

**Representation of Human and
Animal Proximity in Zake Mda's
The Heart of Redness and
*The Whale Caller***

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Abstract

The paper examines human and animal proximity in the novels of Zake Mda namely *The Heart of Redness* and *The Whale Caller*. The study also examines the relationship between humans and animals in the aforementioned texts from an ecocritical perspective. Critical attention is paid to Cajetan Iheka's strand of ecocritical theory which is peculiar to Africa and Nigeria in particular. The study considers animals as an important part of the environment irrespective of human activities that are detrimental to the lives and living conditions of animals in our ecosystems. While animals are exploited in the novels, on the other hand, they are indispensable to man as they are fundamental to biodiversity and the ecosystems. Major ecological issues are illuminated in the study. In conclusion, humans and animals cannot be totally separated and the researchers recommend that further critical research should be conducted on ecocritical studies globally.

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Introduction

Contemporary African literature pays critical attention to events in our ecology; animals therefore are equally important part of our ecology which is why novelists across Africa make use of animals as significant characters in their novels. Cajetan Iheka opines that “aesthetics of proximity refers to the processes by which African literary artifacts depict the interconnectedness of human lives with Others in the environment” (23). Animals have been beneficial to man in several ways such as for food, transportation, sacrificial objects, pet and lots more. Their presence either as domestic or wild animals is crucial to our ecology.

According to Lawrence Buell ecocriticism is the “study of the relationship between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis” (430). Animal representation in African novels may depict animals as good, evil, symbols, gods, totemic, animistic, wild or domestic animals. While the representation of humans in the selected primary texts below demonstrates that they are kind, violent, good, bad, exploited, abused, killed etc. Our reading reinstates that nonhumans are equally integral component of Africa's ecology. Iheka posits that:

The point is not to undermine differences but to problematize the idea that humans are the locus of existence and should occupy the center of literary and cultural analysis. Straddling both notions of proximity is the strategy of interspecies interaction that on the one

hand It is also important to note the overlapping tendencies of the previously mentioned dimensions of proximity and therefore understand them as conceptual categories that allow for bringing together human and nonhuman worlds rather than treat them as discrete entities. (25)

The African novelist is charged with the responsibility of revealing events in his society, the society therefore becomes the bedrock through which events are revealed for the world to behold. Achebe's novels can be first identified as national or regional literature which is a product of the society. The literary works produce during pre-independence and post independence African nations from 1950's till early 2000's are literary works reflecting themes such as dehumanization, animal exploitation, poverty, violence, culture clash and the forced acquisition of land could categorize as protest literature. The literary works produced by contemporary African novelists could be said to be the representation of the way of life, experiences and the aspirations of that group of people. Their literature becomes largely shaped towards reflecting socio-cultural situations that are up till now inherent in the society any ways animals are affected. The study makes use of the ecoritical theory in order to expose issues in the various texts on ways animal characters are represented. Serpil Oppermann is of the view that “much work in this promising field of ecoliterary studies does not go beyond simplistic contextual analyses of both literary and environmental texts” (104). It is indeed pertinent to observe that some African writers have in their novels advocate for animal rights through ways animal characters are represented; African literature therefore considers nonhumans (animals) as essential part of the ecosystems.

Literature Review

Critical essays written by African scholars on *The Whale Caller* and *The Heart of Redness* by Mda suggest that there is evidence of scholarship on the novels of Mda. At the cores of Mda's ecocritical novels, scholars affirm the relevance of nonhuman (animal) in the ecosystems. Iheka affirms that “reading reinstates the nonhuman (animal) as an integral component of Africa's ecologies and as a key player in the narrative movement of the texts” (24). He maintains the representation of animals in Zakes Mda's novels connotes that animals are equally conscious beings and should be paid critical attention; they appear to be significant characters his novels. Francis B. Nyamnjoh posits that “Consciousness matters more than the containers that house it. Consciousness can inhabit any container – human and non-human, animate and inanimate, visible and invisible – regardless of the state of completeness or incompleteness of the container in question.” (2-3). Nyamnjoh establishes the representation of human and non-human characters in Mda's novels and that man share proximity with nonhuman characters. Astrid Feldrugge expands the frontiers of knowledge in relation to the study of Mda's novels, he avers that:

societies, and accordingly reflected in their literature. The indigenous people represented in Mda's novels are confronted with the dichotomy between nature and civilization. They have a magical relationship with the non-human world and thereby subvert any hierarchical structures that would see the human world as superior to the non-human. (151)

