetess "saves" the Xhosa people as her memory rescues their land from being appropriated by the "evil" forces of colonialism.[251] This is ironic because the Unbelievers view Nongqawuse and the other prophets as the destroyers of the Xhosa nation, not as saviours. There is a further irony in this episode in that it is John Dalton who manages to secure the granting of national heritage status to the area; John Dalton, whose forefather was responsible for cutting off Xikixa's head, thereby making him a powerless ancestor. John Dalton whose forefathers were on the side of the Unbelievers ends up helping the Believers in the present. He is the only character in the novel that seems to have no roots, no ties to his ancestors who lived during the time of the cattle-killing. Like the Middle Generations he seems to be outside of history.

What the discussion of the debate concerning the casino serves to emphasize is that throughout the novel the past feeds into the decisions made in the present, in a circular fashion. Many of the same disagreements about progress and about belief are echoed in both time periods. They are not necessarily distinct, but overlap. This is also shown in the way the novel is structured.

Throughout our entire discussion so far we have spoken of the narratives of the past and the present in The Heart of Redness as if they were two separate narratives that could be

[250] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 117-8
[251] Mda, Z. The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 233

read separately and then analyzed according to their similarities or differences. On rereading the novel myself, I tried to read the two narratives separately, by starting out with the "present" narrative and then just skipping over all the parts of the text which dealt with the past. I found that it was possible to read the novel like this, but that the narrative became flat and unemotional and that many of the episodes (such as references to Bhonco's scars) did not make sense when an attempt was made to read them as a stand alone narrative. The same was true of my attempt to read the narrative of the past without also reading the story of the present. The two are intricately linked and cannot really be divorced.

This is further illustrated in the novel in the way in which the transitions between the two narratives normally take place. There is an internal logic which always links the two sections - it could be a thought, an action, a location, a person, an idea - but something is common to each of the time periods when the transitions take place, and this allows for a smooth transition between them. To offer just one example, when the possessions of the Unbeliever Twin-Twin have been destroyed by his brother Twin, he is forced to flee to the mountains, and is reduced to a beggar. In his humiliation, his scars begin to itch: "The itching was so severe that he had to roll himself on the rough ground and scratch himself against a boulder."[252] The very next section opens with his descendent Bhonco: "Bhonco's scars are playing up again. Whenever he is upset by the Believers the scars itch."[253] Thus, over the transition between the two time periods is marked by the itching scars, which relate to being upset over the actions of the Believers.

A further way in which the history in the novel is given a circular form is through the processes of twinning and mirroring which occur throughout the narrative. I have already alluded to many of these: the opposites of Xoliswa Ximiya and Qukezwa, and their fathers Bhonco and Zim, the repetition of names in the family tree. In the next few paragraphs I wish to explore these processes in detail.

[252] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 130
[253] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 130

I use the term twinning to refer to the joining of characters, the echoing of traits and the conflation of identities at points. This type of twinness starts early in the novel, with the birth of the twins: Twin and Twin-Twin. At first, they are like one person, but they come to disagree and hate each other as a result of their differing reactions to prophecy (this will be explored more fully in the next chapter). By the end of their narrative they are complete opposites, mirror images in a sense, as in the mirror everything you see is reversed. This opposition between them is carried down to their descendents Zim and Bhonco and to their children, Xoliswa Ximiya and Qukezwa. Throughout the novel, these characters stand in opposition to each other and they are never reconciled.

Bhonco and Zim, however, are not simple clones of their ancestors. They are linked to their ancestors by their mutual hate, but in other ways they are very different. For example, Twin is described in the novel as a lover of women, and he has many wives; his descendent Bhonco has only one wife, NoPetticoat, and the two are very much in love with each other, to the disgust of their daughter. Twin-Twin is devoted to his wife Qukezwa, and does not want another wife; his descendent Zim is married to NoEngland but has an affair with NomaRussia. NoEngland resorts to witchcraft in order to get rid of the girl, in the previous time period it was the Unbeliever's wife who was accused of witchcraft. Thus, the descendents of Twin and Twin-Twin, although they echo their ancestor's hate of unbelief and belief respectively, are not mere carbon copies of them. In this way the novel suggests that although we are tied to the past, we are not bound by it, and one can be different from one's ancestors.

This is perhaps best illustrated in the complex processes of twinning which take place in the novel. Twinning occurs particularly along the line of Believers, where names are echoed across generations: Twin, Heitsi and Qukezwa. Twin the Believer tries to follow the prophecies of Nongqawuse, and his life ends in misfortune; his male descendent Twin also tries to follow a dream to Johannesburg and ends his days there. Therefore, if we were to only look at these two characters, we might conclude that the novel offers no hope for escape from the cycle of history. However, this view changes if we look in-depth at the final chapter of the novel, and the twinning of the two Qukezwas.

In this last chapter, amongst other things, we witness Qukezwa and her son Heitsi playing near the sea. However, the description seems to slip between the Qukezwa of Twin's day, and the present day Qukezwa; but each one is trying to find life for herself and her son. Each of the Qukezwas is trying to teach their sons to swim in the sea so that they can fend for themselves, they are trying to drive the nation forward, to learn new things. (Importantly, the boys are named Heitsi, the saviour of the nation.) Although the children resist one gets the feeling that the mothers will keep trying until they accomplish this. At the same time both women are singing in beautiful colours, in the split-tone singing of tradition, pushing forward while remaining rooted. The singing is described elsewhere in the novel: "Qukezwa sings in such beautiful colours. Soft colours like the ochre of yellow gullies. Reassuring colours of the earth. Red. Hot colours like blazing fire. Deep blue. Deep green. Colours of the valleys and the ocean. Cool colours like the rain of summer sliding down a pair of naked bodies … She sings in soft pastel colours…In crude and glaring colours. And in brightly glossy colours. In subdued colours of the newly turned fields. All at the same time."[254] It is this dualism, this circularity which seems to me to be at the heart of the portrayal of history in The Heart of Redness.

These processes of dualism and circularity provide the novel with a deep sense of connection between the past and the present, between then and now. Through connecting time in such a way, Mda offers a view of history in which the past is not dead, but alive. In Mda's novel, the past is not just a memory in the present, but an active participant in the decisions and activities of the present day characters. Mda therefore resurrects the past - he brings it to life again - just as Nongqawuse promised that the cattle would be resurrected. The resurrected past can therefore play a vital role in decisions about the present and the future.

It would worry many readers that, at the end of the novel, the Believers seem to be the eventual winners in the tussle between the Believers and the Unbelievers.[255] The

[254] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 223
[255] For a full discussion of these concerns, see Lloyd, D. The modernization of Redness, 2001

gambling city has been prevented, Camagu's co-op is functioning well, Camagu marries Qukezwa not Xoliswa Ximiya, Zim has happily gone on the ancestors whereas Bhonco has gone insane and has attacked Dalton and is now in prison. Bhonco blames Dalton for what has gone wrong in his life, as his blind adherence to belief and things from the West has not resulted in the happiness and fulfilment that he was expecting. Does this mean that what Mda is telling us about history is that the Unbelievers were wrong, and that all the Xhosa should have slaughtered their cattle in accordance with the prophecies, and then this sort of peace would have descended on the village long ago? Is the novel therefore simply backward-looking, elevating tradition and orthodoxy and a relation to history above modernization, progress and an attempt to build a future?

To narrow it down to such simple binaries is, however, to deny the power of the text and to fall once again into the trap of reasoning from the outside in a Western, rational manner. In the type of cyclic understanding of history given in the novel binaries are replaced by complex processes of mirroring and twinning, as described above. To suggest, however, that it is impossible to narrowly pin the novel down to support either of the binary options offered, is not to suggest that ultimately the novel is undecided about the direction which it perceives for the future. In the marriage of Qukezwa and Camagu and the final scene involving Qukezwa and Heitsi, it is very clear that what Mda is advocating for the future is a hybrid position. A position which will span the traditional and the modern; which will be forward looking while at the same time staying close to the past. In many senses, Mda is calling for something completely new: a type of neo-traditionalism, or a modern Africanism. However, care should be taken to avoid reading this conclusion of the novel as an indictment of the previous action of the novel.

As illustrated above, it is not always possible for the past and present of the novel to be separated. In the same manner, it is not always possible for the future to judge the past in a way that a Western rationalist would hold were true. Because the two are still linked it is impossible to objectively measure the past and state what was right and what was wrong. The text makes this clear by allowing the Believers and the Unbelievers to voice

absolute opinions, which disprove each other and which indicate that both arguments have validity.

Around the time of Nongqawuse many of the Unbelievers joined ranks with the colonials and began to adopt their ways and beliefs: the action of the novel goes on the show that ultimately this is as damaging to the Xhosa nation as the prophecies of Nongqawuse. Thus, both sides actually do harm to the nation, although they do not mean to. In a similar way the Believers are absolutely convinced by the prophecies, and the Unbelievers reject them utterly. At no point in the novel does the text indicate which of the points of view it feels to be true or right, in the specific context in which they found themselves.

There is no doubt that later, in the lives of the descendents of Twin and Twin-Twin, the perils of taking Unbelief to extremes is highlighted. Specifically, Mda is frequently very satirical about the character of Xoliswa Ximiya, who stands as the extreme manifestation of Unbelief. It is obvious that her ideas for solutions, for progress for the village, are so divorced from the traditions of the village themselves that they cannot be put into play; and ultimately she leaves the village as she has no place in it, and hence by implication in the new society which will be built there by Qukezwa and Camagu. What I wish to guard against, however, is the easy assumption that this victory of Qukezwa over Xoliswa Ximiya indicates an uncomplicated victory of Belief over Unbelief, at all points in the novel. Mda is careful not to judge the past, as illustrated above, and so to assume from the resolution of the novel, that the novel implies that Unbelief in the cattle-killing was in the first place flawed is to make an assumption which is not justified by the text. On the contrary, sympathy is expressed with both view points, without allegiance being given to either. Both Twin-Twin and Twin are treated in a sympathetic light. In this way the question of correctness is removed, and instead it becomes not about who was right and who was wrong, but about what people did and what people said; about individual choice, not about global responsibility.

