The Practice and Significance of Magical Realism in Selected African Novels

Hiwot Walelign

A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of Philosophy in English Literature

Addis Ababa University

College of Humanities, Language Studies, Journalism and Communication

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This is to certify that the dissertation prepared by Hiwot Walelign, entitled: *The Practice and Significance of Magical Realism in Selected African Novels* and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Philosophy in English Literature compiles with the regulations of the university and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work, and that it has not been presented for a degree in any other university and that all sources of material used for the dissertation have been acknowledged.

Hiwot Walelign

June 2020

This Dissertation is Dedicated to

My Father, Walelign Workneh and My Mother, Bizuayehu Tebeje.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to the people who have been by my side in the course of this study, assisting me in different ways.

I am grateful beyond words to my advisor, Dr. Olga Yazbec. She has been very encouraging and supportive, reading my papers and giving me her critical comments. Her suggestions and recommendations have been very important inputs to this thesis. I also would like to thank my instructor, Dr. Melakneh Mengistu, for lending me novels and giving me advice whenever I consulted him.

I would love to thank my parents, Walelign Workneh and Bizuayehu Tebeje, and my siblings, Sosina Walelign and Ermias Walelign, for encouraging me from the beginning of my course works and all the way along, and for welcoming me warmly whenever I go to them looking for a quiet space and internet connection. Baba, Mami and Sosi, I thank you from my heart for your prayers, encouraging words, and the countless pots of coffee.

My husband, Samuel Tefera, has helped me immensely these past four years in sharing the burden at home with our sons. He also takes the lion's share in buying me novels and books. Samu, thank you and I love you. My precious sons, Fiker and Amen, I love you both and I thank God for your presence which is an additional push forward for me in this study and anything else in my life.

My friends, who are more like sisters and brothers to me, Florence Assebe, Getnet Tibebu, Andualem Tolessa, Mekuanint Tilahun, Melsew Alemayehu, and Addisu Hailu I thank you all for being there whenever I needed you. I would also like to thank Professor James Ogude from South Africa, and Yohannes Gemechu, Shinichiro Hisada, and Aino Ikeda from Japan, for sending me books and articles. Dr. Pradeep Sharma, Gash Meseret Abeje, Dr. Dilu Shaleqa and Asst. Professor Nebiyu Baye, I am thankful to all of you for your invaluable comments and following up on how I have been doing with the study.

I am most grateful to almighty God for being my invisible source of strength throughout the journey of this study and beyond.

Abstract

This study entitled *The Practice and Significance of Magical Realism in Selected African Novels* attempts to read different African novels through the lens of magical realism. Magical realism, introduced to the realm of literature mostly with Latin American novels and gaining worldwide recognition with postcolonial literary works, has been a focal point of different scholarly studies. In Africa, Ben Okri's *Famished Road* has been studied by many for its skilful employment of the technique. The motivation behind taking up this topic is to fill the research gap in reading different novels from different regions of Africa in one volume and to be able to observe the trend in the practice and significance of using magical realism. In doing so, the paper aims to compare and contrast how different novelists from different contexts in Africa have applied the different features that magical realism is known for. After establishing the practices of the usage in different regions, the study attempts to identify the drive that motivates novelists to use magical realism and it also tries to highlight the issues raised through the magical realist approach. Five novels have been chosen for this study namely; *The Heart of Redness, The Bleeding of the Stone, Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez, Woman of the Aeroplanes* and *Wizard of the Crow*. To read these novels, a theoretical framework is formed using magical realism's different features theorized by different critics. The practices and significances of the use of magical realism in these novels are studied comparatively in order to show how and why the approach is used in different contexts. In addition, the paper attempts to identify if there are any differences or similarities among different traditional contexts in Africa in the employment of magical realism and if the issues raised through it have commonalities. The fact that the novels are chosen from South, North, East, West and Central Africa and that they are studied comparatively in one thesis could be taken as a new contribution in showing expressions of magical realism in different backgrounds. The study concludes that different novelists in different parts of Africa have used magical realism associating it with their own contexts, connecting it with their respective cultural backgrounds, shared historical accounts, commenting on existing economic, social and political situations.

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Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Magical realism, as a significant literary approach in the past half a century, has been majorly applied in postcolonial literature. It is favored by writers in contexts of former colonies as the approach disrupts the literary and ideological concepts imposed by western established notions. Magical realism is considered to be subversive against the hegemonic literary tradition that is not considerate of diversity in culture, language and setting. The postcolonial novelists have been resisting the one-sided literary practice to reform it in favor of their hybrid and multicultural contexts. This thesis concerns itself with magical realism and the African novel in particular; reading selected African novels in relation to the approach's trend in Africa along with its significances.

After the First World War, there was a general shift of perspective in the way life, reality, and the world itself was viewed in Europe. The mass destruction the war brought created a sense of distrust in what was seen as existing reality and artists started questioning and even reacting to the established modes of expression in art. In 1925, in the defeated state of Germany, an art exhibition was held by painters and there was a distinct alteration of expression in their paintings compared to earlier decades. And the term 'magical realism' was first coined by the German art critic Franz Roh to describe this new trend of art exhibited at the time (Zamora and Faris, 1995).

Magical realism was tossed around in the art circle for nearly four decades before it was adopted to describe literary works, mainly the Latin American novels. Melakneh notes, "The term was first applied to the realm of fiction in the 1960s by a Venezuelan essayist and critic Arturo Uslar-Pietri" (2008, p. 84).

During the period known as the Latin American Boom, writers like Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Jorge Luis Borges, and Isabel Allande started experimenting with a new way of writing, incorporating magical elements in their novels, winning a wide range of popularity among readers and critics.

Nowadays, magical realism is viewed as an international trend, being used as a literary mode in different countries and contexts. No longer confined to Latin American literature, it is being used also in North America, Europe, Asia and Africa. Among the prominent magical realist writers are Salman Rushdie (India), Ben Okri (Nigeria), Toni Morrison (North America), Haruki Murakami (Japan), Laura Esquivel (Mexico), Zakes Mda (South Africa), Zadie Smith (Britain) and many more others.

Magical realism could be best defined as a literary approach having:

> *'…an ever-shifting pattern, a sharply etched realism in representing ordinary events and descriptive details together with fantastic and dreamlike elements, as well as with materials derived from myth and fairy tales (Abrams, 1999, p. 191). Magic realism achieve their effects in large part by exploiting a realistic manner in rendering events that are in themselves fantastic, absurd, or flatly impossible (p. 261).*

Maggi Ann Bowers supports this claiming that magical realism is an oxymoron characterized by "inherent inclusion of contradictory elements" and that it offers "a way to discuss alternative approaches to reality to that of Western philosophy" (2004, p. 1). It could be understood that societies like in Latin America and Africa, rich in traditional practices, folklore, folk performances, myths and legends could give a writer a comfortable atmosphere to draw that fantasy from those traditions and use it in a text without pretense.

Amaryll Chanady also stresses on the fact that there was 'systematic control of the imaginary by the dictates of a restrictive conception of mimesis based on … imitation of legitimated models (Zamora and Faris, 1995, p. 125).' This means that for a long time, the trend for writers was to follow the logic and structure of the western mode of writing. But currently, applying magical realism and other approaches, writers in former colonies are breaking free from this limiting practice.

This brings us to the notion of postcolonial theory. *The Empire Writes Back* states that postcolonial writers share a perception that aligns them in a common path because of their colonial experience and that they have "asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with

the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin, 2004, p. 2). Magical realism has apparently been handy in highlighting these common concerns for the writers of the former colonies.

What brought magical realism into the realm of literary expression is the insufficiency of realistic depictions in fiction as it doesn't represent everyone's reality in different parts of the world. Artists in the third world, especially in former colonies, needed to resist the western hegemony that was imposed on them and they had three options to assert their autonomy: one is insisting on the equality of both the colonized and the colonizer; the other is accepting the difference between the colonized and the colonizer; and the third option is to claim the superiority of the colonized over the colonizer. Magical realism comes out in the third option where the western model is rejected and a relevant model for the respective context is advocated (Zamora and Faris, 1995).

Ashcroft et. al. also agree with the above notion, stating that European theories like that of realism are unable "to deal adequately with the complexities and varied cultural provenance of post-colonial writing" (2004, p. 11). Therefore, in order to meet these needs, writers opted for literary approaches like that of magical realism. In this regard, these critics categorize magical realism as a postcolonial form of writing listing it among other techniques saying "… allegory, irony, magic realism, and discontinuous narratives are characteristic of post-colonial writing" (p. 27).

The focal point of the thesis at hand is exploring magical realism in African novels. The African novel, since the time of colonialism to present day, has been engaged in exposing and criticizing the predicaments Africa faces on many levels. The poverty, civil wars, migration, draught, famine, maladministration and corruption are among the issues being raised in the novels. Divided by periods with specific themes, the African novel has evolved to what it has become in the present day. Eustace Palmer, quoted in Diop (2002), claims:

> *The African novel, generally speaking, is a reaction to the consequences of the imperialist occupation and exploitation – a historical process that comprised three phases: The phase of imperialist conquest with consequent erosion and disruption of*

> *traditional of African values, the phase of anti-independence, largely one of readjustment intended to rediscover lost values (p. 2,3).*

Melakneh (2012) divides the African novels evolvement in the last century into four generations. Each generation has its own distinguishing subject matter that engaged the writers. The first generation which ranges between the 1910s and 30s focused on the glorification of the time prior to colonialism; emphasizing on the positive faces of African societies' former economic, social and political systems. The second generation from 1940s to 60s was much more involved with acknowledging and exposing the evil of colonialism, playing its own share in the struggle for freedom. The third generation, in the 1960s and 70s, comes after independence and the issue raised here changes to disappointment in the aftermath of freedom. Most of Africa's significant novels, like *The Beautyful Ones are not yet Born*, were written during this time. The fourth and contemporary generation African novel comes with a more optimistic tone, trying to participate in finding solution rather than fault in the overall system.

About today's reality in the postcolonial Africa, Balogun (1984) writes the following:

> *The African today is a product of a specific historical and racial experience molded by slavery, colonization and neo-colonialism. The African had expected that with independence and blackman ruling blackman the quality of life would change drastically for the better. Expectations might have been naïve, even utopian, but that is the reason dissatisfaction with post-independence reality is more intense (p.42).*

This dissatisfaction is intense because the reality under the African rule is no better than the colonial rule. Living conditions are still unreliable and unfavorable. These unsafe and unreal like situations together with African rich oral tradition decorated with spirits, ancestors, legends and myths seem to have made the novelists to opt for a mode that is more suitable to the situation than realism would have depicted it. The selected novels for this particular research are from the fourth and contemporary generation. They were written by authors from different countries of Africa between the years of 1985 and 2006. Though magical realism was used by earlier works like Amos Tutola's *Palm-Wine Drinkard* that was published in 1952 and a number of other novels, this thesis focuses on the contemporary ones for the older ones are well discussed in

different scholarly studies for their magical realism use. This study reads five novels from the different parts of Africa in relation to magical realism's distinct practices and purposes.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

This study has taken up magical realism as a core point of focus because it is one of the emblems that make African literature emerge out as a canon in world's literary practices. It does so by creating a favorable ground for writers to include their major cultural elements in their works embracing the marginalized and voiceless bodies and features of their original backgrounds. This makes it worth revising time and again in relation to different artistic works. Most studies in African literature regarding magical realism focus on Ben Okri's novel *The Famished Road* while others highlight on the mode mostly in West and South African novels separately. This study seeks to examine major magical realist features in five novels from five different regions of Africa. It also attempts to identify the motivating drive behind the need to resort to the magical realist mode. Based on these features, the research goes beyond into searching the significance of employing this specific approach in the narrative. The study attempts to compare and contrast the practices and significances of magical realism in different contexts of Africa. The thesis aspires to fill the gap in research by producing a study that shows different features of magical realism playing out in the different settings of the African novel, the specific forces that motivate the employment, and the purpose the mode serves in African context.

This research attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the dominant characteristics of magical realism employed in the selected novels?

2. Which magical realist features are common in all the novels?

3. What informs magical realism in its practice in the novels?

4. What are the significances of employing the magical realistic approach in the selected novels?

1.3. Objective of the Study

1.3.1. General Objective

The general objective of this research paper is to study how African writers in different contexts use magical realism and to what effect they are using it.

1.3.2. Specific Objectives

The specific objectives are:

- To explore the features of magical realism in the novels
- To identify what triggers the need to opt for the magical realist approach
- To investigate if magical realism has more to it in the African novel apart from its decolonizing aspect
- To compare and contrast the use of the technique in the different contexts within Africa in order locate commonly favored magical realist expressions that can be taken as uniquely African

1.4. Significance of the Study

This research is expected to be of use in giving detailed information of how magical realism draws upon different aspects and techniques to exhibit social and political circumstance in different stories. Moreover, magical realism is known for its multifaceted nature, causing on-going debate defining and distinguishing it from other types of fiction like fantasy and surrealist literature. By providing substantial information on what magical realism is and is not and also by incorporating a well-rounded review of its characteristics set by different academics and its disclosure through African novels, the thesis may contribute its share to the existing body of knowledge. This study might be a springboard in motivating Ethiopian students to conduct further studies on origin, trend, practice and relevance of magical realism in other novels or other genres of literature.

1.5. Delimitation of the Study

Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* is what has been frequently mentioned in different studies for its masterly use of magical realism. This research attempts to show that there are also other magical realist novels from across Africa, worth studying and rich in their incorporation of local color. In this research, the novels under discussion are five: *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez* (1985) by Sony Labou Tansi from Congo, *Woman of the Aeroplanes* (1988) by B. Kojo Laing from Ghana**,** *The Heart of Redness* (2000) by Zakes Mda from South Africa, *The Bleeding of the Stone* (2002) by Ibrahim al Koni from Libya, and *Wizard of the Crow* (2006) by Ngugi Wa Thiongo from Kenya.

The publication time of the novels selected for this thesis ranges from 1985 up to 2006. This means they fall under the contemporary phase or the fourth category of African novels. This will enable the research to focus on the practice of magical realism in Africa in this twenty year span. Other novels from before 1985 are not included in this study because it can be said that they are have been covered by different scholarly studies. And other novels after 2006 are not included in the selection because of lack of sufficient ground to make out magical realist features of them. They mostly make use of surrealist elements instead of magical realist techniques, if at all they are not realist ones.

There are some bases of selection for the novels in this study. The first one is the novels' being widely read and reviewed. The second factor is their incorporation of magical features. Regional representation is also another factor. The study does not go into detailed regional study but observes if magical realism has similar depiction in all regions of Africa. The last and most important basis of selection is the fact that these novels are not explored sufficiently (according to the literature review) for their magical realist narratives, especially the way this thesis attempts to do. The researcher was interested in including works of women writers as well. However, the accessed novels written by female writers employed realist techniques and for this reason the selected novels are all written by male writers. In its global acceptance and usage as a favored literary mode, magical realism is somehow flourishing even beyond the realms of literature. This research focuses only on the novel genre because most of the time magical realistic narratives

fall under the novel genre and writers also artistically exploit this mode of narration in the setting, characterization, theme and style of the novel.

1.6. Methodology

The focus of this study is to read different African novels with the aim of determining their practices of employing the magical realist approach. After exploring the trend of the employment, it goes further into investigating the resources that enable the novelists to take motivations from in their respective works. The thesis then explores if magical realism is serving any purpose marked through the narratives. For this reason the research is a qualitative one relying on close reading of the selected novels and textual analysis. The brief review of related literature shows what magical realism is and what sets it different from other associated modes and genres. What comes after it is the review of related studies done on the selected novels which reveals what is lacking in research in the particular novels and their employment of the magical realist technique. In order to fill the identified research gap, the analysis is done in a way it reveals magical realism's practice and relevance as well as its informing aspects. In order to do the analysis on the novels, parameters are taken from critical works on magical realism that are formulated into conceptual framework. The novels are closely read and relevant passages are identified for the analysis. The thesis used a comparative approach in order to identify the trend of magical realism's employment in different contexts as well as the purposes it serves.

Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature

This chapter focuses on reviewing related literatures and studies of the two focal points of this particular thesis: magical realism and the selected African novels. Magical realism's definitions and distinguishing features afforded by different critics are provided. This section displays brief clarification of critics' claims of what western realism, socialist realism, and magical realism are. Moreover, it also shows magical realism's similarities and differences with its related and often confused modes of writing: surrealism, fantasy and science fiction. Giving magical realism's operational definitions, this chapter attempts to show how the selected novels are lacking in exclusive exploration of their employment of the technique.

2.1 Review of Related Literature on Magical Realism

2.1.1 Different Forms of Realism

- **Western Realism**

Realism is known for its depiction of everyday life as it is. It was started as a counter movement of the pre-existing romantic notions in art and literature. A Glossary of Literary Terms defines it as "…representing complex characters with mixed motives who are rooted in a social class, operate in a developed social structure, interact with many other characters, and undergo plausible, everyday modes of experience" (Abrams, 1999, p. 191).

There are certain characteristics of realistic fiction. The setting is the existing world as we know it. The characters deal with everyday problems humans face in their families, society or nature. These problems get solved in a realistic way. The issues raised are things readers can relate with. Emerging after the era of romanticism, realism works differently from its predecessor with the aim of idealizing no notion while emphasizing on the lives of the middle and lower class. The world is usually presented from an objective third person point of view without any adornment. Unlike romanticism, realism relies on understanding of a given setting based on facts and lived experiences rather than ideal representations. Moreover, it focuses on society than individuals.

Ato Quayson also puts forward the distinguishing factors of realism from other types of realism. He says, "The only narratives that approximate realism as we know it from the western novels are anecdotal exchanges between individuals, in which the objective is to secure a response or judgment on personal experience" (2009, p. 160). This means as a representation of the objective world, realism relies on describing the world from an objective point of view without adding any imaginary settings or scenarios. What can be taken as subjective from realist fictions is the dialogue that takes place between characters.

- **Socialist Realism**

Socialist realism is believed to have originated and got popularity in the former Soviet Union in the 20th century. It has later found expressions in other socialist countries as well. Different artistic works used it as a style of romanticizing socialism. Socialist realist literary works were primarily preoccupied with depicting socialist thoughts in a society with a final aim of promoting classless society. Abiye Daniel (1986) calls socialist realism a literary approach that "advocates the needs of the lowest class" with "a strong commitment to the principles of Marxism" (p. 16). Three characteristics are mentioned by Abiye for a literary work to be called a socialist realist one. These are loyalty to communist party, reflecting the realities of the majority, depiction of power relations within classes.

Literary works that were produced under socialist realism had a target which was representing different situations of a society's social and political structures with the working class being in the center, setting the discourse of the power structure in that given context.

M. Parkhomenko and A. Myasnikov (1971) claim that socialist realism functions within the rules of realism. They say, "An explanation for this should be sought in literary traditions of realism and, more important still, in its conformity to the ideas of the socialist revolution and the needs of the working classes liberated by it" (p. 10). Promoting socialist values and class struggle with the proletariat winning was always the case. Ann Demaitre (1966) refers to different critics calling socialist realism as one manifestation of dictatorship. According to her it is a restrictive method of expressing ideas full of one sided purposes and that it is used as a manipulating device of people's thoughts and ambitions. Though socialist realism originated in the former Soviet Union, different countries had also picked it up as a literary approach. Abiye Daniel's masters

thesis shows that socialist realism had been employed as a literary mode in African literature as well. These days, it seems like socialist realism is getting outdated and being replaced by other types of approaches.

- **Magical Realism**

Ashcroft, et al. define magical realism as a device that is used to "interrogate the assumptions of western, rational, linear narrative and to enclose it within an indigenous metatext – a body of textual forms that recuperate the pre-colonial culture" (1998, p. 133). This is the basic description of magical realism. It came as a decentering tool to disrupt existing realist depictions of life and the world for the former considers the later as hegemonic.

As it gained wide acceptance in the wake of postcolonial era, it is also viewed as a postcolonial tool, depicting what is real by deviating from what is usually known as the western version of realism. In postcolonial context, it is often seen as a way of resisting the truth that is of western standard. This standard realism has been challenged by the magical realist works. "While realism maintains boundaries between subjects and objects, magic realists in their denial of Western rationalism, have attempted to erase boundaries," claims Naidoo (1998, p. 41). In their incorporation of different and even polarized entities as the name itself merges the magic and the real, magical realist narratives promote hybridity instead of purity.

All three categories of realism are grounded in the real world setting while they each deal with social, cultural and political situations of their respective contexts in different ways as explained above.

2.1.2 Magical Realism and Other Related Literary Modes

Magical realism is often confused with other literary modes like Surrealism, Fantasy and Science Fiction. Therefore it would be essential to define these other notions in relation to magical realism.

- **Magical Realism versus Surrealism**

Surrealism was a popular movement in France during the 1920s and 30s that was about finding a way of expressing mixing the conscious experience with the subconscious. This movement is said to have been influenced by Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis. It is more related with the subconscious.

Maggy Ann Bowers distinguishes surrealism from magical realism noting that its focus is "associated not with material reality but with the imagination and the mind, and in particular it attempts to express the 'inner life' and psychology of humans through art (2004, p. 23)."

Hence, the basic difference between magical realism and surrealism is that magic realism mingles the supernatural with the ordinary and treats it as a commonplace in everyday setting while surrealists take us to another location that exists only in our mind. Andre Breton and Salvador Dali are among the leading surrealist writers of the 20th century.

- **Magical Realism versus Fantasy**

Magical realism is sometimes confused with fantasy. The essential difference between the two is said to be that the characters in fantasy writing experience a life that is far removed from the world of human's everyday reality while in magical realism; they live in the familiar world but experience time and space on different levels. Chanady reasserts this saying, "In contrast to the fantastic, the supernatural in magical realism does not disconcert the reader, and this is the fundamental difference between the two modes" (1985, p. 24).

M. H. Abrams claims that fantasy writings are usually set in a rather 'Utopian' and 'extraordinary countries' and he considers *The Lords of the Ring* by J.R.R Tolkin and *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift among fantasy writings.

- **Magical Realism versus Science Fiction**

Science fiction is usually futuristic in its nature and seeks for rational explanation for every other-worldly happening in the narrative. Unusual incidents are not treated as mundane but are accepted with the scientific reasoning backing them up. Abrams elaborates on this saying that

incidents in a science fiction can also be set in another planet or imagined parallel universe in addition to a futuristic earthly scenario where there is 'advance in technology' or 'a drastic change in the organization of society' (199, p. 279). Bowers supports this saying, "… it is set in a world different from any known reality and its realism resides in the fact that we can recognize it as a possibility for our future" (2004, p. 33). Abrams gives H. G Well's *The War of the Worlds* as a literary work of science fiction.

As Bowers claims it, science fiction's difference from realism is more noticeable with their only similarity being a probable realization of the elements of science fiction in the future. And science fiction's difference from magical realism is also more evident than their similarities. Both writing modes can be taken as highly relying on imagination, integrating extraordinary elements in their narratives. However, magical realism is restricted to the real world and real life events while science fiction is not limited to worldly settings or any elements of reality.

Understanding the differences and similarities of forms of realism as well as the often confused genres of science fiction, surrealism and fantasy writing is essential in understanding magical realism better. Knowing its essentially distinguishing features is helpful to sift through novels and selecting relevant ones for this study.

2.1.3 Definitions of Magical Realism

Going through many of the scholarly publications about magical realism, one comes to understand that there is an ongoing debate about how to best define the term. In his *New York Times* tribute to Gabriel Garcia Marquez, entitled "Magic in Service of Truth," Salman Rushdie explained why defining magical realism is problematic. He wrote:

> *The trouble with the term "magic realism," el realismo mágico, is that when people say or hear it they are really hearing or saying only half of it, "magic," without paying attention to the other half, "realism." But if magic realism were just magic, it wouldn't matter. It would be mere whimsy — writing in which, because anything can happen, nothing has effect. It's because the magic in magic realism has deep roots in the real, because it grows out of the real and illuminates it in beautiful and unexpected ways, that it works (May 18, 2014).*

As Rushdie claims, magical realist novels are often set in the ordinary world and the characters may seem to have a life that is mundane but then a few things go unexpectedly, out of the usual way. Magical realism has different characteristics and some or all of them have been explored by different writers from different corners of the world. Writers may use this literary mode for different purposes but the common understanding is that they disclose human reality intersected with irreducible elements. As Luis Leal puts it, "The principal thing is not the creation of the imaginary beings or world but the discovery of the mysterious relationship between man and his circumstances" (Zamora and Faris, 1995, p. 121-122).

The basic characteristics of magical realism are discussed by different scholars. Carter has generally pointed the parameters that qualify fiction as magical realist.

> *First it is the combination of reality and fantasy and second, it is the transformation of the real into the awesome and unreal, thirdly an art of surprises, one which creates a distorted concept of time and space, fourth a literature directed to an intellectual minority; characterized by a cold cerebral aloofness it does not cater to popular tastes, but rather to that of those sophisticated individuals instructed in aesthetic subtleties (1969, p. 3-4).*

A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory also gives the specific traits of magical realist fiction.

> *Magic realism--[is characterized by] the mingling and juxtaposition of the realistic and the fantastic, bizarre and skillful time shifts, convoluted and even labyrinthine narratives and plots, miscellaneous use of dreams, myths and fairy stories, expressionistic and even surrealistic description, arcane erudition, the elements of surprise or abrupt shock, the horrific and the inexplicable. (2013, p. 406).*

Furthermore, a magical realist story goes as if nothing strange is happening. Zamora and Faris describe this best saying:

> *The supernatural is not a simple or obvious matter, but it is an ordinary matter, an everyday occurrence—admitted, accepted, and integrated into the rationality and materiality of literary realism. Magic is no longer quixotic madness, but normative and normalizing (1995, p. 3).*

It is a writing mode employed mainly by writers from postcolonial settings. It seems like they opted to use magical realism for it gave them an additional material to depict their reality, intertwining it with folktale, mythology and the like. As Melakneh states it, "Magical realism as a literary technique has been exploited effectively by most [African] novelists… to make the fictional stories stranger than truth thus subverting Western realism for its inadequacy (2008, p. 235)."

This 'inadequacy' perhaps comes from seeing a certain circumstance from a specific angle; without consideration of any orientation be it religious, cultural, social or any other kind. Taking *Heart of Darkness* can simplify this claim. This novel by Joseph Conrad is written about a certain central African area (assumed to be Congo) and describes the African setting and characters from a static angle. The realistic depiction seems to portray the scenario in an othering way. Achebe calls this European depiction of Africa as 'dehumanizing, stereotypical and racist' (1988, p. 255). *The Heart of Redness*, on the other hand, written in a magical realist mode has given due attention to specific local expressions, embracing and endorsing them. It also does not forget or ignore the reality the time and space of story taking place asks both from the local and international contexts. This is not to mean that magical realism expresses a certain scenario better than realism. This is to mean that magical realism, in its merge of the mundane and the extraordinary, gives more opportunity to different entities to play out better in relation to their respective contexts.

Zamora and Faris also argue for this notion.

> *[Magical realism is] a disruption of modern realist fiction …creates a space for interaction and diversity … no less 'real' than traditional 'realism'... about transgressing boundaries, multiple worlds … on the boundaries and destabilizes normative oppositions … subversive … an international phenomenon (1995, p. 11).*

Therefore magical realism came as a reaction to the pre-existing notions of realism, that what we experience in the physical world may not be the whole reality. Magical realism distorts the conventional plot structure, linearity of time and rationalization. It looks for a more profound, less visible reality surrounding man. As Louise Leal claims it, magic realism attempts, "to seize the mystery that breathes behind things" (1995, p. 123).

2.2 Review of Related Studies on the Selected Novels

The present thesis focuses on how and why magical realism is used in five selected novels from Africa namely; *The Bleeding of the Stone*, *The Heart of Redness*, *Woman of the Aeroplanes*, *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez* and *Wizard of the Crow.* Different scholarly studies have been carried out on these novels in the form of dissertations, MA theses, articles and essays. Most of the following reviewed studies focus on a single novel from the selection of the present study while one dissertation observed two of them. This chapter has included the review of these studies in order to establish their difference from the present thesis and in turn to fill the research gap.

The Bleeding of the Stone by Ibrahim al Koni is a novel from Libya. Different African and Arabic scholars have studied it from different angles. Predominantly dealing with the desert life of the Sahara, *The Bleeding of the Stone* was published in 2002.

Towards an Ethics of Intersubjectivity: Affective Textures of Empathy in Modern Arabic and Hebrew Literature and Film, is a PhD dissertation that incorporates al Koni's *The Bleeding of the Stone* in its analysis. This 2017 dissertation by Rachel Elizabeth Green from University of Texas studies this novel in comparison with other Arab and Hebrew novels the main point raised being empathy as an ethical and aesthetical instrument to show inter-subjective issues in the stories.

Green asserts that *The Bleeding of the Stone*, situated in Northern Africa, is a story that doesn't associate itself with the disenchanted modern world and one that opts to group belonging as an only way of survival. She goes on to depict how 20th century technological and scientific progress contributed to the political violence emerging everywhere in the world and that Libya's situation is not different. Green acknowledges that it is a magical realist novel saying it is,

'hyper-aware of the violence and disenchantment of the modern world, employs playful, unexpected juxtapositions – of empiricism and magic (2017, p. 67).'

As her research concern is empathy, intersubjectivity and ethics, Green doesn't venture far into discussing the magical aspects of the novel. It is different from the present research in framework as this paper specifically focuses on the trend and role of magical realism bringing out a different finding. However it gives a valuable insight into how the people in the desert empathize with their animals and environment, which is helpful for the discussion of the animist feature of magical realism in this thesis.

Discussing how place is significant in this particular novel, Awin Al-Fouri's article *Place in Ibrahim Al-Kawni's novel "Nazeef al-Hajar" (The Bleeding of the Stone)* published in a journal at Jordan University in 2018, shows that the novel has used magical elements to stress upon the Sahara's significance beyond serving as a mere setting for the story. He claims, "The place reflects the mysterious inter-related relationship that links the characters of the novel into one entity and destiny in which drama mingles with legends, philosophy, magic and superstitions (2018, p. 151)."

Al-Fouri further argues that the desert is actually the protagonist of the novel having unique status and distinguished features. Though place is an important point in magical realism, this article differs from this thesis in the former's framework with findings on how the Sahara is influential shaping the identity and the fate of its inhabitants.

Mythical and Miracle Discourse in Al-Koni's The Bleeding of the Stone is another article by Miloud Shoniv (2011) which is mainly about mythical elements in the novel and how the overall theme attained through them. Shoniv claims that Al-Koni uses mythical discourse to reveal the timeless struggle between humankind and nature. Though the discussion on myth is handy as it is one major part of magical realism, it stops at that without further commentary on magical realism which differs from this thesis.

An Invisible Existence Between Life and Death in Al-Koni's The Bleeding of the Stone is also an article by Majed Alenezi, published in the journal of Literature and Art Studies in the Tennessee State University in 2018. This article can be taken as an eco-critical reading that explores the

relationship between man and desert and how they both struggle for survival aligning them with religion, place and time in the ultimate search for truth and freedom.

The above articles just touch upon the magical realist nature of the *The Bleeding of the Stone*, however apart from commenting on it and pointing out a few verifications, they don't discuss the mode in detail.

Zakes Mda's *Heart of Redness* has received critical acclaim and been studied from different angles. It is a South African novel published in 2000. *African Traditional Culture and Modernity in Zakes Mda's The Heart of Redness* is a 2005 Masters thesis by Prosper Ndayi Birama. The thesis analyzes how modernity and tradition interact in the novel. It also focuses on the hybrid stance of the major character's perspective, valuing his African roots and also accepting the modern circumstances around him. Its reading of hybridity, oppression of the colonial history and also the post-apartheid realities is related to the present study though its major focus is not magical realism. Though the framework of the study is predominantly hybridity that leads the analysis through the dual forces that pull the major character; his cultural background and his contemporary status, it concludes that *The Heart of Redness* is a work of fiction that criticizes the existing conditions of the context in which it is set.