Feldrugge further informs us in Mda's two novels that human exploitation of animals has always been detrimental to the society and

ecology. Thus:

In *The Heart of Redness* and *The Whale Caller*, Zakes Mda depicts the impact of global capitalism and Western development on rural and marginalized people. His focus thereby is on the tourist industry, its appropriation of rural landscapes and the animal world, and the desire to conserve a premodern indigenous culture. (152)

Feldrugge focuses on the negative multiplying effects of capitalism on the aquatic life in Mda's novel which is very instrumental the devastation of the aquatic life through whaling. Iheka writes about the importance of the whale to the Whale Caller and tourist alike. He asserts that “the beach functions as a space for showcasing the closeness of human and aquatic creatures, and for exploring the human-dolphin interrelationship (Iheka 34). Iheka enlightens us about cordial relationship between the whale and the Whale Caller, and Caller's circuitous association with humans in the novel. He stresses that some animals have always acted as companions to humans for decades, although it is usually for whales to display strong bond for humans like we find in the novel.

Feldrugge tells us how Nongquwuse prophecy contributed to the destruction of animals and that “the spirits of the ancestors will come to their aid if they kill all their cattle and destroy their crops – splits the Xhosa people into the opposing fractions of Believers and Unbelievers (154). Through Feldrugge's explanation above, we come to the realization that animals (cattle) are equally victims of war. They equally share the same fate as humans who are casualties of war; and that Xhosa cattle are also sacrificial animals slaughtered indiscriminately for

sacrificial purposes. From the excerpt above, animals are not respected and are often exploited, killed and sometimes sexually abused by humans. Jason D. Price wrote in an earlier study that the:

news of the rising popularity of canned lion hunting for tourists (from the US and elsewhere) in South Africa and of the country's role as a major supplier of animal bodies in the international illegal wildlife trade demonstrate a continuation of colonial ways of relating to animals, like patriarchal colonial trophy hunting. (2)

From the statement by Price, It is dishearten to know that Africa's wildlife are killed by American and European hunters who trade elephant tusks, rhinoceros horns and various other things they collect for sale from dead animals. These ugly activities have been going on for ages despite various organizations cry for the end of animal brutality and killings. He further enlightens us about the objectification of animals for the economic exploitation by the western world. It is indeed regrettable that poor African countries may continue to expose her wildlife for developed countries of the world to exploit. Price explains that:

The Whale Caller portrays a different mode of relating to animals through the auditory exchanges between the protagonist and Sharisha, in which they call and respond to one another with the aid of the protagonist's kelp horn. In these interactions between man and whale, the characters at times enact a sexual release through their working up intensities in each other. (68)

Price indirectly makes references to bestiality through the “sexual

release” between the whale caller and the whale in the novel. This shows that human and animal can actually communicate and develop a strong bond as indicated by Price from the above passage. Price further enlightens us about the carnage done to animals, thus:

The focus on the violent organization of society, instead, is to contribute to the thought about resisting the predominant violent modes of extraction, and to consider the promise that South African literature offers toward thinking about more positive ways of living. As the violent instrumentalization of humans and animals continues, more work toward thinking about transforming these relations is needed, and the literature studied in this book affords ways of thinking differently about the current state of affairs. (3)

Roman Bartoash avers that “As a result of the Whale Caller forcing his ideas of love and attachment onto the animal, Sharisha loses her life, Saluni her sight, and the Whale Caller his dwelling place” (182). This explains why humans' banished sexual desires are sometimes materialized through fantasy and sexual desires with animals. Bartoash's depiction of the character of the Whale Caller portrays him as an archetype of a man with lustful sexual desire with a whale. Some animals and humans share intimate bond since man share a lot of similarities with nonhumans (animals). In line with Bartoash's view, Iheka opines that:

Both beings are so in sync that the Whale Caller hears Sharisha announce her departure in a nightmare. Their love is so strong that it interferes with the Whale Caller's

relationship with his girlfriend, Saluni. Readers of the novel will recall how what would have been his first sexual encounter with Saluni is truncated when images of Sharisha creep into the Whale Caller's thoughts. (35)

Iheka depicts that man and animal have the ability to lust after one another. Mwangi reiterates the proximity between humans and animals (whales) when he states that:

The Whale Caller has realized that the whale has characteristics similar to those of human beings, but most people would not experience the intense love that the man lavishes on Sharisha because the whale is far different from other nonhuman animals that share characteristics with humans. (156-157)