However, this reluctance to judge and condemn the past does not mean that the novel offers no resolution to the problems articulated within its pages. The marriage of

Qukezwa (the Believer) and the modern Camagu and indeed Camagu's whole journey from the soulless city of Johannesburg into the traditional village of Qolorha and his eventual incorporation into that village through his co-op and marriage to Qukezwa, indicates clearly that the way forward in the novel involves the embracing of tradition. However, at the same time it does not involve the complete rejection of progress. Rather, it is advocating progress on its own terms, progress which is linked to tradition and not rejecting of it. It is NoPetticoat, the wife of Bhonco and a previous staunch Unbeliever who makes the following point: "maybe there are indeed many different paths to progress"[256]. This comment, uttered in acceptance of the point that cultural tourism could be an alternative to the casino, seems to me to be the point about history which is at the very heart of this novel, and which is clearly offered in the conclusion of the novel. The idea that, although one can embrace progress, it does not involve losing tradition and that what is needed is a development that transcends this binary division of progress and tradition, and which establishes a new way of relating with the world while remaining firmly rooted in the traditional Xhosa culture.

The idea is that there are more ways to do something than the simple binaries of right and wrong. While in the time of the cattle-killing things were reduced by the parties to these two binaries, and thus neither could win, there is no need to do that now. One can have progress and retain the old culture, one can wear the traditional costumes while being beautiful. One can remain living in the heart of redness without being sucked into the heart of darkness which Xolisa Ximiya seems to think it is.

REDNESS

This idea of dwelling in the heart of redness, which gives the novel its title, is vital to the thematic development of the novel. On a very literal level it refers to the red ochre used by the amaXhosa women to beautify themselves. On a more figurative level it refers to the desire to abandon the traditional in favour of Western progress, as the redness is tied to the identity of the amaXhosa people. Allow me to trace the imagery of redness

[256] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 261

throughout the novel. One of the first mentions of redness occurs when the dress of NoPetticoat is described:

> NoPetticoat is one of the amahomba - those who look beautiful and pride themselves in fashion. She is wearing her red-ochred isikhakha dress. Her neck is weighted with beadwork of many kinds. There are the square amatikiti beads and the multi-coloured uphalaza and icangci. Her face is white with calamine lotion, and on her head she wears a big iqhiya turban which is broader than her shoulders. It is decorated with beads which match her amacici beaded earrings…to the amahomba, clothes are an artform. They talk. They say something about the wearer.[257]

Thus, the clothes are described in detail and they are obviously very beautiful. However, the "highly civilized people"[258] like Xoliswa Ximiya consider them to be an embarrassment, as they not progressive enough. In this, she unknowingly echoes similar comments made by the "gospel man" Wilhelm Goliath: "Throw away your red ochre blankets! Wear trousers! Throw away your red isikhakha skirts! Wear dresses!"[259] who would later, in the guise of Mhlakaza, become one of the founders of the movement of the Believers. Thus, her dislike of redness is not as modern as she would like to believe, but instead forms part of an age-old conflict between the new and the old. This is further emphasized in the novel through the conflation of thought shown between ideals of development, and wanting to get rid of the red clothing. It is felt by the Unbelievers to be impossible to wear the red clothing, and have any relation to ideas of progress. One of the first things Camagu appreciates as he drives into Qolorha is that he sees people wearing traditional dress. This foreshadows his later allegiance to the side of the more traditional Believers, as opposed to the Unbelievers such as Xoliswa Ximiya, who despise all things traditional. However, one should be cautious of simply equating redness with a traditionalist viewpoint. For example, the prophet Nongqawuse who is beloved by the believers, does not wear ochre[260]; although some of the other prophetesses do. This is

[257] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 47
[258] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 47
[259] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 53
[260] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 90

despite the fact that the side of belief is referred to as "the side of redness"[261], maybe because of the fact that Nongqawuse urges the people to dress in their best clothes, although some of the other prophetesses do not, indicating that redness is not only about the colour itself, but about a way of seeing the world. As the novel develops, increasingly explicit comments are made about the beauty of redness, which seem to relate to the overall concerns, as discussed above, of embracing the heritage which one is given. "[I]n The Heart of Redness, certain traditional values and beliefs… help to ameliorate the present."[262]

A particularly worrying idea, connected to Xoliswa Ximiya's thoughts on modernization, needs to be explored. She thinks that "even a wrinkled suit is better than no suit at all. Far better than beads and traditional isiXhosa costume."[263] This unchecked reverence for all things Western echoes worrying colonial ideas about the importance of civilization: "his [Grey's] civilising mission did many wonderful things for the natives … [o]f course he had to take their land in return for their civilisation. Civilisation is not cheap"[264] In both these statements there is a willingness to devalue that which belongs to the amaXhosa nation in favour of something from the West. This is definitely not what the novel views as progress, as the following exchange between Camagu and Xoliswa Ximiya indicates:

> … Xoliswa Ximiya screeches. "My people are trying to move away from redness, but you are doing your damnedest to drag them back'.
> 'To you, Xoliswa, the isikhakha skirt represents backwardness,' says Camagu defensively. 'But to other people it represents a beautiful artistic cultural heritage.'
> 'It does not matter if the president's wife herself wore isikhakha,' says Xoliswa Ximiya dismissively. 'It is part of our history of redness. It is a backward movement. All this nonsense about bringing back African traditions! We are civilised people. We have no time for beads and long pipes.!'
> The curse of redness.[265]

[261] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 167
[262] Lloyd, D The Modernization of Redness , 2001, p. 34
[263] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 105
[264] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 95
[265] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 184

Xoliswa Ximiya can never be reconciled to the redness, and eventually she leaves the village in search of "civilization" in Johannesburg. She leaves angrily, saying Camagu and Qukezwa are welcome to "wallow in redness together"[266]; she means it as an insult, but in fact it is exactly what the two do, and what they want to do.

We have explored many ways in which history is presented in the novel History is shown to be something which is not nebulous, rational, linear and impersonal. Rather it is something which impacts on daily lived experience, something which needs to be constantly engaged with and communicated with, while at the same time progress is being made not against history but with it.

[266] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 301

CHAPTER 5:
THE ROLE OF PROPHECY IN HISTORY

Throughout the previous discussion of the reinterpretation of the discourse of history in the two novels, the focus has been on many different aspects of this reinterpretation. In particular, the way in which both novels question Western linear notions of history has been highlighted. Although the novels are very different, as will be obvious from the discussion in the previous chapters, they are united in this suggestion that it is possible to understand history as something which is non-linear and not necessarily subject to conventional notions of rationality. A complete summary of the various points made will have to wait for the next chapter, in which the argument of this entire research report will be drawn together. Before we proceed to that, however, there is one final aspect of the reinterpretation of history that does need to be discussed, and that is the role of prophecy.

Despite the vastly differing discourses presented in the two novels they share a feature which is vital to both the texts. In each, the role of prophets and prophecy is pivotal in the development of the narrative. Each of the texts advances prophecy as a possible way in which to understand the action of the novel, and by implication the historical time periods with which they interact. I would like to discuss each of the novels separately, before moving on to make some general comments about the role of prophecy in history, as conceptualized by these texts.

PROPHECY IN THIS DAY AND AGE

On the back cover of the Vintage international version of This Day and Age the publisher offers the following summary of the action of the novel:

> This Day and Age recounts the realization of a prophecy told to a newly elected president on the eve of his inauguration. After years of harmony and plenty will come a time of plague and famine, and a strange man-child with a Bible chained to his wrist and an army of the disenfranchised in his thrall will gather strength in

> the most remote reaches of the land.[267]

Thus, it is obvious that it is possible to read this novel as being about the fulfillment of prophecy.

> This Day and Age no longer contents itself with interrogating discourses of identity and representation, with asserting that history is a narrative construct and that fiction, in turn, is historically conditioned … the novel also manages to create a radical alternative to the physical world itself. The reader is thus continually socialized into a narrative situation that confronts the folklore and mythopoietic with the provisional perceptions of a limited narrative perspective.[268]

It has been discussed previously, as reiterated in the above quotation, that This Day and Age sets about interrogating the mainstream discourse of history. However, in this chapter I wish to look even more closely at the novel itself, and as is suggested by Pordzik above, begin to explore what lies beyond the interrogation which is so obviously a feature of the novel. There is a logic and linearity internal to the novel, as although it disregards Western notions of causality and linearity, it follows a certain structure. This structure, in Maria's own words, is as follows: "once it is spoken it cannot be untold".[269] There is a sense throughout the novel that once something has been predicted it cannot be otherwise, and that the power of people to determine their own choices within the action of the novel is therefore very limited. Instead, other things impact on the lives of people, things which are normally considered to be irrelevant. When the President first sees Maria he insists that he wants to "hear about matters of substance, not old wives' tales".[270] What the President does not seem to realise is that within the novel it is impossible to make the distinction between the two, as such things as old wives tales can have an enormous impact on the course of events. This issue of responsibility and accountability has been extensively discussed elsewhere, and therefore will not be

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[267] Nicol, M This Day and Age: A Novel New York: Vintage International , 1992; Back cover
[268] Pordzik, R "Nationalism, Cross-Culturalism, and Utopian Vision in South African Utopian and Dystopian Writing 1972-92" Research in African Literatures 32(3), 2001, 177-197; p. 190
[269] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p.21
[270] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p.21

discussed here. What concerns us here specifically is the role that prophecy plays in determining the course of events in the novel.