The Heart of Redness also seems to draw the attention of eco-critics. And *Celebrating Indigenous Ecological Connections in Zakes Mda's Heart of Redness* is one of them. Here the writer of the dissertation, Shalini Jain, states, "Mda approaches his own country's anguished historical realities with a narrative style that combines aspects of magic realism, notably one with deep-roots in African folklore and oral traditions" (p. 207). The dissertation posits that *The Heart of Redness* explores human-nature relations, its major theme being conservation. It bring out the significance of relationships in the novel; humans with other humans, humans with their surroundings, and also humans with their past that holds their traditional practices with meaningful impacts in the present. Hence, the conservation theme do not only apply to environment but it goes beyond - to all the factors in a given context, forming a chain of interactions and making it possible for humans to survive.

The Heart of Redness was also among the novels discussed by Melakneh Mengistu's dissertation entitled *Post-colonialism and Mainstream Anglophone African Novel [ca. 1970-2000]: A Comparative Approach* (2008). He explored the novel from multiple dimensions. The title's apparent challenging stance to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness,* its reflection of the post-apartheid anomalies, empowered female characters and magical realism are among the issues raised. Melakneh briefly explores two elements of magical realism prevalent in the novel; binary oppositions and near fantastic elements. Moreover he compares the major character of J. M. Coetzee's Discgrace David Louri with John Dalton and Camugu of *The Heart of Redness.* Melakneh also mentions that "Other elements of magical realism like ambiguity, cyclical repetition of history in the context of South African politics, quasi-terrorism and folkloristic details are apparently pervasive in this novel" (2008, p. 193).

Derek Alan Barker's *Escaping the Tyranny of Magic Realism? A Discussion of the Term in Relation to the Novels of Zakes Mda* (2008) is an article that discusses when Mda uses magical realism and when he does not. While not denying that Zakes Mda makes use of magical realism in his narratives, Barker suggests that the way Mda applies the technique differs from novel to novel. He wonders why Mda doesn't use magical realism consistently and if the author thinks the mode is not logical or sufficient at times.

Barker speculates that if Mda sometimes utilizes magical realism throughout a novel but some other times he deserts the approach. The fact that different scholars interpreted Zakes Mda's magical realist approach differently gave Barker a hint to go forward and suggest that maybe we could discard magical realism altogether in relation to the Mda's novels. He suggests the focus could rather be on the specific magical realist features Mda incorporates scantily. The fact that in *The Heart of Redness,* the setting shifts back to the 18th century, to an extraordinary cattle-killing event perhaps provides the story with the context to employ magical realism comfortably, suggests Barker. He concludes that "Mda does employ this narrative strategy… wherever the subject matter deals with extreme and inexplicable inhumanity or ontological rifts (2008, p. 17)." However, the concern of the article being proving that Mda's use of magical realism is inconsistent differs from what is explored in the present study.

Brenda Cooper, in her book entitled Magical Realism in West African Fiction: Seeing with a Third Eye has used Kojo b. Laing's *Woman of the Aeroplanes* as one of the West African novels that has made use of magical realism. She has read through Ben Okri, Syl Cheney-Coker and Kojo B. Laing's novels in search of their distinct ways of magical realist approaches. She labels the kind of magical realism Laing used in his novels as 'intermediate magic' arguing that the magic he uses broods somewhere in the middle of the past and the present, the traditional and the modern, the African colonized and the colonizer. She concludes that the magical realism Laing employs serves a kind of intermediary purpose, trying to bring together differences in order to achieve humanity "by way of the creative and enriching embrace of other cultures, races and nations" (2004, p. 204).

What differs Cooper's research from this study is that it is preoccupied with the idea of pinpointing a single purpose that Laing is after in his employment of magical realism. She has gone to the extent of interviewing the author in order to find out what he aspires to achieve when he employs the technique and he answers by saying he endorses the notion 'Change must come' (p. 157). Though both Cooper and Laing both refer to the general theme he is after in all his novels, researcher of this study has also understood it in *Woman of the Aeroplanes*.

However, Cooper does not go into the specific magical realist features *Woman of the Aeroplane* has employed nor she is interested in the driving aspect for the employment of the technique. In relation to the significance of magical realism's application in this particular novel, her focus is limited to the role the approach plays positioning itself in the middle of hybrid entities; its quest for a better future by advocating change.

The other study done on *Woman of the Aeroplanes* is Kropp Dakubu's article entitled *Representations and Transformations in the Fiction of KOjo Laing: "The Language of Authentic Being" Revisited* (1998). Dakubu here centers on what Laing's novels represent through his use of language and how his way of writing transforms from one novel to the next. Dakubu claims that Laing has adopted increasingly deviating style in *Woman of the Aeroplane* compared to the ones prior to it. He says this novel in particular is less angry in its tone and choice of diction than the rest of Laing's works.

Specifically examining the choice of language of Kojo Laing, Dakubu states that the author uses "highly expressive language of imagery" and that it lacks what other writers exhibit in their commonly shared "continuities of theme and style" (p. 358). Though this might make it difficult to easily understand for readers, in a way, Dakubu concludes that Laing has created his own authentic style. Except for one common aspect that is highlighted in the story which is humanity, this article differs from the present thesis in interest area as well as argument.

Woman of the Aeroplanes is also one focal point in Moussa Issifou's dissertation *Hybridizing Political Criticism in the Postcolonial African Novel: Magical Realism as Aesthetics of Necessity* (2012). The study investigates the use of magical realism for political criticism in postcolonial African novels by Kojo Laing, Ben Okri, and Ngugi wa Thiongo. Examining *Woman of the Aeroplanes* as well as *Wizard of the Crow* (which is another novel selected in the present study), this dissertation has shared subjects with the present study in its acknowledgement of the two novels as magical realists and that the authors have applied it as a mechanism to comment on the respective contexts political agendas.

However, the thesis differs from the present on in its analysis of the novels usage of magical realism as an aesthetic of necessity while the present one is interested studying magical realism as a mode along with its relevance's that are not limited only to the political arena. It goes beyond and investigates other significances in relation to social, economic, environmental and other issues. Moreover, Issifou's dissertation goes on to involve existentialism to study *Woman of the Aeroplane* while he examines *Wizard of the Crow* from psychoanalysis perspective which the present thesis does not venture into.

The novel selected from Congo *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez* by Sony Labou Tansi was published in 1985. This novel, situated in an imaginary nation with only two towns mentioned as nemesis entities, centers on a people dealing with multifaceted problems especially with an outrageously and deliberately ignorant and brutal government. The researcher of this thesis could not find different studies that have been carried out on this novel. However, three studies are included here that read through the story from different perspectives.

The first one is Mashihi Thapelo's MA thesis entitled *Narrating Postcolonial Crisis: the Postcolonial State and the Individual in the Works of Sony Labou Tansi* (1999). This paper examines two novels by Tansi, *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez* being one of them. The aim of the study is to examine the use of allegory and irony in the two novels. Mashihi's focus being revealing the postcolonial realities in the African settings Labou Tansi creates, she centers on the concept of 'self' in relation to the individual characters depicted in the story. She argues that the employment of allegory and irony as narrative techniques has enabled the author to narrate the postcolonial crisis in a better way. The thesis also compares characterization especially female characters in *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez,* with other female characters found in celebrated novels from across Africa. It concludes the use of allegory and irony in the novels as a narrative strategy has helped the author to show and challenge the oppression and despair in the postcolonial societies depicted in the stories.

This MA thesis differs from the present dissertation in the subject matter it covers. It doesn't giving detailed account of magical aspects found in the *Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez*. Rather the major interest here is the individual that is shown through allegory and irony. The study focuses more on singling out characters from the town novels of Tansi and discussing allegory and irony's use within them, comparing the characters with other African novels which are not the intents of the present thesis.

The other study done on *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez* is Annie Gagiano's article *African Authors and the Postcolonial Present* (2015). This article focuses on contemporary issues of postcolonial contexts in Africa the impacts of maladministration, inter-ethnic conflicts, violence and social problems. In her discussion of the above subject matters, Gagiano uses *Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez* as one of the African novels among others depicting these predicaments.

Gagiano categorizes *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez* under surrealist tragic comedies list. This particular dissertation differes from Gagiano's article in its discussion and argument that this same novel is a magical realist one; exploring its features and the relevance of the employment of the mode.

The other novel selected is Ngugi wa Thiongo's *Wizard of the Crow* published in 2005. Tesfamaryam G/Mesqel's dissertation (2016) entitled *Magical Realism in Selected Post-Colonial Anglophone African Novels* is another study from Addis Ababa University that has also used *Wizard of the Crow* as data. This dissertation focuses on magical realism's postcolonial stance and reads four Anglophone novels from Africa using postcolonial reading strategy. The novels selected for the thesis are Ben Okri's *Songs of Enchantment* and *Infinite Riches*, Ngugi wa Thiongo's *Wizard of the Crow* and Zakes Mda's *Ways of Dying.* Reading these novels, the study explores how magical realism is used as a narrative strategy in postcolonial literature. The choice of novels in Tesfamaryam's study focuses on Anglophone novels while the present thesis has incorporated francophone and Arabic novels (with official English translations) in addition to the Anglophone ones. The present thesis has also taken regional representation into consideration in order to be able to detect how magical realism plays out in literary works of the northern, southern, central, eastern and western African settings.

Furthermore, the magical realist characteristics emphasized in Tesfamaryam's study are those related to the narratives used as strategies namely matter-of-fact tone, defamiliarization and defocalization while he emphasizes on how magical realism is used to depict the socio-political aspects of postcolonial Africa while the present dissertation goes beyond into looking other features of the narrative technique as well. The framework Tesfamariam used for the analysis is mainly postcolonial theories of Ashcroft et. al., Ania Loomba and Anne Hegerfeldt in order to read the novels for their depiction of historical realities, decolonization and hybridity. The present thesis includes other theories like that of Ato Quayson's concepts of folklore and magical realism, Harry Garuba's animism, Gayatric Spivak and Homi K. Bhabha's otherness and hybridity theories to read the selected novels for their practices and significances.

Joseph McLaren's article *From the National to the Global: Satirical Magical Realism in Ngugi's Wizard of the Crow* (2008) argues that *Wizard of the Crow* uses satirical magical realism in the story. McLaren notes that the story is a mockery of the political leadership in Africa. According to him, the imaginary country of Aburiria represents Africa and its corrupted system. Using satirical magical realism, McLaren asserts that *Wizard of the Crow* ridicules the leaders of postcolonial Africa showing how they have made their respective countries dependent and

manipulated by the western institutions. Issues of 'race, diaspora, eco-criticism and globalization' are discussed in the novel and in addressing these issues, Ngugi mainly resorted to mockery. Moreover this mockery, McLaren notes, is portrayed, "in terms that stretch the boundaries of so-called normative reality" (2008, p. 151).

The present study argues in line with the above article, that Ngugi used magical realism as a mode in *Wizard of the Crow* and that satirizing the existing conditions through it is one element. However there is more to the novel than the article's singled-out point which is its satirizing feature. The present study intends to further explore all possible dimensions the novels could be read in relation with magical realism.

The other article reviewed about *Wizard of the Crow* is entitled *Identity, Politics and Gender Dimensions in Ngugi Wa Thiongos's, Wizard of the Crow* (2013) by Njogu Waita. This article identifies these three dimensions in critically reading the novel. Waita notes that the African identity is depicted in the novel as affected by the consecutive historical circumstances 'slavery, colonialism, neo-colonialism and globalization' and that a solution to the ongoing conflict among citizens suggests that Africa should reminisce and regain its original identity.

The article acknowledges that politics is in the heart of the story while other social aspects around it give more flavors to it. Waita also did a feminist reading of the novel suggesting that the female character Nayawara is a representation of present day African woman who is ready to tackle societal evils as much as the men do. She concludes that Wizard of the Crow proposes that Africans must resist not only internal dominations but also unnecessary global impacts. It suggests countries in Africa can grow while maintaining their original identity just like India and China.

Wizard of the Crow is also discussed in *Gilbert Shand Ndi's dissertation State/Society: Narrating Transformations in Selected African Novels* (2014). The aim of this dissertation is to study African states and their relationships with their societies within them as represented in African Fiction. The textual representation of state/society bond being the main agenda of the paper, it also ventures into the role of the author's intervention between society and state in their fictional representations. Selecting novels for the study, *Wizard of the Crow*, being one of them,

the researcher compares their representation of dynamics in their respective contexts. Furthermore, he explores the author's evolving literary capacities and the transformation of their works. This dissertation doesn't go into the narrative approach of magical realism which sets it apart from the present one.

The present study differs from the previous ones as it takes on magical realism and tries to probe into an African practice of the approach and in doing so to explore what relevance it has in exposing and critiquing prevalent issues in the continent. Studies done on magical realism range from the mode's postmodernist aspects to its postcolonial affiliations in fictional texts and cinematic works of different regions in the world. However this review of related literature focused only on the related topics examined in the selected in order to identify the gap.

The researcher of this particular study couldn't come across any thesis done, especially by Ethiopian students, examining the practice and significance of magical realism in African novels of different regions. This study differs from previous ones by stressing upon the fact that magical realism may have its characteristics in African novels that are shaped by the African context from which it springs; unlike its manifestation as a marvelous realism in Latin America arising from the continent's geopolitical and carnivalisque nature or as a postmodernist technique in other parts of the world.

This thesis generally differs from the reviewed studies in its entertainment of five different novels from five different regions of Africa. Searching for magical realism's manifestation in different cultural settings in Africa, it compares and contrasts the novels of their practice and significance of magical realism's employment. Beyond its search for the practices and significances, it also attempts to look into the driving forces behind its usage and what informs the novelists in their attempt to apply this particular literary approach.

Chapter Three

Theoretical Framework

It has been almost a hundred years since the term magical realism came into use. Starting from its coinage in 1925 by Franz Roh to describe a post-expressionist art exhibition, magical realism has been the focus of numerous literary enquiries. Finding its defining moment in the 1960's Latin American literary boom period, in practice it has evolved from a resistance tool in postcolonial contexts against the long established realist approach of expression into becoming an international trend. From *Lo Real Maravilloso* by Alejo Carpentier in Latin America to *Remystification of Narratives* by Wendy B. Faris and *Magical Realism and the African Fiction* by Ato Quayson, different scholarly studies have been carried out on magical realism from different perspectives. Tracing the origin of the technique to pre-modern mythical and folkloric elements, comparing and contrasting it with surrealist and science fiction narratives, relating it to modernist and pre-modernist tenets and identifying its different characters in different contexts, magical realism has been enriched as a concept slotted within different theories like post-colonialism and postmodernism.

3.1 Magical Realism as a Postcolonial Device

Magical realism is believed to "demarcate a fluid boundary between postmodernism and post-colonialism" (Stephen, 2015, p. 1) as its characteristics conform to both literary theories in one way or another. This narrative technique allows novelists to move beyond providing a one sided view of a single entity and provides them with materials to entertain multiple perspectives of multiple features and realms. It is one tool in postcolonial discourse that explains the past and present peculiarities of the present decolonized space. Considering realism as a hegemonic representation of the Western colonial powers, writers in postcolonial settings opt for other types of literary modes. Magical realism comes in handy here as it permits different ideas and bodies to merge and come together in order to tell a story in a different and balanced way. Incorporating fantastic elements with the commonplace, magical realism is considered to have decentering tenets of what has been considered as the center, providing space for the marginalized and giving voice to the voiceless. The following features of magical realism fall under the postcolonial

thought as well highlighting hybridity in narratives and emphasizing on the history and culture of the formerly othered bodies.

3. 1. 1. Decolonizing Elements

Brenda Cooper suggests that African magical realists write for three reasons. One is to find a decolonized and authentic African way of expression by challenging the imposed imperial narrative, the second is to trace back to the 'idealized past' and celebrate the mythological aspects embedded in the African culture. The other and again a mirroring element of the book's subject matter, is how the magical realist fiction goes back and forth between digging up the past and defying the impositions in the present. She stresses on the third point by calling it 'traffic'. This book has been of a major help in handing essential tools to the present paper in reading the selected novels and in exploring what informs the practice of incorporating magical elements, especially in relation with binary oppositions.