Ralph Goodman also tells us about the consequences of the Whale Callers love affair with Sharisha. Mda's depiction of events in *The Whale Caller* may have been influenced by his vegan lifestyle. He asserts that:

Mda depicts in microcosmic form, through two human lovers, Saluni and the Whale Caller, the precarious position of the mass of ordinary South Africans, but then uses irony, satire and myth, as well as magic realism in the form of a whale, to reflect the vulnerability of those lovers in complex ways. His imaginative recontextualisation of the apparently hopeless plight of Saluni and the Whale Caller is at the same time a recontextualisation of the problems of contemporary South African society. (105)

Goodman points further that the whale caller is in love with the whale in Mda's *The Whale Caller* and that this kind of love affair is not common, he also talks about the complex nature of the love affair between the animal and the whale. In addition, Goodman states that “The mythical element in Mda's representing a person and a whale falling in love with each other dramatises the extremes of unfounded hope for unproblematic union on the one hand and its rational impossibility on the other, serving to focus us on the rifts within our society which are so difficult to suture without the tell-tale presence of a seam” (108). Goodman unravels the concept of myth illuminated through the whale in the novel of Mda, he stresses that the representation of the whale caller and the whale as lovers is realized through the mythical element in the novel. Animal population was reduced drastically as a result of the onslaught on animals in colonial South Africa in the 1850's and that the culture contact between the Dutch and British colonizers led to conflict that ended in death of humans and animals. Animals therefore become victims and casualties of war or conflict. He further indicates that the invasion of the Europeans in South African contributed to the destabilization of the Xhosa people and their livestock. The British contributed to the senseless killing of the cattle of Xhosa people while on the other hand the Xhosa people also killed their cattle in the hope that it will bring about the desired redemption for growth and stability. **Maria Renata Dolce avers that** “During colonial times, when the Xhosa people were being increasingly subjugated by the white settlers and their cattle were dying from a lung disease imported by foreign herds, the Believers trusted in the prophesy of the young girl Nonqkawuse who announced that an act of mass sacrifice (of cattle)

would save them from the British invasion and oppression” (64). Since humans and animals feel pain and are mortal, both are victims of colonial suppression and subjugation in Mda's *The Heart of Redness*.. Furthermore, that is why **Dolce asserts that:**

Camagu's grateful and respectful response to the appearance of a snake in his hotel room – an animal in which he recognizes Majola, the totem of his clan, so that he does not allow the staff to kill it – gains him the esteem of the local community, but at the same time arouses Xoliswa's contempt for a gesture she thinks reinforces and keeps alive all that she considers as barbarism and heathenism. (67-68)

Dolce shows that traditional African religions pay critical attention to totemic belief which is usually revolved around the cosmologies of various people. Dolce points out that in Southern African, totemic ideology is common especially by the Xhosa people illuminated in Mda's *The Heart of Redness* show that snakes are viewed or represented as totemic animals In addition, totem is an object that usually represents a tribe, it is common in parts of Africa. Price opines that “the recognition of subjectivity for animals in a legal sense does not necessarily protect them from the violence of capitalist instrumentalization” (60). Humans communicate with animals through various mediums, their communication are usually through a nonverbal form of communication. The Whale Caller is able to master how to communicate with the whale through his blowing of a horn. However, Saluni is unable to bridge the communication gap between herself and Sharisha in the novel.

Humans and Animals as Casualties of War in Mda's *The Heart of Redness*

Animals are represented in various ways in the novel and critical attention is paid to the cattle, especially the killing of cattle for religious purposes. Although events in the novel are partly historical as it reflects on events that led to the indiscriminate killing of cattle in order to clean the various communities and exterminate colonial oppressors in parts of South Africa. Human factors contributed to the killing of hundreds of cattle which eventually led to the death of many people who died as a result of starvation. One of the major proximal relationship human and animal share in the novel is the inevitability of death through the unnecessary destruction of human lives and animals. Special attention is drawn in the rivers in Mda's *The Heart of Redness*, they provide man and animal water which is essential for human and animal to stay alive. The narrator informs us that “The rivers do not cease flowing, even when the rest of the country knells a drought. The cattle are around and fat” (6). Humans take care of their cattle and their cattle in return provides quality milk that sustains them and their families. The herdboys are preoccupied with the responsibility of taken good care of their cattle, led them to grazing fields and protect them from wild animals. Cattle are associated with wealth and status which is the reason why the father of Twin and Twin-Twin “did not want them to wait for his death before they could inherit his fields, cattle and overflowing silos. He divided the bulk of his wealth between them” (13). Through the reading of the novel, Mda stressed that human and animal lives were destroyed and one of the proximal relationships they share is death. Nxele, cattle and the lives of so many people were lost in the novel.