In order to do so effectively, it seems prudent to map out the various prophecies in the novel, and their relations to one another. The first hint of prophecy in the novel is not, as the blurb would have us believe, that uttered by Maria, but the prophecy of Enoch "the Ox" Hemelswerd that "there'd be great hardships unless a boy with Hemelswerd blood is born to save them".[271] Interestingly, this prophecy is almost lost, as only the children hear it and then the people take a while to believe them. It would be interesting to speculate on what would have happened had the prophecy been lost. Would that mean that it had not been spoken, and therefore was not destined to come true; or would it simply be fulfilled in any case, and people would just be unaware of it?

Maria's prophecy is presented next, but it contains many different things; aside from seeing the eventual rise of Enoch Mistas[272], and witnessing the initial defeat of the police at the hands of the prophet's people[273], Maria also foretells an event which will have great resonance later in the novel: that the president will pick up a peacock's feather in the afternoon.[274] However, this is not all that is offered during this exchange between Maria and the President and Maria goes on to offer comforting visions, visions of the President as a successful statesman, universally loved and respected.[275] These seem to have been the type of visions the President expected to hear, as he modestly expresses his certainty that they are true. However, before he has time to enjoy them fully he too sees a vision, a vision that contained "an event which was not an affair of state, which was not even an event because it existed only in his mind, was never reported, never for him turned real".[276] What he witnesses is the burning of Maria by Enoch and his followers, an event which will take place in the future.

[271] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 16
[272] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p.23
[273] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p.25-30
[274] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 21
[275] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 34
[276] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 34

Let us pause at this point in our descriptions of prophecy in the novel in order to make a few vital points about the prophecies which we have so far noted. Even within prophecy itself it seems that it remains difficult to distinguish the important information from that which is arbitrary. For example, in Maria's vision, as has been mentioned before in a different context, what is actually important is the warning to the President not to pick up the peacock's feather, as that is something which he could theoretically control. The rest of the vision concerns just things which cannot be changed, they are in the future and they have been spoken and therefore it is impossible to change them. This is made clear in an exchange between Maria and the President:

> Maria, he [the President] said, Maria, I need you help. Earlier you spoke of a prophet, a man they call the redeemer. You must tell me where he is.
> She broke into sobs.
> Come Maria, it's important. We must stop him. We cannot have this chaos, this anarchy, this disregard for human life. I'll have you protected, no one will know what you've told me. But I can't have him running at will. He's barbaric, savage, he's beyond reason…
> But Maria shook her head.
> Yes, he said. This is the way I want it.
> No, sobbed Maria, it will only be the way I've told sir, and the way sir has seen it.
> Never. I am warned. I know what's going to happen.
> But that's all … Now sir knows, but there is nothing sir can do. Nothing.
> And again she buried her head.
> There is, he said. There must be. Events aren't fixed. We have the power to choose, to change. You've told me that future that would have happened if I'd never known. But now the power has been transferred. Now I know the story I can change the ending. I can make it anything I like. So these things won't happen. None of them. It will all be very different. But you must tell me one thing. You must tell me where this man is, this Enoch Mistas.
> Maria dropped her arms, spoke as softly as she had done in the beginning. He Is nowhere, she said. He is not yet born.[277]

[277] Nicol, M <u>This Day and Age</u>, 1992, pp 37-8

In this exchange we have the classic standoff between two viewpoints: the ability to change the future, and the predetermined nature of events. As the novel begins with a description of the death of the President following the massacre of the prophet's people, we as readers know that he has been unable to change the events that were foreseen by Maria, and by himself. Therefore, right from the very beginning of the novel the idea exists that prophecy is a very powerful force, and one which is capable of describing a future which cannot be changed, no matter how much the individuals involved might want to bring about change.

There is another element of the prophecies mentioned above which I wish to explore and that is that two of them (Enoch Hemelwerd's and Maria's) foreshadow the birth of a boy, a child who will do great things, although this is differently defined by the two prophecies. In Enoch's prophecy the child is a saviour who will free his people, in Maria's he is a devil who will destroy innocent people. Therefore, even before he is born Enoch Mistas is subject to the dualism which will remain with him for the rest of his life, and which seems impervious to conscious choice on his part.

To continue then, with the series of prophecies in the text. The next series of prophecies, or prophetic events to be more precise, seems to concern the actual birth of Enoch Mistas himself. The term prophecy is used with reference to the curses of Ma Fatsoen at the birth of each of her female children: " those yearly curses …containing a hidden prophecy which Pastor Melksop sensed but could not understand"[278], the curses are also referred to as containing "a premonition of disaster".[279] Each of the times this happens, six in all, Ma Fatsoen gives birth to a girl; a child who will not be able to save the village, according to the prophecy of Enoch Hemelswerd. As each girl is born, the village becomes more desperate for the prophecy to be fulfilled: "As long as Ma- Fatsoen kept on producing children there was hope, of a sort. One day it had to be a boy. A boy would be their salvation."[280] When Ma-Fatsoen finally does fall pregnant by someone other then her husband, Maria (who has somehow appeared in the village, after her

[278] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 45
[279] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 45
[280] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 66

disappearance from the city) prophesies that this child will be a boy. She just knows it, and she is correct; the child is born: Enoch Mistas.

Several vital points should be made about the role of prophecy in these events. The first is the continuous role which prophecy plays in events. It seems as if every time Ma-Fatsoen curses during childbirth, she is prophesying another disappointment for the village, and in this way she is keeping the prophecy of Enoch Hemelswerd alive. Thus, prophecy is not something which is distant to lived experience, but instead it forms an integral part of it. A further point is that, while the rest of the village is clearly aware of the importance of the need for a male child of the Hemelswerd line, Pastor Melksop is obviously oblivious. He alone seems unaware of the importance of the event to the community, and he alone seems incapable of interpreting events correctly (such as Ma-Fatsoen's wild laughter on New Year's Eve).

This is interesting in that Melksop stands as the representative of organised religion in the novel. As such, one would expect him to be the one who would be in touch with things which are "spiritual" such as prophecy: however, this is not the case. Throughout the text organised religion, in the person of Melksop, is completely unable to understand, engage with or initiate any prophecies. This rejection of Western religion (specifically, in this case, what seems to be Christianity) seems indicative of a wider rejection of the ability of Western rationality to satisfactorily explain events, and a turning towards "a-rational" forms of explanation such as prophecy.

The prophecies around the life of Enoch Mistas continue as the novel progresses. As Mrs Naald says: "he's the only sign that the mission has a future."[281] As such it seems inevitable that many prophecies should find him as their centre point, in particular converging around the idea that: "Enoch Mistas's special, he's better than any of us. We're relying on him."[282] Maria alone seems to see him as something dangerous, she

[281] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 75
[282] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 76

says: "I know what he's going to do, I know the deaths he'll be guilty of."[283] As things get worse for the mission, people seem tempted to lose faith in Enoch, but Maria continues to uphold the prophecies:

> I thought the boy was going to be our saviour, muttered this one and that.
> Don't doubt it, he is.
> Well it's not showing yet, they grumbled.
> We need God's strength, said Pastor Melksop. He'll get us through.
> It's all very well for you, his flock responded. You've got the church to pay your pension. We've got nothing.
> You've got God, said Pastor Melksop.
> And the boy, reminded Maria, grimacing at the words, but compelled to utter them anyway. He'll deliver you. Give him time, he's just waiting for the word.
> But how long's that going to take?
> Another few inches. Keep measuring him. He's not yet tall enough for things to start changing…
> How tall, Maria? How tall? they all demanded, and where she pointed above the scowling boy's head they nicked another mark.[284]

In this passage, a number of very interesting points concerning the role of prophecy in the novel are made. Firstly, it appears that people do not have to believe in (in the case of some of the mission people) or even like (in Maria's case) the prophecies in order for them to come true. Maria tells us early in the novel that "I only speak what is given to me, they are not my words. I mean no wrong. I am not to blame."[285] We are never told why Enoch the Ox utters the prophecy about the boy child, or where he gets his information for it, but what is obvious from the development of the action of the novel is that once the prophecy is uttered it cannot be changed, and the mission needs the boy child, who now comes and is forced to perform his destiny. This seems to be epitomized by the comments around Enoch's height. Quite literally the child has to grow-up before the prophecies can be fulfilled, and this growing up has to do with the height he will attain. Enoch has absolutely no control over how fast he grows, or how tall he grows,

[283] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p.78
[284] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, pp. 80-1
[285] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 21

and in exactly the same way, the events in the novel seem to suggest, he has no control over the things he will do in the future; they are contained in the prophecies.

The next major prophecy in the novel is the one which is given to Enoch Mistas, and it is contained in the chapter headed: "What the voices said". There are several points worth noting about this prophecy. Firstly, the voices speak using Sissy's (Simple Martha's) tongue. This is important, as we outlined earlier that Simple Martha is one of the few characters in the novel who seems able to act with agency, and that this seems to be related to her innocence. By adopting the voice of innocence, the prophecies are able to come across as pure.