Stephen Slemon's article *Magical Realism as Postcolonial Discourse* is mainly engaged with how magical realism is concerned with communities rather than individuals and how it serves postcolonial societies in giving an outlet to their thinking and interacting with language. Though his choice of fiction is from Canada, he made connections between magical realism and indigenous culture that can be applicable to the African novels selected for this paper.

Slemon stresses on the role language plays in magical realist fictions in setting the discourse for the postcolonial context. He specifically suggests the notion of continuity that magical realism may promote in creating a bridge between the past that was interrupted by colonialism and the present that is struggling to find its own truth, its own color in the former colonies (1995, p. 409).

Historical accounts purposefully ignored by colonialists to bend the truth to their advantages are also promoted in magical realism, according to Slemon. And magical realist texts create an atmosphere that allows re-enactment of the past that goes as far as near mythic points of origins. "… the silenced, marginalized, or dispossessed voices within the colonial encounter themselves from the record of 'true' history (1995, p. 414)."

On the other hand, magical realism can also ignore real happenings in favor of fictionalized versions. “Given the very unappealing nature of real history, this preference for fabrication is entirely understandable,” says Slemon (p. 412). As history cannot be treated apart from time, space, culture, tradition and the like, Slemon’s discussion of it is of immense importance to the present study, in showing another dimension to look at magical realism.

3. 1. 2. Hybridity

One of the major postcolonial critics, Homi Bhabha, claims that “The very idea of a pure, 'ethnically cleansed' national identity can only be achieved through the death, literal and figurative, of the complex interweavings of history, and the culturally contingent borderlines of modern nationhood (1994:7). The binary opposition between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ is no longer two distinct categories. Rather it has discarded the duality or polarity and has formed a merger as a consequence of colonialism. It is interesting that the system that created the polar perspective through stereotyping and othering has brought this merger upon itself.

There is an evident evolution in the colonial setting that the traditional center which is the body that involves the elements of the colonizer and the othered or marginalized entity in which the colonized is manifested have brought through their contact a new kind of identity. This colonial experience has paved way to the present postcolonial reality where the two entities have to accept one another as co-existing parallel ones where one is unavoidable as the other by the other.

Magical realism entertains the above notion through its feature which is hybridity where “the ‘other’ is among ‘us’, and even more, ‘we’ are the ‘other’” (Sayegh, 2008, p.1). This doesn’t mean that there is oneness of these two differences. It rather means the past contacts of the polar oppositions of the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ have created the present multicultural reality in postcolonial contexts. And this is what Homi K. Bhabha stresses upon. He says, “The shadow of the other falls upon the self” (1994, p. 85). The hybrid postcolonial setting has no place for extreme separation of beings; rather it is a space where polar opposites like the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ no longer perceive one another with enemity. According to Bhaha, this process has brought a new identity that is constructed of the hybrid forms which is manifested mainly in

cultural hybridity. "The 'middle passage' of contemporary culture, as with slavery itself, is a process of displacement and disjunction" (p. 5).

Ashcroft et. al (1995) also agree with the notion that the possibility of pure culture in the postcolonial context is somehow limited. They define hybridity as "the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization" (2003, p. 118). This new creation possessing more than one entity can take different forms including linguistic, political or cultural.

Hybridity is considered to be a primary feature of magical realism in postcolonial settings as the mode's basic preoccupation is celebrating differences and stressing on bringing together incompatible entities like that of the magical and the mundane. It is closely related with the notion of binary oppositions that was discussed earlier. Brendan Cooper states:

> *Hybridity, the celebration of "mongrelism" as opposed to ethnic certainties, has been shown to be a fundamental aspect of magical realist writing. A syncretism between paradoxical dimensions of life and death, historical reality and magic, science and religion, characterizes the plots, themes and narrative structures of magical realist novels. In other words, urban and rural, Western and indigenous, black, white and Mestizo – this cultural, economic and political cacophony is the amphitheatre in which magical realist fictions are performed (2004, p. 32).*

She goes on explaining that the plots of magical realist fictions have their own purpose in bringing out a deeper and truer reality that the conventional narratives cannot capture. They attain this by raising ideas concerning 'borders, change, mixing, and syncretizing' (p. 32). This goes in line with postmodernist thoughts either. Lather Patti (1991) claims:

> *The essence of the postmodern argument is that the dualisms which continue to dominate Western thoughts are inadequate for understanding a world of multiple causes and effects interacting in complex and non-linear ways, all of which are rooted in a limitless array of historical and cultural specificities. (21)*

In this postcolonial time where purity of any kind; be it cultural or racial is almost impossible, identity markers have changed. And literary texts have to cope up with this new reality in order to portray it in a meaningful way. Homi Bhabha claims that there is a 'third space' within the binary divisions where there is no certainty of identity. Bhabha argues that the cultural purity or nationalism or belongingness which hegemonic narratives promote has been replaced by the 'Third Space of Enunciation' where cultural hybridity is taking place constantly. His objective is to argue against grand claims that there are still pure cultures existing. According to him, the experience and legacy of colonialism has erased that.

3. 1. 3. Otherness

Otherness in postcolonial discourse refers to social and geographical distancing created by the colonial empire in order to set new identity markers. It served as a manipulating tool of the colonized people. The concept of 'otherness' comes from perceiving groups of people or communities by another group for the benefit of the later in the fictitious identity construction that paves way to exploitation of different kinds. Edward Said's renowned idea of Orientalism which was instrumental in the colonial process or experience is one instance.

Gayatri Spivak, a critic well known for her concepts and theories of 'otherness' and 'othering' explains these ideas tracing their origin to the beginning of colonialism, especially in the Indian case. She classifies the nature of othering in three forms: othering the colonized physically on his own turf letting him know he is no longer a master of himself nor his land because he doesn't have the weaponry means to defend what belonged to him, othering the colonized psychologically letting him know that he is morally inferior because of his different outlooks on life and living, othering the colonized materially by denying him access to knowledge and technology as well as the means to own arms (Spivak, 1985, p. 253-56). Spivak stresses the fact that othering is manifested in gender, race and status divisions as well highlighting on the gender aspect specifically. This has played major roles in the identity formation of those who colonized and those who were colonized in the past. All this is still going on in the postcolonial context too, only taking a different structure.

This notion of a certain group perceiving the other in a stereotyping and degrading way which has been implemented in different realist and colonial texts has been subverted by writers of the third world through the use of magical realism, creating their own way of expressing their own reality, making themselves the self (the center) rather than the other (the marginalized). Chanady notes:

> *Ethnographers established a binary opposition between European civilization with its consciousness of historical heritage and ability to engage in self-analysis and 'primitive' culture with its spontaneity and lack of self-reflexivity, thus arguing that European scholars were indispensable for the understanding of the social and political organization of primitive societies (*Zamora and Faris, 1995, *p. 135).*

This 'otherness' of 'primitive mentality' which is explored especially by European intellectuals, Chanady asserts, is adapted by magical realists "in their narrative strategies of identity construction (Zamora and Faris, 1995, p. 139)." Thus, local perspectives in third world societies have found representation in magical realism through a 'non-European focalizer', blurring the aforementioned distinction between the 'primitive other' and the 'civilized West'.

'Otherness' in the postcolonial thoughts, as Bhabha posits, is more of within the 'self' rather than the traditional binary division of the 'self' and the 'other'. According to him, the traditional binary divisions are no longer applying in the postcolonial context because they are intermingled and a new kind of identity is formed which is ambivalent, owning a thing of the two, belonging neither here nor there. So now the 'othering' is taking place within the 'self' and this is a new kind of identity by itself. The ambivalent identity is created; there is a "construction of a political object that is new, neither the one nor the other" (1994: 37).

Ashcroft et. al. also raise a relevant thought here which is the postcolonial reality where the formerly established polarized systems are disrupted. They further discuss the direction of perception which had been one manifestation of power relations in the past is changed now. They claim, "Imperial binarism always assume a movement in one direction … from the colonizer to the colonized… but just as post-colonial identity emerges in the ambivalent spaces… the dynamic of change is not all in one direction; it is in fact transcultural" (2003, p.

21). Now there is a middle ground for these binaries which is the ambivalent state of no side dominating the other. Rather, the hybrid state is formed just like the magical and the real in magical realism, a possible space is created for the self and the other to co-exist.

3.2 Magical Realism within Postmodernism

The speech made in Philadelphia in 1994 by Vaclav Havel, the former president of Czech Republic, as quoted here by Marleen S. Barr (2000, p. xiv), has been echoed by many for its depiction of postmodernism. He said:

> *The distinguishing features of such transitional periods are a mixing and blending of cultures and a plurality or parallelism of intellectual and spiritual worlds. These are periods when all consistent value systems collapse, when cultures distant in time and space are discovered or rediscovered. They are periods when there is a tendency to quote, to imitate, and to amplify, rather than to state with authority or integrate. New meaning is gradually born from the encounter, or the intersection, of many different elements. This state of mind or of the human world is called postmodernism.*

This speech indeed rings a similar tune in another literary technique; magical realism. Emphasizing on postmodernism's destabilizing tendency of existing modes of expressions, Encyclopedia claims, "One of the main outgrowths of Postmodernism is the disintegration of concepts that used to be taken for granted and assumed to be stable. These include the nature of language, the idea of knowledge, and the notion of a universal truth." The critic, Wendy Faris, asserts this claiming that "The 'abnormality' and 'distortion' formerly condemned deviations from a given model, were now considered excellent aesthetic effects." And what set postmodernism apart from modernism are its celebrated deviations like that of pastiche, intertextuality and metafiction with magical realism being one of them.

Magical realism has features that fit within the postmodern literary conventions as they do in post-colonialism. Wendy Faris asserts, "Because of its discursive heterogeneity, magical realism has also contributed to the growth of postmodern literary sensibility" (2004, p. 1). Though it is considered as a postcolonial device undermining hegemonic literary conventions, magical

realism has postmodernist temperaments in its novelty, inclusion of deviations, and re-creation of "submerged narrative traditions" (p. 2) within the Western context as well.

3.2.1 Fantastical Elements

For a text to be considered as a magical realist one, the presence of extraordinary happenings or objects is mandatory. The merger of the two realms; that is of the magic and the real in no particularly prioritized arrangement, makes up the magical realist narratives. This feature is what makes magical realism a major deviation from the realistic approach.

The inclusion of fantastical elements in a given story within realistic scenario can be taken as one element of postmodernist literature for postmodernism blurs the division between the real and the unreal. Gerhard Hofman (2005) poses the following idea about reality. He says:

> *Things change in postmodern fiction by the simple fact that it is no longer clear what is real and what is fiction. With the blurring of borderlines the boundaries between the ordinary and the extraordinary are also obscured. The mode of representation obfuscates the borderlines between the actual and possible and makes the possible the truly actual and the actual only a version of the possible (341).*

The blurring of the dichotomy between the real and the unreal with the help of matter-of-fact tone and mundane scenarios is one doing of magical realism. The fantastical or irreducible element is shared by different scholars in their exploration of magical realism and Wendy Faris is one of them. She lists the presence of the fantastic as a major feature referring to it as 'irreducible element of magic (Faris, 2004, p. 7).' Irreducible elements happen, for Faris, when "an event occurs that cannot be explained according to the laws of the universe as they are formulated according to empirically based discourse" (p. 7). According to her, in magical realist fictions it is not easy to find proof for happenings that trigger questions in the minds of readers. These fantastic occurrences that are intermingled in a seamless weave may actually suggest the central idea of the story.

Slemon also acknowledges the mandatory presence of the fantastic in magical realist fictions saying both the ordinary and the extraordinary exist in such works never intending 'to arrange

themselves into any kind of hierarchy (1995, p. 410).' The fantastic elements presence doesn't affect the setting as a foreign entity. Rather it is integrated with the mundane effortlessly and it doesn't get acknowledged as something out of the ordinary. That is what makes magical realism unique from other genres like science fiction or surrealism as discussed far above in this chapter.

The postmodernist thought of binary oppositions raises such polarized features like the magic and the real and how one assumes superiority over the other. Jacques Derrida claims, "Such oppositions constitute a tacit hierarchy, in which the first term functions as privileged and superior and the second term as derivative and inferior (Abrams, 1999, p. 58)." Here Derrida refers to phrases like male/female, life/death. In the case of magical realism, binary opposition is an important concept. But it ironically gives priority to the periphery over the traditional center when not offering equal rights of entertainment to both parties. Nasser Maleki, another literature scholar, discusses hybridity in relation to binary oppositions attributing their domains as central and marginalized. He notes, "We, as living in a certain culture, think and act similarly in situations when we want to pick out one of the concepts in the binary oppositions or while seeking truth or a center. For example, we give superiority to life rather than death (1998, p. 67)." Maleki puts forward his ideas in the realistic circumstances just like Derrida.

This idea is reflected in relation to magical realist narratives in Brendan Cooper's *Magical Realism in West African Fiction: Seeing with a Third Eye* (2004). She has made a contribution in discussing how the mode plays out specifically in West African context emphasizing on the binary oppositions that hold polarized stances and yet synchronize with each other through magical realism so as to discover a certain meaning. She calls this space created between two polarities like 'life and death', 'history versus magic', etc. 'a third space' which captures the very essence of magical realism. This third space can also be "a theoretical position that might be called a reconstituted Marxism; a middle ground between Marxism and postmodernist theory" (p. 1). Here magical realism captures a space between its highlighted binary oppositions to demonstrate power and oppression in human relations. Here the prominent element is class. This division and clash between the oppressed and the oppressor is clearly a Marxist focal point having intersecting points with 'postmodernist concerns' like 'liminality, diversity, multivalency' (2004, p. 1).

Though the degree of achievement may vary in different magical realist works, what they mainly attempt to capture is 'the paradox of the unity of opposites' (p.1), according to Cooper. This very much mirrors the term magical realism itself; merging extreme sides together and yet coming out as an independent technique.

3.2.2 Absurdity (Black Humor)

While the dictionary defines the word 'absurdity' as 'the quality or state of being ridiculous or wildly unreasonable' (Oxford 2020, Lexico.com), as a literary theory it is more than that. Black humor is also defined as 'a form of humor that regards human suffering as absurd rather than pitiable' (Dictionary.com). The literal meaning of these two terms is given from dictionary here in order to be able to see the similarity of their denotation.

Abrams speaks of absurd literature and black humor in one category positioning them between the modern and postmodern literature while inclining more to postmodernism for their disruptive effect. The absurdist literature came into the picture after the Second World War to describe the meaninglessness of life that the war brought. Just like magical realism absurdist literature also disintegrates itself from traditional values in literature. Literary icons like Samuel Beckett and Albert Camus made absurdity popular in their works like Waiting for Godot and Endgame this literary device that endorses that there is no universal truth or meaning shows man's journey through life as a lonely and isolated being.

Abrams says that absurdity is depicted in works of fiction "which have in common the sense that the human condition is essentially absurd, and that this condition can be adequately represented only in works of literature that are themselves absurd" (1999, p. 1) while defining black humor "as baleful, naive, or inept characters in a fantastic … world play out their roles in … which the events are often simultaneously comic, horrifying, and absurd" (p. 196).

Mentioning that absurdity has its roots in literary genres like that of surrealism, Abrams goes on to say absurdity is incorporated in works that question the conventional literary tradition and that are essentially rebellious. Irrationalism is one character of absurdity, according to Abrams, and he mentions Waiting for Godot and Endgame, both plays from Europe, categorizing them as absurd.

Martin Esslin is the one who coined the term Theatre of the Absurd which is used to denote absurdist plays. Esslin (1969) claims that absurdity in literature is attained through showing, "a grotesquely heightened and distorted picture of a world that has gone mad" (p.2). Absurdity is similar with magical realism in its distorted time and place and its "departure from realistic characteristics and situations". This device reflects the "senseless and absurdity of life and death." (Encyclopedia)

In his dissertation entitled *Violence in African Literature*, Omar Diop (2002) mentions two psychologists; Sigmund Freud and James Gillian, and their perspectives on violence. When Freud says that violence is rooted in human instinct and that it is inevitable, Gillian on the other hand stresses on the reactive nature of violence which can be triggered by 'social, cultural and economic conditions' (p.1).