Thus:

Before he (Nxele) surrendered he promised that he would come back again. Alas, he drowned trying to escape from the Island. ... There was famine in the land. Cattle were dying. And those that still lived, you could count their ribs. As the Man of the River was waning away from starvation. (15)

While Nxele drowned trying to escape on the one hand, the cattle were drying as a result of the famine in the land on the other hand. Both human and animal died eventually. Human and animal were caught up in an event in historical South Africa. Their death connotes the futility of human and animal existences on earth. Mda's ecocritical novel reveals that the unnecessary destruction of animals is harmful to the environment. The amaXhosa people depend on their cattle for survival and are also of the view that if they could sacrifice them to the gods of their land, it will bring about their liberation from the oppressive British colonial administration. This led to Mlanjeni ordering "that all dun and yellow cattle be slaughtered, for they were an abomination. He doctored the military men for war" (19). In parts of Africa, when an animal is killed parts of the body of the animal is cut off which may include the horn or tusk. Mda replicates a similar incident *The Heart of Redness* when "A small group of British soldiers were cutting off the ears of a dead umXhosa soldier" (20). Furthermore, it is equally intricate to note that such practice was common in Medieval and Elizabethan era, heads of Kings killed in enemy territories were cut off. Lacapra's concept of the "animal in man" is illuminated through the representation of human and animal proximity in the novel. Human seem to have reduced themselves to subhuman's through their actions. The narrator tells us

that:

the soldiers cut off the dead man's head and put it in a pot of boiling water. They are cannibals too ... these heads are either going to be souvenirs, or will be used for scientific enquire. ... while they are debating the best method of killing their captives, a painful and merciless method that would at least avenge the decapitated patriarch, the British soldiers returned with reinforcements from nearby camp. (21)

The excerpt above shows how humans are reduced to subhuman state like animals in the wild that are captured for scientific research and parts of their bodies mutilated and used as souvenirs. The practice of cutting parts of animal bodies is a common one practiced by Europeans who derive joy in killing wild animals in parts of Africa in order to collect parts of the bodies. Unfortunately, government institutions seem to be doing little or nothing to stopping the destruction of wild life in the environment. The human life is important as well as animal life, which is why “Queen Victoria's men refused to go to the Amathole Mountains to be slaughtered like cattle by the savage amaXhosa” (22). The capturing of about “five thousand cattle from the colonists” (22) is taken back what truly belongs to the amaXhosa people of South Africa in the novel. Through the reading of Mda's *The Heart of Redness*, the narrator makes us to know the importance of some animals and how these animals are beneficial to man as they serve as biological clock that wakes up the amaXhosa people every morning from sleep. “The cacophony of birds, monkeys and waves had woken him up very early in the morning. To some people this racket from the surrounding woods

and from the nearby Indian Ocean ...” (65-66).

Through the reading of *The Heart of Redness*, the narrator affirms that humans sometimes act like animals especially wild animals, this beast like attitude further illuminate how the animal in man can be destructive. The narrator brings to our notice the argument that emanated between the history teacher and the chef who works at the Blue Flamingo Hotel. They argument of why the history teacher should desist from calling the chef a cook ultimately resulted to violence which led to the teacher sustaining injury on his head. Thus:

The history teacher is jumping up and down, dancing around the table, shouting, 'Cook! Cook! Cook!' No one knows when the chef got a stick. Like lightning he hits the history teacher on the head. Blood springs out like water from a burst pipe. He falls down. Soon there is a long red stream on the floor. There is commotion. People hold the chef and try to stop him for inflicting further damage on the unconscious history teacher. (77-78)

It is important to observe that while some humans are advocating for the killing of animals (birds) in the novel, on the other hand, some persons are against the destruction of the lives of animals (birds). Bhonco laments about the attempt to forcing him to enforcing a law that prohibits the killing of birds for human consumption. Thus, concerning the ban on killing birds “they want to enforce a ban on killing birds. Have you ever heard of such a thing? In the veld and forest, boys trap birds and roast them in ant-heap ovens. That is our way. We all grew up that way. Now when boys kill birds, are Dalton and his believers going to take them to jail?” (80).