There is more than one voice which is speaking, there are three voices (which seems reminiscent of the trinity of Christianity). However, the three voices are not necessarily in harmony; an example is given in the first exchange where the third voice appears to interrupt the second voice, and the second voice reacts irritably.[286] The discord between the three voices seems to suggest that it is possible that the prophecy could have been spoken differently, that any one of the three would have said things differently, but that the form of the prophecy is determined by the co-existence of the three voices. What this points to, once again, is the issue raised earlier in my discussion: that prophecies, once they have been said are then fixed and cannot be changed. We do not know what prompts the telling of the prophecy, or why it takes the form it does, but the implication is clearly that that is irrelevant because it is the final form which the prophecy takes which matters, because it is that series of events which will happen.

What do the voices tell Enoch? Firstly they outline to him the pitiful state the county is in. They highlight injustice and exploitation, and the need for redistribution. In particular, what they seem to indicate is that there is a need for a leader, for someone to help the people to break free from this oppression. This leader is to be Enoch Mistas. They tell him that:

[286] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p.91

> You'll be reviled …
> … Cursed …
> … Hated, spat at …
> … Misunderstood, hounded …
> … Incarcerated …
> … Cast out as a subversive, as a traitor, even an imposter …
> All this you will have to bear, my son, but your cause is the righteous one, your liberation inspires us all, your struggle is our struggle …
> And fear not, you're on the side of the angels, you've got history, international opinion, bishops, prelates, the whole bag of tricks rooting for you. You've got a good cause. You're in a state of grace.
> To put it briefly, nothing can go wrong. [287]

This is what the voices promise Enoch. On the one hand what they say is played out in the action of the novel. Enoch is hated and despised by a large number of people - the President and his supporters in particular. On the other hand, the final promise that eventually Enoch will triumph seems to be untrue within the development of the novel. Far from being triumphant Enoch's small band of followers is decimated by the fire of the soldiers, the majority of them end in unmarked graves, and they are unable to change the status quo in the country.

However, to read the success or failure of the prophecy in this way would be to run counter to the understandings of causality and connectedness in the novel. It is true that Enoch's followers do not triumph over the soldiers, but it is also true that Enoch escapes. Early in the novel we are told of this, and are also offered the following insight by the President: "you have created a monster. Whether Mistas is dead or alive, you've let him escape. When you and I are gone and forgotten … he will always be somewhere waiting to stir up trouble. That is why I sent you to arrest him, and all you do is bring back tales of miracles and levitation … That's rubbish … that's the sort of rubbish people die for".[288] Throughout the novel it is emphasized that what is actually important is not what

[287] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 93. The passage also suggests elements of the anti-apartheid struggle, and as such is an example of the overlaying of various periods of history discussed in the second chapter of this research report.
[288] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 7

happens, but what stories are told about what has happened: the stories of afterwards. In this way this prophecy seems to transcend any sort of simplistic understanding of its fulfilment based on the fate of Mistas and his followers, but instead seems to relate to the stories which will be told afterwards, and which, it seems to imply, will find Mistas to be the hero of the piece. As much is hinted at in the early chapter when we learn of Enoch's disappearance, as the chapter ends with the finding of the President's notes by a maid, which implies that this story is going to be recorded.

This then, is the prophecy given by the voices to Enoch Mistas, through his sister Simple Martha. However, it is a while before Enoch reacts to the prophecy; he bides his time, waiting for a command. However, just because nothing happens at that moment does not mean that the prophecy has been disproved, and Maria makes that very clear in an exchange with the pastor:

> For you it's just doom, doom, doom, exclaimed the pastor, putting down his pencil, looking up from his next sermon. You expect the worst of everything.
> I expect what's going to happen and nothing more, replied Maria…[289]

This sense of inevitability, the sense that once something has been spoken it will happen, pervades the entire novel. Once again, the church man, Pastor Melksop, is shown as being incapable of reading the signs correctly; in fact he gives a sermon in which he claims that: "Because our faith was strong … we have been led like the chosen people through adversity into the divine light of the coming kingdom".[290] However, it is difficult for the people to accept his interpretation of events and they continue to wonder about the previous prophecies. One of the churchgoers makes an important point: "The signs are there for everybody. Make of them what you will."[291] Thus, the ability to interpret the prophecies is not limited to either Maria the prophet or to Melksop the priest, but each individual may interpret them; but note that this amounts to reading the future, not determining the future, the future has been determined from the moment the prophecy

[289] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 95
[290] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 95
[291] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 96

was first uttered, all that the people of the mission can do is read signs about it, not change it.

Following this a very interesting incident occurs, and that is the accusation that Maria is a witch. It has already been mentioned that this event was foreseen by the President, and as such it falls into the scheme of prophecy in the novel. However, what is fascinating is that Enoch undertakes this initial assault without the authorization of his unearthly guides, the voices. Instead, he becomes impatient and seems to act of his own accord, outside of his own understanding of prophecy. He is not aware of the prophecy concerning Maria, he was supposed to wait for the voices' commands before taking any further action, yet he does not and still he does not disrupt the thread of prophecy in the novel. This seems to emphasize that in the landscape of the novel it is impossible to act outside of the bounds that have been prophesied, and even when Enoch thinks he is doing something which is not in the prophecies, he is actually fulfiling an earlier prophecy. Thus, the cycle of prophecy remains unbroken. It is only after this initial assault on Maria that Enoch gets the word, via the mouth of Dead Das, that the time has come to begin to fulfill the prophecy of the voices.

We next hear of the fulfilment of the prophecies regarding the rise of Enoch and his followers from a very unlikely source: the dispatches of a government official. They tell how his following grows, and how he has begun to gather people to him in an area of land which is seen by the government as being illegal for him to occupy. We are told that he gives "prophecies of impending freedom from … the chains of the oppressor ... he claims, too, the imminent end of the world and the coming of the day of judgment when all unjust men will be called upon to atone for their sins."[292] Thus, Enoch's prophecies have cemented around the issues which he was told by the voices. In addition he has become a mythical figure who seems to have no origins.

Our next encounter with Enoch Mistas finds him in love with the innocent, Tasmine. Tasmine's story is discussed elsewhere, but here I wish to draw attention to the prophetic

[292] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 122

dimension of this relationship. From the moment he sees her Enoch appears to be in love (or in lust) with her, and he smoothly declares that this is because there is a prophecy that says he will know his bride at first sight. This prophecy is not mentioned anywhere else, and given the weight given to the delivery of prophecy elsewhere in the novel one cannot help but suspect that this prophecy does not actually exist, and that Enoch makes it up on the spot in order to get what he wants. But the important thing is that, whether it is a "true" prophecy or not, once it has been said it cannot be unsaid, and Tasmine does eventually become Enoch's bride, just as he utters in this glib statement. Jabulani Mximba sings the songs of love and "there was no helping it, nothing Tasmaine could do … The songs were sung."[293] As the relationship blossoms it becomes increasingly clear that Tasmaine has no ability to prevent it; the words are spoken, and once they are spoken they must come true. However, the wooing does not end in a fairytale romance, as Enoch discovers on their wedding night. The point is, however, that this episode once again reinforces the dominant strain in the novel, that once a statement has been uttered it becomes the pattern for the future, and cannot be changed.

As we have traced the thread of prophecy through the novel to this point several things have seemed to be repeated throughout the various discussions. In particular, the inevitable nature of prophecy, the idea that once something is said it cannot be unsaid, is explicitly attached to virtually every prophecy that has been discussed. The power of prophecy is immense within the action of the novel, as it determines the shape which future events will take. Importantly, as will be clear from the discussion of Maria's visions, not even the prophet is necessarily able to shape the course of the prophecy; it seems to be a force outside of human agency.

In the previous chapter on This Day and Age I focused on the way in which the novel discourages simplistic readings, and resists the urge to find a single overarching explanation for everything, and instead offers a multiplicity of readings. Yet, in this chapter I have been exploring a single explanation for the events in the novel: prophecy. What the discussion in this chapter should serve to emphasize is just how completely

[293] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 144

This Day and Age rejects linear, Western explanations. Instead, it embraces other explanations which are seen as alternative explanations - not necessarily superior, just different. These alternative explanations should not be read as absolute in themselves, but rather as options which are offered to the reader, which the reader is free to accept or reject. It is in this play with modes of explanation which many readers would reject, that This Day and Age further emphasizes the constructed nature of any understanding of history.

At a later point in the novel we are reintroduced to the colonial, P. T. George, and a large portion of the build-up to the massacre is contained in his diaries. P. T. George joins the prophet's people, seemingly without conscious violation on his part:

> Why on earth should I join you?
> You are one of us, he replied. We can tell.
> … I am a scientist. A man of Newton, A man of Darwin. Perhaps not an atheist but certainly an agnostic. If I cannot believe in God, how can I believe in your redeemer?
> You will, they said. Come with us.[294]

There is in this exchange the evidence of how a man becomes embroiled in this web of prophecy, and how Western notions of science and rationality (Darwin, Newton) are useless in response to the force and the pull of prophecy. P.T. George is gathered to Enoch through the force of the prophecies which surround him. It is important to note that once again these prophecies are divorced entirely from the concept of Western religion. P.T. George's inability to believe in God is not relevant, because the prophet Enoch seems to bear no relation to the Western God.

As mentioned before within the course of the novel Western religion, in particular what seems to be Christianity, is completely unable to compete with prophecy in the novel[295] as a legitimate master discourse. Iconic of this is the image of Enoch Mistas wearing a Bible chained to his wrist; he starts chaining it to his wrist after it is knocked out of his

[294] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, pp. 159-60
[295] This is not true of The Heart of Redness, which engages Christian thought, as will be illustrated later.

hand by Pastor Melksop, and in this way it seems as if Enoch is controlling the Bible, subsuming it so that it becomes not a force in itself but an element of his power and his personality.