Violence in wars, dictatorships, and other engagements has been reflected in literature using different modes. However the absurdity that violence brings upon societies in different times and contexts seem to correlate better with the magical realist mode as it has several elements suitable to capture such states. The violence of the Second World War that brought the Theatre of the Absurd afore is also mirrored in African reality as well. Africa, having several states within it with ongoing political, social and economic instability, is where absurdity is one part of life that can be reflected in its literature. Atrocities that have occurred in world wars, ethnic conflicts, religious disputes, and other kinds of clashes committed by governments on peoples; armies on civilians; and individuals on individuals emit a kind of unreal sense about them. Believing they have actually taken place is difficult. They seem and sound unreal. And magical realism, with all its unconventionality, comes in handy to depict such scenarios fittingly.

Here absurdity and black humor offer essential tools in portraying such unreal realities. When the writers paint these absurd images they blend them with satire in order to ground the unreal-like in the real and together these two features give a clear image of the 'widespread contemporary condition of social cruelty, inanity, or chaos' (Abrams, 1999, p. 278).

Wendy Faris quotes Salman Rushdie saying, "Realism can no longer express or account for the absurd reality of the world we live in – a world which has capability of destroying itself at any

moment". Here Rushdie shares Ngugi's (2001) stand which magical realism is one possibility of expressing such absurd realities.

When we bring the concept of absurdity to the African literature, F. Odun Balongun (1984) posits that it "developed as a reaction to the general world malaise and the absurd conditions of modern Africa" (p. 44). This might put absurdity in parallel position with that of magical realism. However, this thesis has used it as one concept under magical realism for some specific elements of absurdity are evident in magical realist fictions.

These characteristics, according to Balongun are "realistic devices combined with hyperbole, irony and satire with, of course, a basic use of fantasy" (p. 44). The fantasy creates a kind of suspension of disbelief that normally absurd situations create when they happen in reality. As Balongun (1984) puts it absurdity is grounded in the "general dissatisfaction with politics, mounting crimes and violence" (p. 42). The themes of absurdity, cruelty and violence that are characteristic of absurdism are also prevalent in magical realism. These are also the matters reflected in the magical realist texts. And for this reason, this thesis has included absurdity, which is stretched to the extreme as to become humorous, as one aspect to study the novels with.

3.2.3. Defamiliarization

The notion of hesitation in magical realist narratives leads us to the concept of defamiliarization. Introduced into the circle of literary interpretation by the Russian Formalist, Viktor Shklovisky, in his book *Art as Technique,* defamiliarization is a literary device that denotes the special characteristic of language that can make an ordinary happening looking like having an extraordinary element in them. He claims that "the technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar', to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged" (1998, p. 16). According to Victor Shklovsky, the critical function of art is to rise above the routine of life by representing familiar things in unfamiliar ways.

Skimpkins claims that magical realist texts make use of defamiliarization "to radically emphasize common elements of reality, elements that are often present but have become virtually invisible because of their familiarity" (Zamora and Faris, 1995, p. 150). This is done to avoid the sense of

disbelief caused by 'the unusual ways of familiar things' (p. 150) to emphasize that originally they have magical assets.

According to Faris, magical realist texts "achieve a special kind of defamiliarization, not only with respect to familiar events and images but with respect to habitual realistic narrative referentiality, knowledge, and authority" (2004, p. 50). Ato Quayson adds on this saying that magical realist texts "should be read more as a literary defamiliarization of indigenous beliefs than a true replica of such beliefs in reality" (2009, p. 148). Therefore, the point here is that unfamiliar things are not just introduced into the magical realist narratives but the unfamiliar aspects of the familiar are highlighted as well.

3.2.4. Metafictional Dimension

Metafiction is one important feature of postmodernism which is shared by magical realism as well. Patricia Waugh, in her book *Metafiction: the Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (1984) defines metafiction as "fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality." This type of self-referencing writing also has a connection with magical realism, according to Wendy Faris. She stresses on the metafictional nature of magical realism. She says, "Metafictional dimensions are common in contemporary magical realism: the texts provide commentaries on themselves, often complete with occasional mises-en-abyme, those miniature emblematic texual self-portraits" (2004, p. 175).

Exploring Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* novel, Scott Skimpkins comes out with a different outlook of magical realist manifestation, which is self-reference. He notes:

> *"One Hundred Years of Solitude is 'about' a book titled One Hundred Years of Solitude…which questions and answers the situation by creating itself through the very workings of the novel it conceals itself within (*Zamora and Faris, 1995, p. 156).

Skimpkins brings this idea relating it to the inadequacy of language to signify a 'real' object or phenomenon and how it would seem superficial to assume that that same language may signify a

fantastic or imaginative happening. And Gabriel Garcia Marquez tried to overcome this impediment by using magical supplements in his novel and still letting the readers know that they are reading about another novel within the novel. This is yet another dimension to look at magical realism.

3.2.5. Disruption of Time and Space

Temporal distortion is description of postmodernism which is a commonality with magical realism. As Encyclopedia of Literary Terms puts it, "In [postmodernist] literary works, authors often disrupt expected time lines or change points of view and speakers in ways that disrupt and cause disintegration in the very literature they are writing." One of the genres that can be considered as a postmodernist technique, magical realism, also has this tendency. Wendy Faris claims, "Magical realism disturbs accepted ideas about time, space and identity" (2004, p. 7). In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the novel that critics often refer to in relation to magical realism demonstrates this notion best. It says, "Four years, eleven months and two days of rain, an insomnia plague that erases the past and the meaning of words, and a room where it is always March and always Monday (p. 1)." Such as the descriptions that are said to disrupt our sense of time, space and identity.

As much as magical realism celebrates bringing together different entities, it also disturbs accepted or known ideas concerning time and space. Faris gives an example from *Perfume* by Patrick Suskind (1985), mentioning a character who has a perfumed body that attracts a huge crowd that bother him following around him. Likewise he has the ability to smell anything across town.

Magical realism's unique treatment of time, space and identity shows its 'roots are in modernism and branches and leaves are in postmodernism" (p. 30), according to Faris. The concept of time no longer adheres to conventional frames and spaces are often used interchangeably, not fixed to a certain location. Identities of characters usually fall under question for they display a variety of persona within themselves and with their interaction with others. These tendencies have been evident in modernist writings as well but postmodernism takes them to an extreme level. Faris says that when modernism manifests these tendencies of characters playing with their psyche,

postmodernism reveals their hybrid nature within events. And magical realism allows this as hybridity and disruption are its expressions.

3. 2. 6. Authorial Reticence

When we say postmodernism breaks with former practices, it has many manifestations and authorial reticence is one of them. "Narrative expectations are upset as the author either contradicts the narrative or intrudes deliberately into the story line," says Encyclopedia. With regard to this, one of the points Amaryll Chanady raises about magical realism is 'authorial reticence,' in which the narrator in magical realist stories is never surprised about the extraordinary accounts he/she relates. Moreover, the narrator doesn't hold a judgmental stance 'about the veracity of the events, the authenticity of the worldview expressed by characters in the text" (Zamora and Faris, 1995, p. 30). The above notion of moment of hesitation is closely related with authorial reticence for the dilemma is created because of the ambiguity provided in the first place.

The fact that there is no clarification of these unlikely occurrences in magical realist texts makes the unexpected to be accepted as what happens every day in the physical world. The narrator is somehow detached relating the story in a matter-of-fact manner. Faris calls such narrators 'naïve' (2004, p. 91). The narrator goes on providing realistic details that surround an extraordinary happening or character to blur the line between the 'magical' and the 'real'.

3. 2. 7 Eternal Recurrence (Cyclical Time)

Gerhard Hofman (2005) categorizes eternal recurrence of events in fiction as one feature of postmodernism. He posits, "The cyclical mode of time has come to complement the linear one, not only in postmodern fiction but also in certain version of literary history" (p. 323). Tatyana Fedosova agrees with this saying, "Temporal distortion is used in postmodern fiction in a number of ways and takes a variety of forms, which range from fractured narratives to games with cyclical, mythical or spiral time" (2015, p. 77). Eternally recurring happenings within cyclical form of time is also shared by magical realist texts.

Chanady raises two interesting ideas in relation to the characteristics of magical realist texts. She refers to Alejo Carpentier's historical novel *The Kingdom of this World*, discussing it for its

structural and thematic experimentation to challenge the existing knowledge of history as it is recorded and to give an alternate glimpse into what it might have been. Just like other historical fictions, Carpentier has also incorporated fictional characters and inserted fictional events into the plot, of course apart from the marvelous happenings which make the text magical realist. However, what Chanady noted which the researcher of this paper found interesting is the *recurrence of incidents* as history is often noted to do so which she correlates with *identity formation* of what she calls 'primitive mentalities' as it is perceived by the west. These cyclic events have somehow shaped the mentalities and in turn the identities.

> *Carpentier creates a different chronology whose structure illustrates one of the dominant theme of the novel, eternal return and the cyclical notion of time of 'primitive' mentalities ... transformation of events into signifying network characterized by meaningful correspondences (Zamora and Faris, 1995, p. 138).*

These recurrences or 'involuntary repetitions' as Faris (2004, p. 127) calls them are included in the narratives purposefully to show reflections or create a mirroring effect that denotes the dual sides of reality.

3. 3 Magical Realisp Narrative Strategies

The Handbook of Narratology defines narrative strategy as "a use of certain narrative techniques and practices to achieve a certain goal" (2014). It is about the choices a writer makes in producing his narrative in techniques. Magical realism also makes use of different techniques as strategies. Two of them are discussed below.

3. 3. 1 Moment of Hesitation (Ambiguity)

In order to make the story in the text believable or at least create a sense of uncertainty in the mind of the reader (to the extent of igniting a dilemma about believing or not believing), writers use a mechanism which triggers hesitation or ambiguity. In Zamora and Faris, Skimpkins quotes Tzvetan Todorov making his point clear here saying, "I nearly reach the point of believing: that is the formula which sums up the spirit of the fantastic. Either total faith or total incredulity would lead us beyond the fantastic: it is hesitation which sustains its life" (1995, p. 155). To

avoid skepticism, magical realists use ordinary objects by giving them extraordinary functions, in a way saying that these objects have somehow inherently been created to serve such magical purposes. It is as if to say if we have looked closely to the objects, they always had this trait.

This moment of hesitation is related to what Faris calls 'unsettling doubt'. A magical realist work incorporates the irreducible elements, and Faris states, that makes "the reader experience some unsettling doubts in the effort to reconcile two contradictory understandings of events (2004, p. 17)." This element of unsettling doubt is included in magical realist stories for a reason. Faris states, "Another possible strategy for the reader [confronted with unsettling doubts] is to interpret a particular instance of magic in an otherwise realistic fiction as nothing more than allegory (p. 20)". Allegory, according to Abrams, is "a narrative in which the agents and actions, and sometimes the setting as well, are contrived by the author to make coherent sense on the "literal," or primary, level of signification, and at the same time to signify a second, correlated order of signification" (1999, p. 5). This simply means that a particular subject is raised disguised as another matter. Therefore the 'magical' in magical realism could be interpreted as the 'symbolic' meaning of the 'real' or the 'literal'.

3.3.2. Defocalization

The multi-perspective approach in magical realism is another issue that is discussed by Scott Skimpkins. In magical realist texts, we see a single occurrence from multiple viewpoints to give the scenario a general glimpse and make it more understandable. This gives the text an extra push and prevents disbelief because every day-to-day happening in the real world also have multiple viewers. The perceiver may differ, how it is perceived may differ, why it is perceived may differ and the sum of all this gives its own flavor to the thing or incident that is perceived. Skimpkins says: "… the consciously polyscenic text portrays more accurately an important aspect of reality, for there are always many different viewpoints of something at any given moment" (Zamora and Faris, 1995, p. 151). This multi-focalized nature of magical realism creates a narrative distance that gives room to multiple meaning formations.

Focalization is all about a certain stand point from which a segment of a story is reported in. Gerard Genette is the critic who coined the term first replacing the traditional expressions like point of view and perspective. Genette classifies focalization into three categories namely Zero

focalizer, internal focalizer and external focalizer. Zero focalizer is what is traditionally known as omniscient narrator where the narrator has more knowledge than the characters. In the case of internal focalizer the narrator and the character have equal knowledge or perspective of a certain happening. When 'the narrator says less than the character knows' it is called external focalizer (Genette, 1988, p. 188-89).

In the case of magical realism, the perspectives are not of a certain origin. They get intermingled and distracted at the same time. According to Faris, "the kinds of perceptions [magical realism] presents are indefinable and the origins of those perceptions are unlocatable" (2004, p. 43). In general, she calls magical realism a 'defocalized narrative' (p. 43). Genette views focalization in relation to the perception of a realistic account of events in fiction. But Faris comes up with a counter notion that stands for a point of view in magical realist narratives calling it defocalization. Defocalization in short is different perceptions that show different types of occurrences; one magical the other real.

This uncertain source of perception through which the narration is viewed and related to the reader makes the whole thing undetermined. Presenting two divergent views; one magical view that cannot be not verified by sensory means and another view that is considered to be mundane. These notions of defamiliarization and defocalization are employed in magical realist texts to stretch the balance of believing and not believing a certain magical account and in creating unsettling doubt.

3. 4 Magical Realism in the African Context

Being a widely used narrative style today, magical realism has also found its way in the African literature across the continent. It has been adopted into African novel as a decolonizing agent in the narratives of postcolonial contexts. Novelists have picked it as a narrative mode in their quest for a new way of expression of their own African reality. As Ato Quayson puts it, "African writing takes inspiration from resources of orality in order to establish a distinctive account of the African world" (2009, p. 159). This is a stepping stone for the current research to dive into the ways African magical realists trace back to their traditional roots loaded with folklore, and embed their stories with mythological and spiritual details.

3.4.1 Prevalence of Folklore

Folklore consists of traditional values and practices of a certain society. It can be about their beliefs (superstitious or other traditional beliefs), their oral literary practices in forms of fables, dirges and the like, their physical performances during different occasions (rituals, plays and dances), their making of items used for different purposes (Richarc Dorson, 1972). These elements are often incorporated in magical realist narratives, especially in African novels.

In the first wave of postcolonial literature of Africa, we find novels like *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe that paved the way for other novelists by encouraging them to incorporate their respective local colors. Achebe did this within the realist narrative conventions while later others followed suit taking it to the next level and merging the real with the extraordinary with the help of folk knowledge.

Dorson produces a list of subgenres of folklore as follows:

- Social Folk Custom

This is about "secular and religious observances characterized by group interaction rather than individual performance," says Richard M. Dorson (1972, p. 3). It is one sub category of folklore. Rituals, festivals, ceremonies like 'rites de passage', performances done during agricultural occupations, weddings, funerals and public festivals like carnivals are all categorized under social folk custom. Providing illustrations on the customs of a community in India, Dorson considers rituals of worships in folk religions, believing in the presence of ghosts and spirits and according them with customary services, and festivals and ceremonies which are the manifestation of collective manners as social folk custom. Every society assigns a special time annually or monthly to carry out customary ceremonies. It can be a celebration of an important person. It can also be a commemoration of god. All these are folk customs observed and carried out by a certain society.

- Physical Folk Life (Material Culture)

Physical folk art also known as material culture is a sub-division of folklore. According to Dorson, physical folk art "covers the visible rather than the aural aspects of folk behavior that

existed prior to and continue alongside mechanized industry" (1972, p. 2). The knowledge within material culture is transferred from generation to generation just like oral tradition does. It consists of knowledge of building of homes, making of clothes, food preparation, medicine preparation, making of eating and cooking utensils, making of farming and fishing materials. These items could be handmade or prepared through innovative ways within a community.