Human and animal interaction dates long before modernization, animal play significant roles in the life of human which could be as: companion, pet, beast of burden and for security purposes. The narrator in *The Heart of Redness* notes that:

At night Camagu becomes the river again, and NomaRussia flows on him. Yet she remains elusive. So does the dream. It refuses to be arrested. But it keeps on coming back. Until the birds and waves and the monkey and the wind tell him it's time to get out of bed. He defies them and sleeps until midday. (80)

In many rural setting in parts of South Africa, people do not have access to the use of mobile phone, clocks and wrist watches, they rely mainly on the use of the sounds made by animals in the rural communities. These animals serve as a biological clock of some sort or nature at work. The animals mentioned above helps man in planning his activities for the day. They appear to be beneficial to man and also not harming to humans. For instance, the bird (cockerel) is used to waking people up at cockcrow in the morning. It is through the reading of *The Heart of Redness* that one discovers that human and animal display mutual love and affection for one another. This is materialized through the representation of the love Twin hard for his horse Gxagxa and vice versa:

No one had heard of lung sickness attacking horses before. But now the beautiful brown and white horse was becoming a bag of bones in front of his eyes. Twin did not sleep. He kept vigil at Gxagxa's stable. ... But he could not eat. As long as Gxagxa could not eat he found it

impossible to eat. ... The poor horse spent days gasping for air, its tongue hanging out. Then it died. (83)

Until Gxagxa's death, it was beneficial to Twin and his household. He had "lost Gxagxa. The same Gxagxa who led us to these new pastures. Gxagxa is gone because of the contamination that blankets the land" (85). Mda shows that death awaits both humans and animals alike and that no amount of effort one makes to avoiding death, it remains inevitable to all. Although the people of amaXhosa believe in prophecies "about the new people who would come from the dead with new animals after all the contaminated ones had been killed" (86). The narrator in *The Heart of Redness* informs us of the appearance of animals in the spirit world with human. The supernatural is illuminated through the proximity both human and animal characters are represented as integral part of the spirit world. The cosmology, spirituality and religious way of life of the amaXhosa people includes animals as integral part of their worldviews. Thus:

At a distance on the waves of the sea he saw his own son who had recently died. He was alive and well and living with King Hintsu in the Otherworld. He saw his favourite horse that had also recently died. It was happily frolicking with the very horse his father rode just before he met his fate at the hands of D'Urban's headhunters. (88)

Mda, brings to our notice how human and animal feature in the otherworld. They are interwoven in the cosmological fabric of the amaXhosa people. The world view of the amaXhosa tribe is revolved around the cosmic cycle that connects the birth, death and rebirth of

human and animal. The above mention cosmological orientation pre-informs the mind of the people toward killing their cattle in the hope that it will cleans their land and the cattle multiplied in the near future. The narrator in the novel states that:

The Strangers made it clear that the new ones will not come unless we do as we are told The new people, our ancestors, will not rise from the dead until we have cleansed the earth by destroying all our cattle and all our crops both in the fields and in the granaries. ... In the following weeks the king began to kill his cattle. The first victim was his bull, which was famous for its beauty in all the land. ... The cattle had to be killed. At the same time he sent imiyolelo- his formal commands- throughout kwaXhosa that all amaXhosa should obey Mhlakaza's instructions. (89)

Human participation in the killing of cattle in Mda's *The Heart of Redness* led to the demise of lots of cattle and humans who died as a result of starvation. Human and animal became victims as a result of indiscriminate killing of cattle in the novel. Mda includes human and animal as integral part of the myth of the people of amaXhosa, the myth is revealed through Nongqawuse in the novel. Of significant important is that the representation of animals in the mythical story in the novel is that it shows that animals are integral part of the ecology. Thus:

The air was filled with the bellowing of cattle, the neighing horses and the bleating of sheep and goats. 'Cast your eyes in the direction of the sea,' Nongqawuse commanded. And in the sea the chiefs saw hundreds of

cattle. Over the horizon a great crowd of people appeared and disappeared again. It did that a number of times. The chiefs pleaded with Nongqawuse to tell the new people to come closer to the shore, that they might communicate with them. 'The new people will come only when you have killed all your cattle,' she told the chiefs. 'You cannot talk with them now. Only I can talk with them. (90-91)