At this point, if this were a normal linear narrative, ordered by cause and effect it would be possible to say that all the elements that were to lead to the eventual tragedy are now in play, and it remains now to see how the various characters interact in order to see how the outcome comes about. However, in a narrative dominated by prophecy, a slightly different feeling is given. We have known from the beginning what the end of the massacre will be: it has been prophesied. Many people will die but Enoch will (possibly) survive and pass into legend. There is a sense in which the novel forms a circle around this idea of prophecy, every event in the novel implicates another one, or foreshadows another one. It is prophecy, not human agency or any Western notion of cause and effect which binds them together. This becomes even clearer as the power of prophecy escalates as the novel reaches its conclusion. It is evidenced in the way the President's body is literally rotting away, as he faces the impossibility of defeating Enoch Mistas. This is epitomized by his inability to stop people from talking about him: the editor of the newspaper writes a piece about the prophet and his people, despite the presidential decree that: "he ordered that the man was not to be mentioned, he was banned, banished, he didn't exist…"[296]. The President is trying to remove Enoch from language, because if something is spoken in the novel, it happens, as has been made clear from the previous discussion around prophecies. What this points to is the inability of something to be unspoken, of a prophecy to be unmade, the President can neither destroy Enoch Mistas militarily (as evidenced from the failed first attack on the group) nor can he remove him from language. The President, despite the fact that he has all the normal power of the state at his disposal is powerless to stop the course of prophecy.

This is another point the novel makes about the course of prophecy, that it is unrelated to normal conceptions of power. Maria, as a person, has absolutely no power at all - she cannot even stop Enoch from attacking her - and yet she is the one who utters many of

[296] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 185

the prophecies in the book. The President, who is supposedly all powerful, an absolute dictator, cannot stop the course of the prophecy. Indeed, he cannot even keep himself out of the prophecy, as he once again sees the prophet and his people; he sees their preparations and is powerless to do anything about it, indeed the people will not even speak to him or acknowledge his presence. Another example is that Pastor Melksop, backed up as he is by a long tradition of Western religion, is unable to stop himself and the village from hearing the prophetic curses of Ma-Fatsoen.

I have spoken of the way in which the importance of prophecy in the novel leads to the feeling of the novel as being in some ways circular as events are predetermined, and often the description of an event precedes the actual occurrence. It seems appropriate therefore that near the end of the novel the same prophet who uttered some of the initial prophecies in the novel should reappear. Maria has been seriously hurt by Enoch's burning, and has been left her previous society and is now part of an agricultural show. Thus, the effects of the results of the fulfilment of prophecy are severe. Once again, we see her meeting with someone who wishes to gain information from her. In the first case it was the President, and now it is the editor of the newspaper. When Maria sees the editor she tells him that: "I shall tell you what you want to know"[297], and this phrase is ambiguous. Although it implies that she will tell him the truth that he seeks, it could also mean simply that she could tell him what he wants to hear: lies. However, the rest of their discussion seems to indicate that she will simply tell the truth to the editor:

> For what do these things matter now? They are history. For me it is all history. Even tomorrow is history. I can tell it and all that remains is for us to live out the telling …One thing I've never done, mister, is play with reality. You won't get pretty words from me, you'll get what happened, or what's going to happen.[298]

There is a conflation in Maria's words between the past and the present, both are already determined, and are therefore not worth lying about. One can change the future no more then one can change the past, as she says about the President: "Once, years ago, he though he could change the world. But he learnt otherwise. He learnt the best that can be

[297] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 207
[298] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 208

done is to be ready for the worst".[299] Thus, once again we are presented with the idea that through prophecy the future in the novel is determined, and that it is impossible to change. Prophecy is the single most important driving force in the novel, as the President recognises:

> Maria … you were right…I chose to put my trust in others. I used the logic of professors, advisors, generals and men of wit who all, without exception, lied or blundered, couldn't tell rumour from reality … I should have heeded your warning. I should have searched out this evil when it still suckled on a woman's breast. But I forgot. I thought there were more important affairs. I turned to good government, to law and order, to development, fiscal growth and the collection of taxes, when all along a demon fed off my flesh, sucked at the very life I created.[300]

What this statement by the President points to is the all pervading nature of prophecy. Whether we agree with his evaluation of Enoch Mistas or not, the fact remains that whatever the President attempted to do was all pointless, as it was not able to overcome the force of prophecy. Maria makes the point that, given the inevitability of the future, it would be just as well to not attempt to know it at all: "What good is it to know that what happens happens and can happen no other way."[301] However, in explanations such as this Maria often (see above) compares the inevitability of the future to the inevitability of the past, and this is something which does not resonate well with the rest of the novel.

From the prologue onwards we are constantly reminded that while events might have happened, they are not comprehensible until afterwards. The prologue is entitled "Afterwards" but this is just one letter away from being "after words"; that is, following the denunciation of prophecy. It is only afterwards that answers, causes, reasons exist. In this way, it is almost possible to change the meaning of an event by changing the way it is represented and spoken about after it has occurred. What is suggested therefore is that while the future is fixed, the past is changeable. It is in the past that we can discover

[299] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 208
[300] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 221
[301] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p.221

truth: "The struggle for truth continues ever afterwards.[302]" This idea is reiterated again and again throughout the novel: "Which in the end is what it's all about: who gets to be told, who gets to be in the story. Who is hero, who is villain. Who lives, who dies … Afterwards so much seemed possible."[303]

This is a direct reversal of normal logic, and seems to indicate that within the novel different forces have power, and while humans cannot change events they can interpret them. This has been criticized: Peter Horn writes scathingly that "The [P]resident says 'I want to know the future' (p.19). But this novel does not even tell us the past."[304] Highlighting this as a weakness of the novel fails to see the way in which the novel questions normal ideas about the ability to know the future and the past.

This is further borne out through the events following the massacre. Leading up to them there is this sense of inevitability, a sense of both Enoch and the President being trapped in a prophecy from which they are unable to escape. Once the massacre has occurred events seem to slow down, it is almost as if the prophecy that has been gathering momentum since the moment it was uttered by Maria has finally exhausted itself, in much the same way a hurricane would. It has now wreaked the havoc and disaster it foretold; and it is now possible, in the aftermath, to strive for understanding and knowledge. The power, it is suggested, is in the hands of people like the editor, who find themselves outside of the prophecy, not in the hands of people like Enoch and the President, who are trapped in it.

During the actual description of the massacre, this sense of entrapment and inevitability rises to fever pitch. Enoch Mistas, the prophet, is aware that his followers will die but he feels that he is powerless to prevent it. The following is an exchange with P. T. George:

> I [Enoch Mistas] have dreamt of all this and the end. I have dreamt there is to be bloodshed: horrible deaths and bad dying.

[302] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p.3
[303] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 8
[304] Horn, P "Afterwords" Southern African Review of Books 6(3), Issue 31, 1994, 11-13; p. 12

> So easily said. So quickly accepted, thinks P.T. George. And out loud, hoping against hope, suggests: There are ways to avoid it.
> No, sighs the prophet of the people. No. It is God's will.
> … this is not the end, the Lord will provide, thinks Enoch Mistas… Jehovah will not have us run …It will not be death… It will be a new life. This is not the end, this is the beginning.[305]

In this exchange Enoch seems to vacillate between resigned acceptance of death, and a belief in the ability of God to prevent that death. Though perhaps what he is speaking of is not so much that the massacre can be prevented - that is inscribed in prophecy, and he says is inevitable - but perhaps that it can be interpreted not as a tragedy but a triumph. Thus, Enoch is arguing for the power of afterwards, for the power to ascribe meaning to a circumstance and thereby control it through its meaning, rather than for the power to actually change a circumstance while it is ongoing.

This detailed tracking of the various threads of prophecy in the novel has been time-consuming, but necessary. Without such detail it would be impossible to accurately demonstrate how pervasive prophecy is in the novel, and the myriad forms it takes. The jacket of the book is only partly accurate: the entire novel is not just about Maria's prophecy, although that particular prophecy plays a large part. Instead, prophecy more generally as an ability to know the future is pervasive throughout all the action in the novel, and shows itself to be the determining force behind the action in the novel. Once something is said it cannot be unsaid, and in this way prophecy of the future becomes synonymous with the past in the novel. Except that the past can be interpreted and challenged, whereas the future is certain. This reversal of the normal understanding of our ability to shape events relates to the way in which the novel conceptualizes history in general. In particular, it points to the inevitability of events, and the ability of humans to control not the events themselves, but the constructions of those events. Meihuizen sums up this point wonderfully: "Although vision and prophecy are prominent in the book, they underline not an escape from history and its consequences, but rather the inevitability of history. In the end oppressors and oppressed are at the

[305] Nicol, M This Day and Age, 1992, p. 247

mercy of historical necessity. But history, as Nicol sees it, is in turn mutable; made up of differing versions of events"[306], and these differing versions of events can rise to prominence in the time of afterwards.

PROPHECY IN THE HEART OF REDNESS

Even the most superficial reading of this novel cannot but emphasize the extremely important role which is played by prophecy in the development of the novel. The story is based around the prophecies of the child Nongqawuse. These prophecies influenced the lives of the Xhosa people in the 1850's and by so doing had a significant impact on their future. To say this, however, is not to offer any particular insight into the novel, or into how the novel conceptualizes the role of prophecy in history. Jeff Peires's text also speaks of the prophecy of Nongqawuse, and yet no one would want to argue that simply by writing of them he automatically engages with an entirely new conceptualization of the role of prophecy in history. Instead, it is not so much the presence of the prophecies themselves, as the way the novel engages with them and presents them in relation to other events, which determines the relationship of prophecy to history, as understood by the novel. It is this relationship which will be examined in detail below.