- Performing Folk Arts

This comprises of traditional music, dance and drama. "It involves an actual physical movement - parts of the whole body, as deemed necessary by a group on a particular social occasion," claims Melakneh (2008, p. 87). Pointing out the nature of one type of performing folk art overlapping with the other, Dorson notes, "They are more casual in nature than the conscious presentation of these arts by individuals or groups with folk instruments, dance costumes, and scenario props. The performing arts intersect each with the other and often appear in conjunction" (1972, p. 4). Performing arts correlates closely with social folk customs in its inclusion of dances and performances in ritualistic occasion.

- Folk Literature

Melakneh calls this subcategory of folklore "the verbal heritage of mankind transmitted from generation to generation by word of mouth" (2008, p. 84). It is what is traditionally known as oral literature. "Spoken, sang and voiced forms of traditional utterances that show repetitive patterns," (Dorson, 1972, p. 2) are categorized under folk literature. Folk narrative, folk songs and folk poetry are among the elements found in folk literature. Proverbs, traditional songs and poems whose authorship are unknown are told throughout time and considered major components of folklore.

Though these are the sub-divisions provided by Dorson of folklore, there are also other types. Folk arts exhibited especially in paintings done centuries ago found in caves and other cultural heritage sites can also be taken as one form of folklore.

Critics like Ato Quayson and Wendy Faris claim that these elements of folklore are prevalent in most magical realist narratives. About magical realism's unique preoccupation with folklore,

Wendy Faris claims, "African magical realism developed out of a first wave of postcolonial indigenist novels inspired by traditional myth and oral narrative," (2004, p. 36). This is what Dorson also notes saying that African novelists have started immortalizing these oral traditions by incorporating them in their works after written literature started to flourish in the 20th century. Folk literature of Africa that was formerly transmitted from generations to generations is now getting its expressions in the written literature as well. And magical realism is one mode of fiction writing which highlights these traditional features.

To come back to Ato Quayson, his crosscutting article entitled *Magical Realism and the African Novel* (2009) stresses the impact of oral tradition on present day practice of magical realism writing saying, "Orality in Africa is not just a mode of speech different from writing, but undergirds an entire way of life" (p. 159). Consequently, magical realism seems to be flourishing in the African literature generously borrowing from its loaded folkloristic traditions.

Quayson also hails the notions of animist realism and animist materialism illustrated by Harry Garuba in 2003, owing animist realism's exploration as a major contribution to magical realism. Quayson states, "For Garuba, this re-enchantment finds expression not only in African literature but also instrumentalized by African political and cultural elites for specific purposes" (p. 160).

The concepts of animist realism, animist materialism and animist consciousness by Harry Garuba are used as one of the major elements in this framework to assist the reading of the selected novels. According to Quayson, Garuba attributes animist tenets of re-traditionalization not as a resistant character of approach but to alleviate Africa's long standing beliefs to the level of standardized modes. 'The continual re-enchantment and re-traditionalization of African thought, belief, and practice (p. 160)' is what is constituted within the animist approach in literature which is closely linked with magical realism.

The above noteworthy ideas raised by the mentioned scholars are also shared by others in Africa's, Latin America's or other former colonies' contexts. Some or most of the following listed out elements are frequently used in critically reading magical realist texts. This framework provides a way of reading of the selected novels in relation with magical realism, its trend and purpose in the African context.

3.4.2. Animism

The magical realist writers seem to go back to the narrative mode that best expresses their close relations with nature and cultural backgrounds. The diverse and mixed application of oral tradition of storytelling, legends, fairytales, myths, religious ideas as well as spirituality endows magical realism, especially in the African context, with the capacity to make the unnatural appear natural.

Magical realism bringing out 'the wondrousness of everyday objects and events (Faris, 2004, p. 126),' strives to make balance between the ordinary and the unexpected. Consisting of mythologies, traditional beliefs, magical realism is also a setting for animism to take part. Linking African magical realism with animism, Brenda Cooper also notes, "African writers very often adhere to this animism, incorporate spirits, ancestors and talking animals, in stories, both adapted folktales and newly invented yarns, in order to express their passions, their aesthetic and their politics" (2004, p. 40).

The term animism was first coined by Peptela and later got prominence by Harry Garuba's division of the concept into three sub-categories: animist realism, animist materialism and animist consciousness attributing them as one feature of magical realism. According to Garuba, "Animist materialism subspeciates into the representational technique of animist realism, which may once again further subspeciates into the genre of magical realism" (2003, p. 275). Garuba here puts animist materialism and animist realism under the umbrella of magical realism. Garuba further explains the notion of animist materialism saying that animism may be a "belief in objects such as stones or trees or rivers" the belief arising from the "simple reason that animist gods and spirits are located and embodied in objects: the objects are the physical and material manifestations of the gods and spirits" (p. 267). This belief that spirits are with us having a shape of any object around us and that makes them having a soul of their own leads us to animist realism. Animist realism in turn, according to Garuba, involves these animist materialism beliefs intermingled with realistic aspects. These two concepts are usually expressed within magical realism, which makes the approach to be using the animist features.

Magical realism as a narrative mode, as we understand it today, existed in oral traditions much before the term was coined in modern/postmodern written narratives. For example, folktales

commonly intermingle magical elements in a supposedly realistic narration. Elements of magical realism, such as the presence of the supernatural under natural circumstances, mythical elements in realistic acts, and so on, are part of folklore (Quayson, 2009, p. 159). Animals, inanimate objects, natural forces, etc. communicate with humans and among themselves in a matter-of-fact manner.

Since Africa is prominently associated with folklore and oral tradition, it can boast inherent connection of the use of magical realism in its current literature to its existing tradition. Modern narratives employ similar magical elements but in a slightly different fashion since the thematic concerns and the audience have changed. Magical realism now includes mythical, folkloristic, fantastic elements alongside the ordinary. Lydie Moudileno's (2006) observation is quite significant in this respect. She says, "The term 'magical realism' is now extended to many postcolonial narratives in which magical or mythical elements of 'indigenous' cultural origin are incorporated and naturalized within a western language and framework, including Oceana, Africa, the African Diaspora and South Asia" (2006, p. 30-31).

Magical realism in the present contexts is particularly associated with postcolonial fiction since the cultures of the former colonies, such as the African nations, have been incorporating mythical, animistic, spiritual components. African novelists may employ magical realism as a narrative mode in their texts to implicitly associate their fictional mode with a 'purely African identity and for themselves as a representing a particular African cultural milieu.' African magical realism is also termed as 'animist realism,' a notion studied by and used by Harry Garuba. Referring to the strong presence of the imaginary ancestor, traditional religion and animism in African culture, animism intersects with traditional African knowledge and folklore. And all these notions usually play out in magical realism.

Generally, this chapter has set out theories taken from different schools of thought and categorized them into concepts in order to be used for the analysis of the selected novels. Postmodernist features of magical realism are also shared by postcolonial features and vice-versa. The distorted notion of time and space which is discussed as a postmodern practice also has a thematic importance in postcolonial literature. Hybridity and otherness which are thoughts of paramount significance in postcolonialism have also been the concern of postmodern critics

like Jacques Derrida. All in all, these magical realist features have overlapped in both theories of postcolonial and postmodern literatures. Together with other narratological aspects and with regard to the African context, the elements discussed above are taken as concepts to read the selected novels with in order to discuss the proposed topic.

Chapter Four

Magical Realist Features in the Selected Novels

This chapter will mainly engage in critically analyzing the features of magical realism used in the five novels. The plot summary of the novels is given beforehand. Parameters for exploring magical realism have been discussed in the previous chapter. Using these parameters, this chapter attempts to answer the first and second research questions set for this study which are exploring major magical realist features and picking out the most consistently used ones in the novels. Before going into discussing the major features of magical realism in the novels, the plot summaries (synopsis) of the novels are given.

4.1. Synopsis of the Selected Novels

4.1.1. The Heart of Redness by Zakes Mda

The Heart of Redness is a novel by Zakes Mda, a South African playwright, poet and novelist. It was published in 2000 G.C. The novel is set in South Africa, especially in the Eastern Cape area, particularly in Qolorha (the Wild Coast). The plot goes back and forth between the post-apartheid South Africa and the mid 1800s, featuring several major characters, Camagu being the main one. Camagu, a South African middle aged man, returns from his thirty years stay in the United States to the newly independent South Africa, to play his part in the reconstruction of his country. However, he becomes jobless despite his doctoral degree and years of experience in the field of communication. He then goes to the Eastern Cape, Qolorha, following a beautiful woman. In his search for this woman, he comes to learn the history and traditions of the area. It was in this Xhosa region that the historically catastrophic cattle killing incident took place in the mid 1800s. Prophetess Nongqawuse, a teenage girl of 15, convinced the Xhosans to kill. This rampant cattle killing movement in 1856 and 57 ultimately led the people of the Xhosa region to famine and surrender to the British colonialists. In the Heart of Redness, Zakes Mda divides the people who obeyed the prophesy and didn't obey the prophesy as Believers and Unbelievers, respectively. And Camagu, finds himself in the middle of this age-old feud between the descendants of the Believers and Unbelievers.

4.1.2. The Bleeding of the Stone by Ibrahim al-Koni

The Bleeding of the Stone is a novel by the Libyan author, Ibrahim al-Koni. The story is set in the Libyan desert in the first half of the twentieth century. The story revolves around a herdsman called Asouf. Asouf born from parents who chose the solitary and harsh desert life over any human contact was raised knowing only his parents, his animals and the desert. His father chose this life for his family because he believes living with other humans is more dangerous than living in the desert. Growing up he heard mythical stories and life experiences from his father, especially in relation with the moufflon that is believed to be extinct in 17th century. Apparently, this wild sheep – referred by them as waddan – still exists in this part of the Libyan desert. After his father's mysterious death, Asouf assumes the responsibility of protecting and providing for his family. Though it is very difficult for Asouf to deal with merchants in passing caravans in the trading of goats for barley and wheat he somehow manages. His first contacts with other people are very awkward. But after his mother's death, he becomes the sole keeper of the area's heritages and he starts showing the desert's ancient carvings and paintings in the stone caves to visitors. Among his visitors were two moufflon hunters, Cain and Massoud, who assault him until he revealed the whereabouts of the animal. He finally dies in the hands of Cain; crucified on one of the caves' rocks.

4.1.3. Wizard of the Crow by Ngugi wa Thiongo

Wizard of the Crow is a novel by the renowned Kenyan novelist, poet and playwright Ngugi wa Thiongo. The story takes place in an imaginary African country, Aburiria, centering on the country's dictator known throughout the story as The Ruler. The story begins with a lavish festival of the Ruler's birthday. The corrupt officials in the government come up with an insane birthday present for the ever dissatisfied and skeptic dictator. They present him with an architectural design of a building that is supposed to be the tallest in the world; seeking to surpass the record of Israelites' House of Babel. The apparent reason for giving such a present to the Ruler is to make him closer to God as he himself is almost God in many of his attributes being the all-knowing, all-controlling one in the land whom the entire country obeys and fears. The government is going to have a loan from the Global Bank, stationed in New York, to construct the skyscraper. The project is called Marching to Heaven. While many of the

government officials, including the Ruler, fall ill trying and failing to secure the loan from the Global bank, the people, led by women, become bolder with defiance. Marching to Heaven is a project that officials hope to use for their corrupt ways while the people understand its long-lasting effects on their country's economy. The struggle between these two groups intensifies with the Wizard of the Crow tossed in the middle. Getting started with his healing powers as a kind of prank, the wizard becomes the archenemy of the Ruler, later becoming an instrument in the people's struggle against dictatorship. It's a political satire layered with the real and the extraordinary, mostly blurring the distinction between the two with exaggerations and uncertain narrators.

4.1.4. The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez by Sony Labou Tansi

The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez is a story about a town called Valencia which lost its status as a capital city because of corrupted officials. It's a story packed with extraordinary and ordinary happenings, death taking the central point. Valencia, robbed of its major assets when the capital city was taken to a neighboring city called Nsanga Norda, is now left at the mercy of its people with minimal intrusion from the authorities that reside in the new capital. It was during this time that the first murder of a woman took place. After that the women of Valencia assumed power though it was not official. Though the distance between Nsanga Norda and Valencia is very near, the police take 47 years in general to come to Valencia and investigate the death of the woman. In this 47 years, a lot happen in Valencia – absurdity being the rule of the day – and ironically, Valencia gains its status as a capital because of the people gathered there from all over the world to wait for the police to arrive. It's a satirical novel with harsh commentary on society and politics, women running the show all along.

4.1.5. Woman of the Aeroplanes by Kojo B. Laing from Ghana

Woman of the Aeroplane is a story of a town called Tukwan in Ghana. This town is invisible to the rest of the country. The place being out of sight made its time frame out of the ordinary time too. However, the smart and diligent people of Tukwan, led by the four major characters of the story – Pokuwaa, Kofi Senya, Kwame Atta and Kwaku de Babo – have made it possible to travel to Levensvale, a town in Scotland. Levensvale has similar nature and interest with that of Tukwan: it's invisible to United Kingdom and its inhabitants are immortals as well. Pokuwaa,

the woman who owned the airplanes they travelled in, arranges this trip to Levensvale that later establishes business partnership as well as human relations between the towns. The story centers on a strong tie made by two different groups of people, under difficult situations. The slow walk to mortality and ordinary time, giving equal ground to ordinary and extraordinary happenings, marks the central point of the novel.

4.2. Fantastic Elements

Fantastic occurrences take place in all the novels. However, some novels have incorporated extraordinary happenings as much as the ordinary while other novels have used them subtly with things going out of the mundane in understated ways. *The Heart of Redness* is a novel where extraordinary components are randomly inserted within a realist narrative in a matter-of-fact way. Tracing the lives of the protagonists, Camagu, Bhonco, Zim and John Dalton, the story slips in fantastical elements in the narrative that barely escape through the highly realist tone in which detailed everyday occurrences are described.

"On nights like this [when he is upset] his scars become itchy. He rubs them a bit. He cannot reach them properly, because they cover his back" (2000, p. 12). This misfortune of Bhonco, one of the major characters is observed in the novel around the beginning of the story. One might wonder how Bhonco got the scars that make him uncomfortable during bad times; how can a person's scar, which is a long-healed wound, be irritable when the person is having troubling times. The narration goes on to reveal how the scar came to be in the first place. But the reasoning is far from expected. "Yes, Bhonco carries the scars that were inflicted on his great-grandfather; Twin-Twin… every first boy-child in subsequent generations of Twin-Twin's tree is born with the scars" (2000, p. 13).

This cannot be accepted in a realistic context as a believe phenomenon. However, such occurrences are the defining notion of magically realistic narratives. As a literary mode that situates the ordinary and the extraordinary synchronized in such a unified state, magical realism can be said to be effectively employed in *The Heart of Redness*.

"He was a man of great power. He lit his pipe on the sun, and when he danced drops of sweat from his body caused the rain to fall (p. 16). At first thought, this may look like a hyperbolic

expression to show how powerful the man is. But then the narration asserts the seriousness of the matter by using the people around him as witnesses of such extraordinary happenings.

> *The Man of the River appeared at the door of his hut, and after one word from him people saw the star of the morning coming down from the sky and placing itself on his forehead. Another word from him and the earth shook and the mountains trembled (2000, p. 16).*

In *The Heart of Redness,* Mda created a setting that is not only realist in the fiction writing sense but also intensified its realness by attaching it with historically factual events. Names of people who actually lived in the physical world that are recorded in history are inserted in the narrative so interwoven with the fictional characters to the point of making it difficult to differentiate who is who. Not only are the fictional characters and the real people put side by side, but also the real and the fantastic incidents.

Let's look at another example here. A group of elders called the Unbelievers step into a dance rhythm that helps them to travel back in time. This time-traveling through a dance may be an extraordinary phenomenon but all the other details accompanying it decrease its untrustworthiness.

> *They are wailing now, and mumbling things like people who talk in tongues. But they are not talking in tongues in the way that Christians do. 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. But to this world when it still belonged to the ancestors (2000, p. 73).*

However, when this happens, there is a wife of one of these elders washing dishes near the dance site, totally unaffected by the incident. Though Michael Stretcher describes magical realism as "what happens when a highly detailed, realistic setting is invaded by something too strange to believe (1999, p, 267)", it is also the suspension of disbelief. One cannot totally discard the extraordinary happenings in such narratives as impossible because of the realist scenario that surrounds the single fantastic occurrence.