The passage above reveals the importance of animals and humans in the myth of the amaXhosa people that is illuminated through Nongqawuse in the novel. Mda shows in the novel that humans and animals are casualties in time of war, they are both slaughtered. On the one hand, the mutilation of Twin and Twin-Twin's late father's body, while on the other hand, the indiscriminate killing of cattle for sacrificial purposes. The myth surrounding the cattle killing led to the death of lots of cattle and humans in the novel, thus, in the hope that it will be about restoration and rebirth of an ideal amaXhosa nation. Although, the slaughtering of cattle is destructive to the ecology, in the eyes of the believers, they think that they have done the right thing but their action led to starvation and death of human and animal. The narrator further says "... Believers were killing hundreds of cattle every day. ...Every day new cattle were slaughtered ..." (98). Bird watching is common in parts of the world, people derive joy watching birds and other animals especially by tourists in South Africa. Some other persons tend to keep lizard and birds as pets. For them, these animals are companions to play with and probably ease stress or boredom. Zim is vexed that the tourists "come here to steal our (their) lizards and birds"

(106). The inhuman destruction of the lives of cattle led to the pollution of the environment, therefore, destroying the ecosystem. The narrator in the novel states that:

Twin-Twin had walked all the way to Ngcizele to persuade his brother one more time to stop the foolishness of killing cattle his cattle, and to stop believing in the dreams of a sex-starved girl. To his astonishment he found that Twin had already killed all his cattle. His home-stand was buzzing with flies, and the stench of rotten meat assailed one a mile away. (123)

The excerpt above illuminates on the objectification of cattle as sacrificial animals to be killed with reckless abandon to the gods of the amaXhosa people. The negative implication of their action led to the death of humans who died as a result of starvation in the land. Through the reading of Mda's *The Heart of Redness*, most of the negative uses of animals mentioned above are reflected in the novel. Mda's *The Heart of Redness* shows that irrespective of the illegitimate killing of cattle, they are also animals of economic importance the people of amaXhosa and environs. This, however, might have been the reason why some persons “had sold their cattle off instead of slaughtering then” (151). They could not stand the slaughtering of the precious cattle for some religious purposes in the clan. Human and animal appear to be co-hunters during hurting, some person take their dogs along with them to hunt for other wild animals in the forest. This practice is ancient and is still practiced in recent times by hunters. Often times, the collaborative effort of the hunter and the animal is praised when a game is caught in the forest and brought back home. Thus:

From time immemorial? And the business of banning boys from hunting wild animals with their dogs, where does it come from? And what gives Dalton the right to change the ancient practices of the people? How dare he try to influence Chief Xikixa on such matter? (169)

Cows remains the major economic animal in Mda's *The Heart of Redness*, they provide milk, are used for transportation and agriculture and they also represents wealth. The Believers “had stolen grain from the silos and milk from the two cows” (213) which is an indication that they needed the milk from the cow to stay nourished and alive. Humans could actually use animal to their own advantage especially when they can effectively communicate with them. Zim in Mda's *The Heart of Redness* has mastered the act of communicating with birds and makes lucid use of them when the need arise. The narrator observes that:

Zim gets his revenge. He sends ing'ang'ane birds, the hadeda ibis, to laugh at Bhonco. They are drab grey, stubby-legged birds with metallic green and purple wings. Three or four birds follow him wherever he goes, emitting their rude laughter. They sit on the roof of his ixande house, and continue laughing. (227)

Zim represents a friendly person that can communicate with animals; in return, the animals communicate with him and yield to his instruction. These birds in the wild are domesticated by Zim who succeeds in effectively communicating and interacting with them. Some animals tend to laugh or smile when they are comfortable with humans around them. Mda creates an enabling environment which allows humans to interact with animals. During the interaction between Camagu and

Qukezwa, “A bird laughs: wak-wak kiriri! They laugh with it, competing to see who will produce the closest imitation. Their eyes search for it. But they can't find it” (254). Mda affirms in *The Heart of Redness* that humans and animals (birds) can actually interact as the both of them try to mimic the bird.