It should be remembered, first and foremost that Nongqawuse's prophecies are not the only series of prophecies presented in the novel. Before Nongqawuse there are the prophecies of the river man, Mlanjeni. Mlanjeni was by no means the first prophet among the Xhosa people; there were many before him, in particular the text mentions Nxele. However, the prophecies of Mlanjeni, like those of Nongqawuse, have a far reaching impact on the actions of the novel. It is he who utters prophecies of the evil of witchcraft, who urges the people to take up arms against the British, assuring them that the bullets of the British will turn to water, and who first introduces the idea of cattle-killing.

[306] Meihuizen, N "Inside and Outside of History" Current Writing 4(1), 1992, 149-151; p. 151

These prophecies of Mlanjeni result in, amongst other things, the scars which the unbelievers will carry for future generations, the decapitation of Xikixa, and Twin's marriage to Qukezwa, the Khoi woman. Thus, the events which are sparked by Mlanjeni's prophecies continue to resonate throughout future generations. In addition, it is concerning the prophet Mlanjeni that Twin and Twin-Twin first disagree. Twin consider him to be a reincarnation of Nxele, the great prophet; while Twin-Twin thinks that he is a prophet in his own right.[307] Later, the two argue again regarding Twin-Twin's defence of his senior wife against allegations of witchcraft. In each case, however, the twins are able to patch up their arguments.

Therefore, from the discussion we can observe two things about the role of prophecy in the novel. In the first case, it is capable of uniting people in common causes, which leads to events occurring which can have severe resonances throughout future generations. It should be noted that this ability to unite seems to be independent of any external "truth" value being attached to the prophecies by the novel. The bullets do not turn to water, as Mlanjeni promised they would (the reason given by his supporters for this is that some of the soldiers have continued to practice witchcraft), and yet the amaXhosa people go on fighting. "People were disappointed with Mlanjeni's prophecies. None of them were coming true. The Imperial bullets did not turn into water. Instead amaXhosa men were being killed everyday. But when the amaXhosa were about to give up, the Khoikhoi kept them fighting."[308] Thus, the power of the prophecy lies not so much in its ability to predict the future, or to determine events; but in its ability to move people to action and to inspire people to unite behind a common cause. The Khoi people join the Xhosa in fighting their war, not necessarily because they believe the prophecies of Mlanjeni, but because those prophecies have set in motion an event which impacts on their lives. In the end, the amaXhosa lose the war and turn against Mlanjeni, but this should not detract from the ability that the prophecy did have to mobilize people, even if only for a short time. In addition, as mentioned several times already, the events of this war continue to have far-reaching effects:

[307] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 2000; p. 15
[308] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 22

"Mlanjeni's war … had given Twin a beautiful yellow-coloured wife, and Twin-Twin the scars of history."[309]

The second observation, which will become even more pertinent as we move on to discuss the prophecies of Nongqawuse, is that prophecy also has the ability to divide people, and to cause strife. In the beginning of the novel we are told how Twin-Twin and Twin never fight, and yet over the course of Mlanjeni's prophetic era, they have two arguments, both of which cause significant rifts and are only healed with much effort. At the beginning of the novel they are described as being "like one person"[310], and this seems indicative of the way in which at the beginning of the action the amaXhosa people could be described as being one nation, but that they split over the issue of prophecy. Importantly, these rifts are related to the prophecies in that they concern differing interpretations or understandings of events, and in this way they speak directly to the role which prophecy should be able to play in their lives.

While Mlanjeni's prophecies serve to unite the nation in a common cause: a war against the British, the prophecies of Nongqawuse have exactly the opposite effect. They split the nation down the middle:

> Believing brothers fought against unbelieving brothers. Unbelieving spouses turned against believing spouses. Unbelieving fathers kicked believing sons out of their homesteads. Unbelieving sons plotted the demise of believing fathers. Unbelieving fathers attempted to kill believing sons. Siblings stared at each other with eyes full of blood. Many amaXhosa killed their cattle in order to facilitate the resurrection. Many others killed them unwillingly under the threat of their believing relatives.[311]

The split between the Unbelievers and the Believers is dramatized for us through the estrangement of the brothers Twin and Twin-Twin. As they did during the time of

[309] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 26
[310] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 13
[311] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, pp. 97-98

Mlanjeni, the two brothers disagree. The difference is that during Mlanjeni's time they were arguing over the essence of the prophecies, while now they are arguing over the truth or falsity of the prophets themselves. Every further action on each of their parts seems to drive them further and further apart, until finally Twin-Twin is unwilling to offer aid of any sort to his brother (and even if he did, it is unlikely that Twin would accept it). "He did not give a hoot for the plight of the Believers. He felt no pity even when he heard stories that his twin brother, his brother's yellow-coloured wife and their yellow-coloured son were surviving on the bark of the mimosa tree."[312] Twin ends up dying of hunger in the Kaffir Relief House in King William's Town.

However, as this discussion suggests, it is not ultimately the Belief of Twin, and others such as he, which leads to the destruction of the nation. Neither is it the Unbelief of Twin-Twin and his followers. In both cases, the novel avoids ascribing correctness to the actions of either side. What seems to destroy the amaXhosa, therefore, is neither the Unbelievers nor the Believers alone, but the fact that they cannot agree and therefore remain divided. Once again, what seems to be suggested is that the force of prophecy lies not so much in its ability to foretell the future - whether Nongqawuse was correct or not is an issue carefully avoided by the novel - but in its ability to both unite and divide people. An example of an event which has the power of uniting people, regardless of its "truth" is the circumstances regarding the death of Sir George Cathcart, the much despised governor. He is killed in war by the Russians, with the result that the amaXhosa Believers are convinced that the Russians are the new people who will come to save them. "[T]he news of Cathcart's death had spread like wildfire, sparking jubilation and impromptu celebrations throughout kwaXhosa. People got to know of the Russians for the first time. Although the British insisted that they were white people like themselves, the amaXhosa knew that it was a lie. The Russians were a black nation."[313] An interesting aside to this is that during the time of the Middle Generations the Russians do act as comrades to the amaXhosa nation, through their willingness to help resistance movements. As such, what at first seems to be a false belief about the

[312] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 244
[313] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 93

Russians can also be read as being true. This is how Zim reasons as he waits for the Russians even though he knows they will not come: "[H]e waits for the Russians even though he knows they will not come. They have already come in a guise that no Believer expected. They came in the bodies of those who fought to free the Middle Generations."[314]

What harms the amaXhosa people is not the prophecies themselves, but the split between the Believers and the Unbelievers. This is a split which continues into the present day, and here too threatens to destroy the village, as their inability to agree to anything seems to demonstrate. It is in the marriage of Qukezwa and Camagu, as discussed in the previous chapter, that a way forward is found; a neo-traditionalism which honours the old while moving forward.

So far, our discussion of the role of prophecy in the novel has been related to the words uttered by individuals who are identified as "prophets" and how these impact on people and events in the novel. It has been suggested that it is not so much the contents of the prophecies themselves which are important within the novel, but the ability they have to unite and divide the people. When the people are divided, they are unable to work together and this results in hardship for the people. However, to view this form of prophecy as the only form of prophecy in the novel would be naïve, as within the novel prophecy takes many forms, and relates not only to revelations about the future, but to guidance in the present and insight into the past.

For example, it is Qukezwa, the wife of Twin, who introduces to her husband and to us the religious philosophy of the Khoikhoi people. As is obvious from her offerings at the piles of stones on the roadway, she is deeply committed to the Khoikhoi system of belief, and it is this which gives her strength to fight the war for the Xhosa people. Her belief in Heitsi Eibib, the man who "was a prophet and a saviour … the son of Tsiqwa … He lived and died for all the Khoikhoi irrespective of clan"[315] serves as a focal point

[314] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 204
[315] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 24

in her life. She names her son after him. It enables her to stay close to her beliefs despite adverse circumstances. So vital is this to her that at the end of the novel, after the Great Disappointment, she forsakes the prophecies of Nongqawuse and returns to the gods of her own people, and to her own prophets.

She also shares her beliefs with her husband Twin, who in turn takes them on board and incorporates them into his life. In this way, he sides with her against his brother Twin-Twin on several occasions, something which foreshadows the eventual split between the two over the issue of the cattle-killing and the prophecies of Nongqawuse. Indeed, it is partly as a result of these beliefs that he is willing to listen to the prophecies of Nongqawuse, as he feels that "[i]n the same way that Heitsi Ebib saved the Khoikhoi, we need a prophet who will save the amaXhosa … perhaps there is something in this Nongqawuse thing."[316] However, unlike his wife, he continues to believe in the prophecies of Nongqawuse even after the Great Disappointment.

Thus, the belief in a prophet who himself has no direct role in the novel is also something which impacts significantly on the course of events in the novel. Prophecy is shown to not be something which is isolated and restricted to the amaXhosa nation at certain times, but something which impacts on the lives of all peoples. Once again, the issue is not whether the prophecies are true or not - Qukezwa does not offer us a detailed description of who Heitsi Eibib is, or why she believes in him - what is important is the way people react to them, and through this the ability that prophecy has to shape people's lives.