In *The Heart of the Redness*, when the Unbeliever elders begin their dance, Camagu witnesses it and wants to escape. "He tries to steal away when the elders are dead in their trance. As he tiptoes past the pink rondavel he almost falls on NoPetticoat, who is busy washing a gigantic three-legged cast-iron pot (p. 73)." This realistic portrait of a homestead with the matron doing dishes is juxtaposed with the extraordinary activity of the elders. These two incidents are carried out side by side creating a moment of hesitation in the mind of the reader.

Wendy Faris calls this a 'common technique' of magical realist texts. 'Irreducible elements' as she calls such insertions of extraordinary occasions are narrated in a 'detached style… presenting them without comment (2004, p. 94).'

On a certain day, the elders of the Unbelievers led by Bhonco need to induce sadness in order to stay happy. So they get into their dance rhythm which takes them back to the past. When they are 'fallen on the ground in their trance (2000, p. 187)' little men come and surround them. These short men are known as 'Bushmen by the colonists of old (p. 187).' Bhonco wakes up first and notices them.

> *"Wake your friends up," says the leader of the abaThwa (the Bushmen). "Wake them up!"*
>
> *"Hey, what is the matter?" Bhonco asks.*
>
> *"We demand the return of our dance!" says the leader.*
>
> *"Woe unto the amaGcaleka who have given birth to me!" cries Bhonco (2000, p. 187).*

Not only does it seem incredulous that a group of people ask the return of a dance, as if it is some kind of object, but the shock of Bhonco saying 'woe' throws the reader off-balance as it confirms the significance of the ownership of the dance. The dance originally belongs to the short men who are sometimes referred to as 'the bushmen'. This dance of dying is an extraordinary engagement on its own but the request of its return by its former owners is something that is expected in a realistic interaction of lending and borrowing an object.

The narrative goes on to show the readers that the other Unbeliever elders are also waking up one by one to the shocking realization that the original owners of the dance of dying have come back to claim what is theirs. The Unbelievers cherish the dance because it enables them to go back and see the past when they start moving in its rhythm.

> *"Didn't these people give us this dance? How can they demand it back?" asks one elder.*
>
> *"We must negotiate. We must beg them to lend us the dance again," says Bhonco (2000, p. 188).*

Terms like 'negotiation' is used in relation to an ownership of a dance spikes the incredulity of the situation higher. However, these things are not narrated in a humorous tone but rather in a grave one. Finally, the 'Bushmen' take back their dance leaving the Unbeliever elders in their dismay.

It would be essential to discuss this in relation with Alejo Carpentier's notion of the importance of 'belief' and Wendy Faris's 'unsettling doubts'. As discussed in chapter 3, Carpentier stresses the need to believe in magic in order to depict it in its truer sense. After he states, "The marvelous begins to be unmistakably marvelous when it arises from an unexpected alteration of reality… (Zamora and Faris, 1995, p. 86)" and asserts magnifying the reality itself in its own setting and stretching it to the point of creating hesitation, Carpentier says it is essential to note "the phenomenon of the marvelous presupposes faith…(p. 76-77)." He emphasizes in drawing the extraordinary happenings out of the reality in order to make it believable.

For Faris, a magical realist work incorporates the irreducible elements that make "the reader experience some unsettling doubts in the effort to reconcile two contradictory understandings of events (2004, p. 6)." In magical realist texts, uncommon things happen. These unnatural occurrences which make the reader doubt the narrative's credibility are situated with consecutive narrations that disrupt the doubt in turn.

The unsettling doubt that suspends the moment of belief can be taken as one strategy used in the magical realist stories. Faris states, "Another possible strategy for the reader [confronted with

unsettling doubts] is to interpret a particular instance of magic in an otherwise realistic fiction as nothing more than allegory (p. 20)". Therefore the 'magical' in magical realism could be interpreted as the 'symbolic' meaning of the 'real' or the 'literal'.

For every magical realist text, to have extraordinary elements that cannot be explained by natural laws lodged within ordinary circumstances is mandatory. *The Bleeding of the Stone* is also one of these novels that have such unexpected and unexplainable occurrences in the story that are intermingled with the mundane, described in a matter-of-fact tone. However, the kind of multiple incorporation of extraordinary happening seen in *The Heart of Redness* is not evident in *The Bleeding of the Stone.*

At the beginning of the novel, Asouf tells his parents about his days in the caves with ancient cravings of Jinni's. "I hear the jinn in the caves every day… talking to one another. They say the strangest things, and they even start singing sometimes. I'm not afraid of the jinn" (2002, p. 4). Even when he is in trouble and in a situation between life and death, Asouf wishes the Jinnis to come to his rescue, believing in their existence. "Where were those good jinn, who loved, at other times, to talk so loudly together? Why didn't they come and save him?" (2002, p. 56).

Most of the fantastic elements in the novel are related with the mysterious nature of the desert and the strength of the animals and the desert.

> *Then the hunter finds (Asouf) himself haunted, leaping on his own four limbs as he chases the beast over the smooth, hard rocks (2002, p. 46). Then, in the twinkling of an eye, the stone was pulled from the earth and the waddan went on, dragging man and stone behind (p. 48). He looked below… and saw a crazy rock overhanging the pitch blackness of the pit, as though suspended from the sky (p. 50).*

As evident in the above extracts, the extraordinary is drawn from the correlation of desert and its inhabitants. Asouf, when he sees the *wadden,* he abandons all his human attributes and adopts the traits of a predator animal. He runs on his four limbs instead of on his two legs like humans do. When Asouf finally pegs the *wadden* with the rope he was holding, the *wadden* hysterically runs off until Asouf manages to hold on to a big stone. Asouf was certain that his hold on the stone was safe and sure when the big rock was plucked 'in the twinkling of an eye' from the

ground with one tug from the *waddan*. This is an impossible occurrence in ordinary circumstances. And later Asouf, after losing his quarry, finds himself hanging on the edge of a pit only with his hands whose bottom is not visible. And while in that state, he saw a rock just hanging in the air – without any support what-so-ever. These wondrous things are related in the story without any trace of surprise and these extraordinary occurrences are perceived by both the narrator and the character.

In the case of *Wizard of the Crow*, the novel itself indicates that "there were things on earth that defied understanding and it was better to let them be" (2005, p. 283). And there are instances in the novel that cannot be explained by any logical reasoning. The major fantastic element we see in the story is when we are first introduced to the protagonist of the story, Kamiti wa Karimiri, the one who later becomes the Wizard of the Crow. He comes into the picture as a beaten, hungry job hunter who, after looking for a job for three years and to no avail, finally collapses at a garbage site. And when his body lies in the filth, he feels himself getting out of himself and floating above Aburiria, the country. The statement here says, "The body needs a rest from you and you need a rest from the body, he heard himself saying to himself" (p. 38). His flying form was like a bird and gives him the chance to fly over his country and the world. Later in the novel, Kamiti explains that he could also fly through time.

Kamiti's sense of smell is the other fantastic element in the novel. He can discern a person's identity by their smell. According to his sense, the good ones smell of flowers while the corrupt leak unbearable stench. There are other fantastic elements like money growing on trees and a lake that freezes anyone that comes near it.

The major activity of the *Wizard of the Crow*, which looks like witchcraft, is not an extraordinary happening. It is rather a mind game. The context sets a kind of environment where anything can happen any moment without any explanation. And within such a context, a reader expects to witness unworldly occurrences when encountered with a wizard shrine. However, the expectation of the reader gets deflated when the wizard himself says, "I was merely playing a role … I worked with thoughts and images already in their own minds (2005, p. 207)." The point here seems to be that what we commonly understand as magic is not really magic. On the other

hand, there is another dimension in the story where it acknowledges we all possess a bit of magic in us.

Concerning these fantastical happenings, in one instance, Kamiti tells one of the characters that the most potent magic is within her. This explains that everyone has hidden powers that they are not aware of possessing. However, when they recognize it and embrace it, they can do wonders with them. There is magic within us, not only around us. The novel acknowledges that the ordinary and the extraordinary exist so close to each other and one flows out of the other. It says "the line that divides the real and the unreal in human lives is very thin" (2005, p. 757).

When we come to *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez,* we notice that the novel is packed with extraordinary events. The city of Valencia is where people can see monsters that are over million years old, monsters born from people, and death itself, either walking or clutched in fish's mouth, intermingled in a realist scenario. A creature with death's head in his mouth cannot be told if dead or alive. Anything ordinary and anything extraordinary exist side by side.

The fantastic elements in this novel are expressed through two features that stand out the most: exaggeration and absurdity. Everything is stretched to impossible levels, disrupting its realistic realm to a breaking point. One instance is the changing of capital city from Valencia to Nsanga Norda. The authorities decided to make Nsanga Norda the capital and they took towers, bridges, lakes, mosques from Valencia as well as other things that one wouldn't imagine to be transported from one place to another in normal circumstances (1985, p. 2). This exaggeration seems to be employed to ignite a question in a reader's mind: 'why was it necessary to change the capital in the first place if Valencia was way advanced than Nsanga Norda?' This unrealistic element is inserted here to show that the 'decapitalization' as the narration calls it is unnecessary. Later in the story, one learns that Nsanga Norda symbolizes the authorities and Valencia, the people. The authorities took everything from the people because they had the power, the guns.

In *Woman of the Aeroplanes,* Kojo Laing has experimented with magical realism without any limit. The story has too many extraordinary happenings grounded in the ordinary world, with time as a central point. The novel at one point clearly establishes that there is a lot of extraordinary happening going on in the setting but that fact doesn't change this is ordinary life.

"The land where to be immortal is not to cease to be human; where magic is made in bits but you don't become superhuman making it" (1988, p. 172). The very essence of magical realism where the fantastic and the mundane are synchronized in the lives of the characters with complete acceptance is fulfilled in this novel.

Just like any magical realist text, *Woman of the Aeroplanes* is a story where things that happen to the people are highly unlikely to happen in any given everyday situation. However it was accepted and harmonized as mundane in the people's lives.

The setting of the story, the town of Tukwan, is invisible to the rest of the country. But the inhabitants live the way the rest of the world go about living. And just like the people of any town, they have different or divided views about the invisibility of their town. When some yearn for the day their town becomes visible, other want to live on like that forever. We witness one of the characters in the book, Kwaku de Babo, thinking the following, "When would this town be unbanished? When would it become visible to the rest of the country?" (1988, p. 66) The invisibility of the town has made the inhabitants out of ordinary time and as a result, they are immortals. People actually don't die in Tukwan because there is no mortality there, but even if they do, they get reincarnated. Amoa is one character who is 'recently' reincarnated (p. 53).

Other happenings like blowing airplane horns during flight to scare off ghosts, birds and airplanes hugging each other for greeting, raising hills around the town to keep it invisible are among the countless fantastical accounts in the novel.

4.3. Hybridity

Ashcroft et al. discuss the notion of hybridity by relating it to post-colonial literature's peculiarity in presenting its hybrid stances in different forms; literary hybridity, cultural hybridity, hybridity in voice, etc. Faris asserts this noting that "the very oxymoronic nature of the term suggests its capacity for including multiple worlds and discourses (2004, p. 39)." Hybridity, allowing polarized concepts to come together, contributes its share in the meaning construction of different and opposing relations in language and culture. Different instances of the presence of these different entities the selected novels entertain are the following.

- **Life and Death**

In *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez,* there are hybrid entities present in the setting of this story; like that of the real and the extraordinary. Christians and Muslims, men and women, Valencias and Nsanga Nordans, authorities and civilians exist together or at least very near to each other. However, they each see the other as a potential danger, if not a full-blown enemy.

Life and death is the prevalent polarity evident in *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez.* "God, how difficult it is to leave this flesh with which we've had so many dreams! The honor of knowing that in the end one is no more than a saltless forgotten. God! What ugliness is man" (1985, p. 93), says Fartamio Andra, one of the characters. For someone who calls God's name repeatedly, it should be known that the scriptures say man is created in the image of God but here human is beautiful only when alive. Death takes away that beauty, that dream, and all becomes nothing is the notion here. This idea could be shared by all, in realistic or magical realistic scenarios. However, death in *Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez* is different.

Death is so rampant here it assumes human attributions and walks down the village. And the interesting part is the narration has a matter-of-fact tone. It says, "Dogs barked at Death passing by the street" (1985, p. 53). In fact, death is the dominant theme in this book. People die in alarming numbers and easily and the crimes go on unpunished because the police take years to arrive at the crime scene and investigate; partly because the authorities are part of the crimes committed. The novel integrated the opposing natures of life and death going to the extent of showing death visibly walking to the naked eyes of dogs and that they recognized him to show that level of dying in Valencia; that death is common.

In the case of *The Heart of Redness* we can see these hybrid forms in the characters, in the setting and in the voice. In *The Heart of Redness,* there are extracts that support the above notion of binary oppositions; the imposition of one over the other.

> *"He was in pain before he died, this our brother," he shouts. "It was the pain of the spirit that was being denied the right to soar in its creativity. The beauty of death is that it separates us from the pain that racks our body (2000, p. 34)."*

> *How would he commune with his fellow ancestors without a head? How would a headless ancestor be able to act as an effective emissary of their pleas to Qamata (god) (2000, p. 120)?*

In the above magical realist extract from *The Heart of Redness*, death is given due prominence over life. While life is painful and restriction; death is rest and freedom. While in life, a person couldn't continue living without a head, in death he couldn't maintain dignity and duty without a head which seems to be more important in the tone of the narrative.

It is not even questionable that the ancestor will have duties even in the afterlife. Death is not seen as the end of life for individuals but as a beginning of another form of life. A person's body must be intact when leaving this life. Otherwise it may pose an obstacle in the ancestral duties. This treatment of death as another way of living is a persistent theme in the story of *The Heart of Redness*.

In the Xhosa's view, life and death are given equal positions. They way they worry over the hassles of everyday life; they also worry over what happens in the afterlife. Their perception of these two polarized realms is on the same plane. As noted in the above extract, the loss of life equates the loss of dignity in the afterlife.

Magical realism, celebrating differences, is taken to heights in *The Bleeding of the Stone* by bringing polarized entities together as well. Christianity and Islam, flood and thirst, animal and human, life and death, victim and executioner are among the binary opposites common in the novel. These opposing entities are linked to the specific society's beliefs in the desert as things in that space are limited to these polarities.

The two polar ideas, life and death, are the most highlighted ideas in the *The Bleeding of the Stone*. Both forces pull at each other and the struggle for immortality creates a third space.

> *A goat breathes and takes in air long after it is slaughtered… as for slain waddan, it gets up, headless and runs off a long distance before it gives in… then there is the waran. You kill it in the morning and when you fling it on the fire to grill it at night,*

it leaps from the blaze and runs right off. There is another life between life and death. A third state neither void nor existence (2002: 64).

Though life and death are depicted as two polars pulling at a person's life in the desert, just like everywhere else, the fact that the lives in the desert struggle to hold on to life is given due attention. The novel stresses that there is freedom in the vastness, emptiness of the desert, away from any contact of other humans. Moreover, it is also asserted that freedom can be attained in death too. However, the lives in the desert seem to choose freedom of life in the desert than the freedom in death.

There is an ongoing dilemma between life and death in *Woman of the Aeroplanes*. These concepts are highly related with the other idea the novel stresses on, which is mortality and immortality.

The characters in both towns of Tukwan and Levensvale, hidden from the rest of the world and living on and on for eternity, are comfortable with their ways of life. They struggle to keep this going, finding each other and creating mutually benefiting mechanisms of surviving. They strike business deals, importing and exporting necessary substances, from and to each town. However, when their social transformations assisted by their inventions and efforts paid off, inevitable change began to happen. And that change took a shape of mortality. Interestingly, they didn't welcome mortality warmly nor they rejected it bitterly.