From the reading of Mda's *The Heart of Redness*, elements of superstitious belief among the amaXhose people and environs are examined. It is connected to the cosmology (worldview) of amaXhosa. The Believers tenaciously hold on to their belief irrespective of other negative comments from Unbelievers. Human and animal are integral part of the belief of the amaXhosa people, they are included in the cosmology of the people, although Dalton is flabbergasted about “Dead people and cattle rising from the sea” as he perceives the whole story as foolish. Through the reading of Mda's *The Heart of Redness*, he has shown that human and animal are intertwined in so many ways as they play significant roles in the novel. At this juncture, one can conclude that Ngugi's representation of the proximal relationship between human and animal characters in the novel is that both humans and nonhumans are victims of human exploitation. Thus, it is as a result of unnecessary war that led to the senseless killing of cattle in amaXhosa land. Humans and animals were the major casualties of the war.

Love Between Humans and Animals in Mda's *The Whale Caller*

The novel opens with a brief description of a bleeding whale that looms large over the coast of a village called Hermanus in Cape Town. The suspended description foreshadows the fate of a big human friendly female whale personally named Sharisha by a middle-aged, “tall and

brawny” bachelor (10). The narrator suspends the real name of this recluse from the reader and introduces him as the Whale Caller in the novel. The Whale Caller lives in “a two-roomed Wendy house in the backyard of a widower” (9-10). He has already developed a special bond with the whale and would spend much of his retirement times blowing his kelp horn at the sea to entertain it. As the story opens, the Whale Caller can be seen, dressed ceremoniously in “a new tuxedo ... specially to welcome Sharisha” (3), doing his summer routine of blowing his horn for the whale, this time without the whale responding from the depth of the sea. As the beloved whale fails to emerge as usual, he is apprehensive that it has possibly been murdered by the tourists who have just visited the resort. It is unusual for Sharisha not to respond and lobtail to the sweet sound that oozes from his kelp horn, the only tangible artifact from the church he worked for that he does not want to part with, as it was what brought him and Sharisha together. He impatiently goes to Mr Yodd, a reticent confessor, to pour out his indignation. He later discovers, however, that the whale is safe and sound in her habitat. The proximal relationship between the Whale Caller and Sharisha is the display of emotions towards each other, the mammal and the Whale Caller seem to have developed a strong bond between themselves. The narrator begins the narrative:

THE SEA BLEEDING from the wounds of Sharisha. But that is later. Now the tide returns in slight gentle movements. Half-moon is the time of small tides. The Whale Calller stands on one of the rugged cliffs that form an arena above the bay. He has spent the better part of the day standing there, blowing his horn. Blowing

Sharisha's special song. Blowing louder and louder as the tide responds by receding in time to the staccato of his call. Yet she is nowhere to be seen. His eyes have become strained from looking into the waters, hoping to see Sharisha lobtailing in the glare of the setting sun. It is September and the southern rights have returned from the southern seas. But Sharisha is not among them. (1-3)

The excerpt above indicates that Sharisha enjoys the companion of the Whale Caller especially whenever he blows “Sharisha's special song” unfortunately the sea is bleeding and Sharisha could not be seen by the Whale Caller who looks for her till the point of straining his eyes. The passage above also reveals that the Whale Caller is fond of Sharisha and enjoys her company. The Whale Caller is indeed vexed and worried about Sharisha. Through the reading of Mda's *The Whale Caller*, he creates the possibility of affection between a human and a mammal. The proximal representation between the Whale Caller and Sharisha is that they have both developed some sort of affection for each other. This affection develops into a strong bond that ultimately affects the Whale Callers relationship with Saluni. The affection the Whale Caller have for Sharisha becomes very strong that “the Whale Caller makes his way down the cliffs to pour out his pain to Mr Yodd” (2). Humans and animals swallow objects of various sizes and sharps. In Mda's novel, Sharisha is not just only jealous but paints a very negative image about Saluni which is destructive. She compares the the Whale Caller to a blue whale. “She (Saluni) called me a blue whale ...I bet it was the blue whale that swallowed Jonah” (49). The act of calling the Whale Caller a blue whale is symbolic and depicts destruction. The horn is the major

instrument the Whale Caller makes use of in communicating with Sharisha, she response whenever the Calller blows the horn. They become very fond of each other. The Whale Caller “will blow his horn and play her song and she will manifest herself by bleaching. Even if she is not that close to shore he will know it is Sharisha because when he plays the horn she breaches rapidly up to fifteen times in a row, keeping up to the rhythm of the horn” (51). Saluni and Sharish battle for the love, care and attention of the Whale Caller in Mda's *The Whale Caller*, they both want the Whale Caller to spend more time with time. This desire for the love and care of the Whale Caller ends why they are both (Saluni and Sharisha) are brutality killed by humans. Saluni was:

Wondering what the Whale Caller and Sharisha were up to at that moment. ...But Saluni had not reckoned with the power of the whirlwind that Sharisha was generating in the sea, locking the Whale Caller tightly in her embrace. ...People clapping their hands in accompaniment to the kelp horn. And Sharisha's grunts and groans. (58)

The except above show that the Sharisha is a fascinating mammal to behold, the tourist are attracted to the whale as they watch her display when the Caller blows his kelp horn. The magnificent creature is friendly to the tourists who come to watch her. Mda through the reading of *The Whale Caller* buttress the fact that Whales and Sharisha in particular give birth to their off springs like humans which and important proximal similarity they share with humans in the novel. Iheka observes that:

the Caller's devotion to the more-than-human world

appears at the expense of his relationship to fellow humans. The novel exposes the lopsidedness of the Whale Caller's relationships even as it problematizes the efforts at finding a balance between a genuine concern for fellow humans and other lives sharing the environment. ...when the relationship is later consummated and the couple seems to be making progress, Sharisha always appears to interfere. The Caller has no human friend before Saluni forces herself into his life, and he makes no friends afterward, not even with the twin girls Saluni befriends. (37-38)

The Bored Twins have lived so closed together with animals like reptiles that they now play with them and even scare their visitors with them. The proximal relationship between the Bored Twins and the reptiles in Mda's *The Whale Caller* is that both the twins and the reptiles are not afraid of each other, the animal seems not to be afraid even in the aboard of humans as illuminated from the excerpt above. It is not just the natural habitat that animals and humans share in the story. They also share a common feeling of love. Animals could have feelings, just like human beings. In fact it is this feeling of love that unusually exists between humans and animals that the author intends to communicate with the story. In the story, the Whale Caller and Sharisha develop an affection for each other. The Whale Caller has a root famous for the attachment to animals but his own is different. The narrator makes it knew that:

Although at first the Whale Caller envied the attention and fame that the world's only whale crier received, he

soon realised that his mission in life was different from the whale crier's. The whale crier alerted people to the whereabouts of whales, whereas the Whale Caller called whales to himself, much like the shark callers of New Ireland. (11)

His love for Sharisha can be sensed when he erroneously thinks that she is dead. He can do anything to see Sharisha again. When Sharisha finally emerges from the sea after the season's hibernation, the joy of meeting again is expressed by both Sharisha and the Whale Caller. Thus:

He blows his horn even harder, and finds himself playing Sharisha's special song. A gigantic southern right erupts from the water, about a hundred metre from him. It rocks up in the air, and then comes crashing down with a very loud splash. As its head rises from the water again the Whale Caller's heart beats like a mad drum in his chest, for he sees the well-shaped bonnet that he knows so well, sitting gracefully on the whale's snout. ... (36)

The joy in seeing Sharisha is like total healing for the Whale Caller, but he is not alone in that joy. Other animals too seem to join him in that emotional satisfaction as he goes to Mr Yodd to break the news to him. "As he walks down to the grotto the grey doves with black wings and the white seagulls with grey wings, all sporting matching red feet, share his excitement by hovering over him, and defecating on his head" (37). Mda have shown through the study of *The Whale Caller* that it is a common practice for humans to interact with animals in the novel and that humans more importantly enjoy the company of animals. Sometimes, the relationship humans share with animals especially in

the novel in a mutual one.

Conclusion

In Mda's, *The Whale Caller*, It is not just the natural habitat that animals and humans share in the story; they also share a common feeling of love. Animals could have feelings, just like human beings. In fact it is this feeling of love that unusually exists between humans and animals that the author intends to communicate with the story. In the story, the Whale Caller and Sharisha develop affection for each other. The Whale Caller has a root famous for the attachment to animals but his own is different. The Bored Twins have lived so closed together with animals like reptiles that they now play with them and even scare their visitors with them. The proximal relationship between the Bored Twins and the reptiles in Mda's *The Whale Caller* is that both the twins and the reptiles are not afraid of each other, the animal seems not to be afraid even in the aboard of humans. In Mda's *The Heart of Redness*, he examined the multiplying negative effect of the amaXhosa people act of slaughtering their cattle is that it eventually led to scores of death for cattle and human. The death of cattle led to hardship in amaXhosa communities. Humans take care of their cattle and their cattle in return provide quality milk that sustains them and their families. The herdboys are preoccupied with the responsibility of taken good care of their cattle, led them to grazing fields and protect them from wild animals

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