The force of prophecy and prophets, and the power they have to direct life is something which seems to resonate deeply with the characters in the novel. Christianity itself, the religion of the British colonialists, is essentially a religion of prophecy, as the amaXhosa realise. They interpret the killing of Christ as a symbol of the extreme wickedness of the white people, and through it make sense of many of the events of the era. For example, Christianity explains the presence of white people in the land: "They

[316] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 85

were all white people who, according to the teachings of the great Prophet Nxele, had been cast into the sea for murdering Tayi, the son of Thixo. The waves spewed them out on the shores of kwaXhosa. And now they are giving their reluctant hosts sleepless nights."[317] It later also explains why the white people cannot accept the cattle-killing: "…the whites were beyond redemption … what else would one expect from people who were a product of a different creation from that of the amaXhosa, people who were so unscrupulous that they killed the son of their own god?"[318]

In this way the function of prophets and religion in a series of events is elevated in the novel, while ideas about modernization and social forces which are usually presented as explanations pushed into the background. The amaXhosa nation's resistance to Christianity can also be explained in terms of a rejection of foreign prophets in favour of local ones: "'We had our own prophets who are now with the ancestors,' cried Twin. 'We had Ntsikana who prophesied the coming of the white man. Then we had Nxele who told us about our own god, Mdalidephu, who was in opposition to Thixo, the god of the white man. Now we have Mlanjeni. We do not need these people with their false prophets and false gods.'"[319] This idea that the cattle-killing was an alternative religion, no more illogical than any other religious belief, is carried through into the present time: "If your Christ can walk on the sea and turn water into wine, so can Nongqawuse's cattle rise from the sea"[320]

In a way one could say that in The Heart of Redness what Mda is doing is reinstating the mythic and mythical element into history. He introduces people's beliefs in prophecies and prophets, in saviours and redeemers, as ways to understand what drives people and what contributes to decisions which people make. In this way prophecy is a powerful force in the novel, as it influences the choices which people make.

[317] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 53
[318] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 153
[319] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 54
[320] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 282

This is graphically illustrated by the extreme distress which Twin-Twin, the Unbeliever, suffers as a result of his rejection of the prophecies of Nongqawuse, which are felt by many to be the future of his nation. His Unbelief necessitates him siding with people who have entirely rejected the ways of the amaXhosa, something which he finds extremely distasteful. "His unbelief in the false prophets … had forced him to form a strange alliance with people who had deserted their own god for the god of the white man … his unbelief in Nongqawuse was not unbelief in the rites, rituals and customs of the amaXhosa, and in the god who had been revealed by the likes of Ntsikana and Nxele. Mdalidephu. Qamata. Mvelingqangi. The one who was worshipped by his forefathers from the beginning of time. The one whose messengers were the ancestors."[321] Thus, prophecy is most definitely not something which is limited to the debate around the truthfulness of Nongqawuse's words, but is something which each character in the novel, and each group of people, needs to grapple with and come to terms with, and inscribe with meaning for themselves.

The discussion so far should leave us with the conclusion that the novel undoubtedly points to an understanding of prophecy as something which is capable of shaping the course of events; something which is capable of inspiring people to do many different things; and something which has a significant role to play in the development of a society. However, up to this point we have only discussed action which has taken place in the "past" of the novel, the time of Twin and Twin-Twin. I wish to expand on the points made above by illustrating the continuing role which prophecy plays in the lives of the present day inhabitants of Qolorha-on-sea.

The most obvious example is the continuing feud between the Believers and the Unbelievers, a feud which originated around the prophecies of Nongqawuse, but continues to impact on the lives of the people of Qolorha in many significant ways. However, this relationship between the two time periods has been discussed at length elsewhere in this report, and it would be pointless to reiterate previous points and ideas. Instead, I wish to draw attention to other ways in which prophecy, and more broadly

[321] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 97

ideas about religion and the ability of the ancestors to influence everyday life, continue to function in the present day focus of the novel.

The present day action of the novel, which follows the experiences of Camagu, is in fact structured around an episode which concerns the ancestors and witchcraft. Camagu goes to Qolorha in search of a beautiful girl, NomaRussia. He cannot find her, but instead he finds Qukezwa, and he finds himself being drawn into the life of the village. It is only after his marriage to Qukezwa, and the birth of their son, that he discovers who NomaRussia is. She is a girl with whom Qukezwa's father Zim had an affair, which Zim's wife discovered when NomaRussia took one of her undergarments to a igqirha (a diviner), hoping that he would work some magic on it so that Zim would leave his wife and marry her. NoEngland, Zim's wife, retaliated by getting the igqirha to work magic on one of NomaRussia's undergarments, with the result that now NomaRussia is very sick: "whenever she tries to know a man - in the biblical sense, that is - she sees the moon. Things come in gushes, like water from a stream."[322] The only reason that NomaRussia was in Johannesburg, where Camagu encountered her and followed her back to the village, is because of this. NomaRussia was at the funeral of Qukezwa's brother Twin, because she hoped that Twin could take a message to the ancestors, especially to his mother NoEngland who had passed away since the episode of the undergarment, begging them to free her from this curse. Thus, it is this cycle of ancestors, witchcraft and magic which Camagu unwittingly stumbles into, and which therefore in some ways initiates what can be read as being the main thread of the narrative of the present day.

That NomaRussia's illness is indeed caused by the magic of the igqirha is made clear during the course of the novel. The following is an exchange between her and Camagu:

> '… Cervical cancer is a well-known disease even among laymen like me (Camagu said) - that is, people who are not medical doctors. This is not a curse. Please let me take you to hospital …'
> 'Do you think just because white doctors have a name for the sickness that

[322] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 44

it was not caused by NoEngland?'
'No one can cause someone else to have cancer.'
'Then how come your white doctors didn't understand how I got this terrible thing at such a young age? How come they said mine was such an unusual case?'
'I don't know.'
'You have a lot to learn..'[323]

Thus, while in Western medicine the illness afflicting NomaRussia might be known as cervical cancer, this ability to label it does not mean that it was not caused by the work of NoEngland, and it therefore also does not mean that the ancestors will be unable to heal it, or at least relieve her of her pain. It does indeed seem as if the ancestors do intervene, as NomaRussia dies at the same time as Zim, thus following him to the world of the ancestors, where she will be able to confront her old rival NoEngland.

This is not the only instance where the otherworldly is seen to impact on the action of this world. An example from early in the novel is the episode where Camagu sees the brown mole snake in his bed. Although other people wish to kill the snake, he stops them because he recognises it as Majola, the totem of his clan, the amaMpondomise. He is overjoyed by this visitation, as it is a message from the ancestors. Despite all his Western education he is still connected to his tribal roots and sees the snake as a sign which will give him guidance and direction in his life. "I am not from America. I am an African from the amaMpondomise clan. My totem is the brown mole snake, Majola. I believe in him, not for you, not for your fellow villagers, but for myself."[324] In this way the snake is for him a personal prophecy, a prophecy which concerns only him. Even though he does not know exactly what the prophecy means in any explicit way, it is enough that it has been given, as he draws strength and comfort from that.

Thus, throughout the action of the novel prophecy, and related ideas about the ancestors, spirituality and religion, are things which impact on people's everyday lived

[323] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 306
[324] Mda, Z The Heart of Redness, 2000, p. 173

experiences. It is not just about what is contained in the prophecies, the actual content, but also about the ability of prophecy to unite people around them, and to inspire people to do things which they otherwise would have been afraid to attempt. Prophecy can also be a divisive force, leading to deep rooted cleavages which are capable of directing the course of the nation long after the initial prophecies have been fulfilled or have failed, and long after the prophets themselves are dead.

PROPHECY

I have tried, in these two discussions around the role of prophecy in This Day and Age and The Heart of Redness, to highlight certain aspects of the portrayal of prophecy in each of these novels. In particular, I have shown how prophecy is presented in both novels as a shaping force in history. Prophecy plays a large role in determining the shape, course and outcome of events throughout both novels.

In This Day and Age prophecy is presented as a force of extreme power in and of itself, as something which is entirely divorced from human agency and is therefore predetermined and inevitable. The power of prophecy lies in its ability to determine the future, and by so doing to control it. In fact, the novel seems to suggest that the power of prophecy to determine the future is such that in fact it is easier to change the past than it is to change the future. The past has been released from the iron grip of prophecy, and can therefore be interpreted; while the future is gripped by prophecy and cannot be interpreted while it is ongoing, it can only be endured. Thus, within the novel prophecy and vision play an important role in the portrayal of history in This Day and Age. As Pordzik says, the novel "no longer thrives on a tactic of mechanically negating elements of the dominant discourse, but on establishing a new matrix … itself beyond fixed borders of representation. In this novel, characters slither provokingly between possible options, play with our rationalist tendencies to recuperate or co-opt the

marvelous and the impossible, and thus regain fictional space for a transformational understanding of futurity."[325]

In The Heart of Redness prophecy is also presented as a powerful force, but one which is nevertheless deeply connected to human agency and belief. In this novel, what is important is not so much the actual content of the prophecies themselves, but the ability that they have to divide and unite people, and through doing so to shape future events independent of the "truthfulness" of the prophecy itself. In addition, prophecy is portrayed not as something terrifying, as it often is in This Day and Age, but as something which is an integral part of normal lived experience, something which is both powerful and normal, a force which operates constantly, and impacts constantly on, everyday lived experience.

What both novels definitely do have in common is a willingness to ascribe to prophecy a power which normal Western rationality would not be willing to concede. In this way, both novels present their respective understandings of prophecies as alternative ways of understanding the course of history, as alternative ways of interpreting events.

[325] Pordzik, R "Nationalism, Cross-Culturalism, and Utopian Vision", 2001, p. 191

CHAPTER 6:
CONCLUSION

> History is not reality… history is a kind of discourse … the novel is a kind of discourse, too, but a different kind of discourse; inevitably, in our culture, history will, with varying degrees of forcefulness, try to claim primacy, claim to be a master-form of discourse, just as, inevitably, people like myself will defend themselves by saying that history is nothing but a certain kind of story that people agree to tell each other … the authority of history lies simply in the consensus it commands. The categories of history are not privileged … They do not reside in reality; they are a certain construction put upon reality.[326]

This quotation from the Nobel Prize winning South African author, J. M. Coetzee, predates the publication of either of the two novels which are discussed in this research report. What it highlights is the ability of fiction to question the authority of history. It refers to fiction as something which does not merely reflect historical events or interpretations, but challenges these through its own constructions. In this report, the way in which two specific novels challenge mainstream historical understandings has been explored in detail.

To begin with, the novels were read as being in conversation with mainstream historical accounts of the events described in the text, in the case of This Day and Age particularly Edgar's account of the Bulhoek massacre; and for The Heart of Redness Peires's detailed research on the cattle-killing of the 1850's. In both cases, it was highlighted that the historical accounts against which the fictions were being compared were themselves constructions, their interpretations of events was strongly influenced by the authors. The discussion showed how the two novels interacted with these texts in very different ways.

Instead of engaging explicitly with the text of the massacre This Day and Age was shown to flirt with the contents of Edgar's work. Instead of trying to offer the totality of

[326] Coetzee, J. M 1983 p.4 cited in M Green, Novel Histories, p.19

interpretation which is so obviously the aim of Edgar's work, Nicol's novel touches on ideas and images, without committing itself to a total representation. This very provisional anchoring in mainstream history leads to the novel being able to explore a wide variety of possible causes and effects of the massacre, which the historical text seems unable to do.

The Heart of Redness, on the contrary, ostensibly anchors itself very closely to the text of Jeff Peires's work The Dead Will Arise. Event follows event in the exact same sequence, and frequently Mda reproduces fragments of Peires's work. Therefore, a close reading is necessary to trace the faultlines between the two texts. What such a close reading reveals is that Mda's text is very questioning of the assumptions contained in Peires's work. In particular, he rejects Peires's evaluation of the cattle-killing as a tragic error, and instead considers it a legitimate way to have faced historical circumstance.

As both novels reject the mainstream historical accounts, they also reject many of the founding assumptions of such accounts. Nicol rejects the ideas of linearity, causality and responsibility, all of which are vital to normal understandings of history. Mda too rejects linearity in favour of a circular notion of history, in which events are complexly involved with each other. In particular, Mda's circular notion of history also seems to deny the ability of the present to judge the past, as both are intimately connected; although he definitely does have a vision for the future which encompasses both tradition and progress.

In the fifth chapter an aspect common to both these novel's was explored: prophecy. In particular, the way in which prophecy is used in This Day and Age as an alternative mode of historical explanation was discussed. This was shown to be related to the novel's preoccupation with multiplicity, as it offers the reader a way to read events which is radically different to any mainstream historical reading. At the same time, however, it keeps emphasizing that the explanation it is offering is just one possible story, and that readers are welcome to adhere to "this story" as they would to "his story" or any other story. In the novel, Nicol suggests that prophecy has the power to shape lives, and that

human agency has no power at all: everything is predetermined through prophecy, and it is only the interpretations that can alter. In this way, the reading of prophecy in the novel suggests that the past can be changed through interpretation; but the future cannot be changed as it is already prophesied.

In The Heart of Redness Mda traces the impact which prophecy has had on the lives of the various characters in the novel, and the development of events in the novel, both fictional and "historical". In particular, while prophecy is advanced as being an alternative mode of understanding this is not so much because of the ability of prophecy to actually determine the future (as in This Day and Age), but rather because of the ability of prophecy to give meaning to events and to bind people together.

This wide-ranging discussion of the portrayal of history in these two novels serves as a way in which to illustrate how it is possible to reinterpret historical events. The opening chapter of this report focused on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and on the way in which it raised problems around the ideas of truth, narrative and history. These are problems which are concerned with the way in which people conceive of the past, and interpret that past. What the remainder of the research report has looked at are two specific interpretations of the past, in two novels. It would seem appropriate, therefore, to return to the central questions surrounding history which were raised in the discussion of the TRC, and examine how the discussion in the rest of the chapters has engaged with these questions.

TRUTH, NARRATIVE, HISTORY

The truth proclaimed by the TRC was one which was shown to be multifaceted and open to interpretation. In particular, this was illustrated by the insistence in the report on the existence of four different types of truth. The discussion of the novels in this research report serves to elucidate some of the other types of truth which exist. The TRC, although remaining cognizant of various truths, focused its attention primarily on forensic truth: the normal, legal understanding of truth. Neither of the two novels is particularly

concerned with this type of truth, but the historical work of Peires and Edgar, discussed in Chapter One, is concerned with this type of truth. What the comparison between these works and the two novels under discussion illustrates is the numerous ways in which the novels frustrate this type of forensic truth, by elaborating on truths which are not necessarily quantifiable in the same way. To refer to just two examples which have been mentioned previously. The refusal of This Day and Age to maintain a linear time-line allows it to represent events, such as the massacre, as currently occurring and not confined to the past, thereby allowing the emotional truth of the violence and pain which accompanies such an event to come to the fore. In The Heart of Redness, Mda's sympathy towards the viewpoints of both the Believers and the Unbelievers allows the text to explore issues around progress and decision-making, and finding individual truth; rather than allowing the discussion to revolve around the correctness of the choice of either the Unbelievers or the Believers. In this way, the type of forensic truth treasured by mainstream historians is sidelined in favour of a truth which can work both for individual and community.

Following the discussion in relation to the TRC about the existence of multiple narratives about the past, the research report focuses attention on two of those narratives: those contained in This Day and Age, and in The Heart of Redness. History and fiction share as their basic feature the use of narrative as a form of transmitting their information. In this way, history and fiction are not polar opposites but related to each other. The narrative in both of the works of fiction under discussion has been examined in this report. In brief, what seems to be indicated in terms of the texts' relations to narrative is that through the telling of story they are able to explore ideas around causality and responsibility, amongst other things. In particular, the power of narrative is highlighted in both novels through the use of a non-linear presentation of the central story.

The central narrative of This Day and Age concerns the story of Enoch Mistas and his followers. However, this story is often interrupted, told out of sequence and otherwise unsettled, giving the novel its distinctive flavour as being a text on the edge of coherence; lending itself to many differing interpretations. It is through unsettling the narrative that

Nicol is able to launch many of his assaults on the commonsense notions of causality, linearity and responsibility which are central to the understandings of mainstream historical discourse.

Mda's novel is not nearly as radical in its disruption of narrative. There are two time periods, and the narrative switches between them in a logical manner, as events in one time period flow into similar events in the other period. What this linkage of past and present delivers in terms of understandings of narrative is a conception of the artificiality of the linear development of events. It points to the linkages, through narrative, of various eras and therefore of individuals from these eras.

In general, therefore, the two novels make use of narrative in various ways. Through so doing, they engage with ideas around the ability to simply tell a story, and tell it truthfully (as mentioned above when speaking of truth). It is in the narrative form that fiction and history have the most in common, and the disruption of this narrative in these works of fiction serves as a way to emphasize just how fragile a form that actually is.

In response to the break-up of narrative in the novels, it is necessary to ask how this influences the portrayal of history in the novels. What both novels do is advance alternative ways of understanding the past, and thereby challenge mainstream historical approaches. This Day and Age does this in two ways, firstly by directly challenging the central pillars of historical discourse - causality, linearity and responsibility - and by so doing evoking a sense of multiplicity within the novel; and secondly, by advancing a tentative alternative way of interpreting the past through its portrayal of prophecy. The Heart of Redness re-inscribes the past into the present as something which actively informs the functioning of the present day village, rather than something which is over and can therefore be objectively analysed.

Both novels highlight the ability to re-write and reinterpret historical events from many different perspectives. Through not just engaging with the idea of a generic pastness, but through specifically engaging with texts around specific historical incidents, the novels

are able to offer their explanations in contrast to what is generally accepted as "true" and archived as such. Thus, these novels have the ability to contest the primacy of certain interpretations, through highlighting their own alternatives to these interpretations.

In conclusion, both the novels discussed in this research report respond to many of the same issues as were raised during the earlier discussion of the TRC's interaction with problems surrounding truth, narrative and history. Although they are works of fiction, these novels are engaging with the same concerns that were faced around the interpretation of the work of the TRC, a body which was prominent in South African public life during the 1990's - the decade in which both these novels were written.[327]

However, a final word of caution is in order. Although these novels do offer alternatives, to elevate these alternatives to the level of master discourses in themselves would be to undermine the actual strength of the novel. For example, Nicol's challenge to secular understandings of history should not be read as a simple valorization of mythical interpretations of history; instead the engagement is more complex and multi-faceted than that, as has been explored at other points within this research report. Even Mda's much more close-ended novel (in the sense that it offers a solution to the impasse between the Believers and the Unbelievers, a neo-traditionalism epitomized by the marriage of Qukezwa and Camagu) should not be read simplistically as the ultimate interpretation of the events of the cattle-killing. The novels are fictions, provisional constructions which through their own provisionality are able to challenge established modes of thinking.

This research report has attempted to offer a broad and indepth study of the way in which two novels interact with the type of concerns around historiography, historical knowledge and history which were raised by the establishment of institutions such as the TRC. As such, it aims to foreground the contested nature of historical knowledge, and the endless possibilities which are open for reinterpretation, re-vision, and re-imagination.

[327] Published in 2000, it is logical to assume that at least some of the work on The Heart of Redness was carried out in the 1990's.

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