What one understands from the story is that life is precious but death is what really makes it precious; the danger it pauses brings a kind of understanding among humans to cling to life. The presence of death in life is the point that makes life worth living. The novel compares life with candy, something sweet, a joyful dance on top of a mountain and *'the knowledge of the drop, the death, seemed to add sweetness to the movement of the dance (1988, p. 256).'* The novel parallels death, not only as a spice to life but also as freedom. The mortality that is taking over is new, it's change, and it's also freedom. T*he young men had become entirely obsessed with the new freedom of mortality. Freedom is change, and change is freedom (ibid, p. 257-8).*

The knowledge of living on forever seems to have created a sense of being trapped for the people of Tukwan. That is probably the reason why they understood death as a way of breaking free

from the monotonous cycles of life. And though they were unsettled about the understanding of death lurking around, they still didn't look for ways to revert it.

In *Woman of the Aeroplanes* there are also black and white ancestors roaming Africa, calling themselves 'dead mercenaries scouting the forest and the desert for hostages of history to capture (1988: 157).' Ironically, these 'living' ancestors themselves seem to be trapped in the history they once lived.

These ancestors capture anyone they suspect of trespassing and some of the characters in the story fall prey of this scheme when their airplane malfunctioned and landed in '*the deathly silence of the forest that partnered the desert* (ibid, p. 156)'. We are not sure if the setting here is the desert or the forest as the unreliable narrator gives no more information in his usual manner – giving too much information when not needed and holding his silence when information is needed. It's like the narrator intends to create gaps in the story and make readers suspenseful. This extraordinary scenario of the dead capturing the living until the living tell the dead that they are actually dead is vital in showing all kinds of polarized notions. Moreover, the dead are living in ordinary time while the living are living in a distorted time which they often call 'out of time'. This is another extraordinary element of the novel. People in Tukwan and Levensvale say they are out of time because the hours, days and years change uncontrollably.

Ordinary time and distorted time, living and dead, mortals and immortals in the desert and the forest all collide in this single scenario. One can get a significant meaning out of this which is embracing differences is the inevitable way forward.

- **Men and Women**

Women in *Woman of the Aeroplanes* are for the most part strong, insightful, shrewd, problem solvers, independent and caring. They are respected, loved and looked up on by male characters. Pokuaa, the lead character, has been a leader of Tukwan by default, becoming elected president at last. She is someone who is looked up on by the people of Levensvale too. Maymuna, the other female character is a hard-headed business woman whom other female characters come to for advice and the male characters are intimidated by. Women here are confident, they work outside homes, go the length that men usually are believed to go.

However, it doesn't mean all is smooth for women in this story. There are a couple of male characters who wish and work to overthrow Pokuaa and ridicule Maimuna. Still, the general tone is that Tukwan is led by a very successful business woman, influencing strong men who are around her.

Pokuaa serves as a mediator between the people of Tukwan and Levensvale, understanding the nature of the two towns and initiating the relation between them. She exercises agency, i.e., she makes decisions and is capable of independent actions. Men, both black and white, are equally intimidated by and in awe of Pokuaa. The men are represented as inventors, business runners, writers, religious leaders, and such but all look to Pokuaa in time of crisis and her say is the final say.

The identity of the narrator in *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez* is revealed later in the story and we learn that it is a woman. And when the narrator says 'we' in most of her recounts, she means the other women of Valencia and herself. The entire tone of the story is 'we' meaning the women against 'them' the authorities meaning men. *Not satisfied with turning us into domestic animals, now they want to kill us (1985, p. 10).*

The relationship between people and government is interestingly depicted and alluded as the relationship between men and women. One entity holds the authority, the other entity is rebellious. One entity wants to force its interests on the other, the other one finds its own means to fight, even fire back. That is why the women think they are vulnerable. The men have all the means to maneuver anything to their interests and the women are susceptible to death because they say no.

First the killers were men, the dead were women. But then that trend is reversed. Lorsa Lopez killing his wife is what sets the story off. And it goes on for us to witness a butcher who mocked women's value in public was found murdered, rather butchered and his body parts in his own deep freezer with a note in his mouth saying, 'women are also men.' Till the end of the story we don't know who killed him.

So here the ultimate goal of the women seems to be men. They have been on the receiving end of abuse and now they think it has gone too far and they want revenge. What explains this situation

better is that when victims are victimized for so long, they long to be like the victim. And they act the same way the first chance they get.

- **Dream and Reality**

In *The Heart of Redness,* Qukezwa gets pregnant while she was still single. Camagu was the prime suspect to be the father of the child as they were often spotted together. But the midwives in the neighborhood confirmed her pregnancy and also her virginity at the same time. This is an extraordinary occurrence told in an impartial voice. In the narratives, there is no account of Qukezwa and Camagu consummating their affection. However, they visit each other in their dreams.

> *Of late he has been featuring in her dreams. And she tells him so. She does not like that. He has no business imposing himself on her dreams, performing unsavory acts.*
>
> *"I should be angry with you too, because you feature in my dreams," says Camagu.*
>
> *"If I feature in your dreams it is your own fault. Just don't mess up my dreams (2000, p. 171)."*

From this dream encounter, Qukezwa and Camagu later get their child Heitsi. This is one of fantastic elements evident in *The Heart of Redness*. Science may not support her immaculate pregnancy. However, one gets the idea that Mda employs different allusions to the Christian mythology and that this Immaculate Conception is also one of them. In the widely accepted and believed Christian myth Christ was born from an immaculate conception which is a mystery and a miracle at the same time. But here, Qukezwa's pregnancy is not such a wonder. The elder women announce her pregnancy while she still maintains her virginity and the rest of the village accepts it as a usual occurrence and go about their business.

Camagu sees one dream many times in one night. These dreams also recur other nights too without changing a bit. The dream is portrayed in a magnified way, imposing itself over the reality. The following extract proves this.

In his dream he was the river, and NomaRussia was its water. Crystal clear. Flowing on him. Sliding smoothly on his body. Until she flowed into the ocean. He ran after her, shouting that she should flow back. Upstream. When he failed to catch her, he tried to catch the dream itself, to arrest it... He chased it but it outran him. But it keeps on coming back (2000, p. 60).

"...he got very ill with fits. His ancestor, Twin, visited him in his dreams, and told him to carve people out of wood and he would get well. He carved the beautiful people..., and he got well (2000, p. 42)."

Camagu gets well after he got directions from the dream world. The healing came from the dream not the reality. When Camagu goes to sleep, he keeps his legs straight so he will be able to run away from unwanted creatures or happenings in his dream. He believes he can control his dreams with what he does when he is awake. He and Qukezwa tell each other not to come to each other's dreams believing they can do so. Camagu chases the dream itself trying to catch it. Ancestors come in dreams and give orders that will be effective in reality. Dream and reality are two opposite realms. But in these narratives dream is treated as reality; as something that can be controlled.

- **Modernity and Traditional Values**

Just like the very nature of magical realism, holding two opposing ideas together, the hybrid aspect in *The Heart of Redness* tries to entertain these two polarized tendencies; on one hand western modernity which "questioned the certainties that had supported traditional modes of social organization, religion, and morality, and also traditional ways of conceiving the human self" (Abrams, 1999, p. 167) and traditional values. The values of the past, as Ashcroft et al. assert it, is informing the present conditions, leading to predictable circumstances in the future.

Apart from the mass representation of believing and not believing, the characters of Camagu and John Dalton pose an interesting manifestation of hybridity. The Black South African PhD holder Camagu, who recently returned from his thirty years stay in the United States and the White South African John Dalton, whose ancestor is a British Colonial are juxtaposed in the novel in a very interesting play-out.

While Camagu struggles with the reality of the newly independent state of South Africa, John Dalton is comfortably settled with a flourishing business in Qolorha. While Camagu is seen as a new comer, a discriminated intruder, feeling foreign in his own country, John Dalton is the village keeper, the pension distributer, considered as one of the natives – in most cases.

> *Dalton is fascinated by an umXhosaa man who has spent so many years living in America. He himself has never left South Africa and has spent most of his life in the Eastern Cape. And Camagu cannot get over the fact that Dalton speaks much better isiXhosa than he'll every be able to (2000, p. 57).*

This altered role of characters in the novel highlights the hybrid stance of post-apartheid South Africa. The post-colonial world is one in which destructive cultural encounter is changing to an acceptance of deference on equal terms (Faris, 2004, p. 35).

Though explicitly what drives Camagu to Qolorha is the need to find the girl he fell in love with at first sight, his journey implies the need for him to rediscover his identity, his roots. Interestingly, the American educated South African Camagu who is in his middle age with a doctoral degree and attractive caliber falls in a love triangle; with the daughter of the Believer who is a strong advocate of traditional values and the daughter of the Unbeliever who wants to see her Qolorha transformed into a gambling town. Soon Camagu finds himself in an ambivalent position.

Qukezwa, the daughter of Zim (the Believer), takes Camagu to the exact place where the prophetess Nongkawuse once lived and with her magical power pulls him into a dream-like state where the prophesy of the past looms real-like. Qukezwa has unpredictable and double-identity. She makes him hear the sounds of the new cattle that were supposed to come and replace the destroyed ones. She encourages him to believe that though the prophesy failed, it wasn't in vain. And one way or the other, it was a part of their tradition, their identity. On the other hand, Xolisiwa Ximiya, the daughter of Bhonko (the Unbeliever), reminds him every chance she gets of the developed world he has left behind, encourages him to stand for modernity and expects him to stand for changing the Wild Coast of Qolorha into a gambling town.

Though what is visible to these two women who were born and raised in the same area, Qolorha, their understanding of it is different. While Qukezwa sees magical beauty that is laced with the mythic past in her birthplace, Xoliswa Ximiya sees the ugly reality which is backwardness; redness as she calls it. Camagu's response to her accusations of Qukezwa can be evidence here.

> *"That child (Qukezwa) as you call her is not dismissive of beautiful things. Where you see darkness, witchcraft, heathens, and barbarians, she sees song and dance and laughter and beauty (2000, p. 189)."*

Unlike the magical bent we see in Qukezwa, believing in the supernatural that is manifested in her everyday life, Xolisiwa Ximiya believes in reasons and outcomes in her every move. However he opts for the side of the Believers in the end, Camagu has a difficult time deciding.

There are also two basically divergent inclinations; the 'redness' which represents tradition that is held sacred by the Believers and modernity which is advocated by the Unbelievers who opt for change.

The dichotomy of the people who live in the setting of the novel, Qolorha, as Believers and Unbelievers is worth discussing in relation to hybridity. This dichotomy was not necessarily created by the author of the novel. Rather, it was a real deal that happened during the historically catastrophic movement of the Xhosa cattle-killing. Though the majority of the Xhosa believed the prophesy and killed their cattle and burned their crops, there were a minority groups who didn't follow the instructions and finally took the blame for the letdown of the prophesy as it did not take effect.

> *The amaXhosa people called the Believers the Ama Thamba – those whose hearts were soft and compassionate. The clever ones, the generous ones. The Unbelievers were called the AmaGogoyta – the hard ones. The selfish and the greedy men who rob the entire amaXhosa nation of the sweet fruits of resurrection (2000, p. 86).*

Taking this historical account as a basis Mda creates a descendant generation of Believers and Unbelievers who, informed by their respective forefathers, still hold on to the old values. Within this framework, the Believers and Unbelievers have their own current agenda in the post-

apartheid South Africa which is the issue of their area – Qolorha, the Wild Coast – to modernize it or to keep it as it is. Though the two parties are holding on to their traditions in contradicting ways, they both aspire to build the future for their nation as they believe it would suit their children and grandchildren. The means may be polarized but the end is the same. This is stressed in the following statement.

> *Post-colonial literary theory, then, has begun to deal with the problems of transmuting time into space, with the present struggling out of the past, and, like much recent post-colonial literature, it attempts to construct a future (Ashcroft et. al., 2004, p. 35).*

In *Woman of the Aeroplanes* technological inventions serve the people of Tukwan as much as their traditional beliefs do. They have bought airplanes that were invented in Scotland. Though the airplanes serve their original material purposes, flying people from place to place, they have been tamed into Tukwan's lifestyle. They are kept by the lake that breeds ducks with supernatural powers. Pokuwaa, the owner of the planes, sprays lavender on them, as a ritual. They have adopted humanistic behaviors like landing on their own when the pilots oversleep, and hugging birds in the sky for greeting.

- **Christianity and Traditional Beliefs**

The debate within the narrative of *The Heart of Redness* treats religion as a focal point. In the following extract the brothers Twin and Twin-Twin are concerned with the different beliefs within their own traditions, leaving Christianity out of the question and even ridiculing its core point – the death of Christ.

> Twin-Twin: *"The same Mhlakaza who was spreading lies, telling us that we must follow the god of the white man. The very white man who killed the son of his own god."*
>
> Twin: *"Unlike the white people, the Khoikhoi did not kill the son of their own god."*

Twin-Twin: *"Stick to your own god and his true prophets. Leave other people's gods, including those gods' sons, daughters, or any other members of their families (2000, p. 76)."*

In the novel there are several parallels between indigenous beliefs and Christianity. The role of Heitsi Eibib, the prophet of the Khoikhoi people (the people of the old Qukezwa, from the neighboring area of the Xhosans), is similar to that of Moses and Christ in the Christian belief.

Like Moses, once the prophet Heitsi Eibib was leading his people away from their enemies and they came across a river. Heitsi Eibib prayed to Tsiqwa, the 'Father of fathers' to open the river. The river opened and let the people pass while it drowned the enemies. In the story, whether Heitsi Eibib is dead or not is not clear as that information is suspended with description of his numerous graves. And Qukezwa puts stones on his grave. She says:

"To place a stone on this grave of Heitsi Eibib is to be one with the source of your soul."

"How can one man have so many graves?" Twin asked.

"Because he was a prophet and a savior," she said. "He was the son of Tsiqwa. He lived and died for all the Khoikhoi, irrespective of clan (2000, p. 23)."

Like Christ, the prophet is the son of the 'Father of fathers' and died for all people in all clans of Khoikhoi. These parallel allusions of figures from Christianity and indigenous beliefs are significant in neutralizing the superiority of one religion over the other which in a way fulfills the purpose of magical realism. It balances the importance of the center and the periphery.

Stephen Slemon claims, "In magic realism this battle is represented in the language of narration by the foregrounding of two opposing discursive systems, with neither managing to subordinate or contain the other" (1995, p. 410). Just so, in *The Heart of Redness*, just like Camagu, the narrative itself embraces differences. It doesn't give any priority over to either one of the two faiths.

- **Believers and Unbelievers**

Believing and unbelieving is one of the key points in *The Hearth of Redness*. The believers do not want to be caught unbelieving in anything even in the things they don't believe in. The same is true for unbelievers. The unbelievers do not want to be called believing in anything, even in the things they believe in. Knowing this, Zim provokes Bhonco saying, "This man who believes in progress" (2000, p. 94). Bhonco, even if he believes in progress, doesn't want the term believe associated with him. So he shouts back. "I do not believe in progress," he shouts in a pained voice. "I am an Unbeliever. None of us Unbelievers believe! We stand for progress" (p. 94). He contradicts himself in a funny way just not to be called a Believer.

Bhonco weeps whenever he sees something beautiful. He cries in happiness. However, he also engages himself in the activity of inducing sadness using the dance of the Unbelievers that takes them back to the time of colonialism where their immediate forefathers suffered.

On the other hand, the Believers evade unhappiness. Whereas Believers have a tendency of wanting to stay ignorant of the things that could make them unhappy, the Unbelievers like to induce sadness in order to attain happiness (2000, p. 181).

This means the Unbelievers are happy. But in order to stay happy they have to remember of the sad times. The Believers are not happy but avoid the things that make them unhappy. These are interesting twists. Happiness is at the center here. But how to attain it, is different for the two groups.

- **The Physical World and the Otherworld**

The connection between these two parallel worlds is another aspect in *The Heart of Redness*. What happens in one of the worlds affects the other. "The poetics of magical realism involves various bridging techniques that enable the narrative to conflate different physical and discursive worlds (Faris, 2004, p. 104)." Because there is no locatable source of perception, it makes it possible for the two worlds to come to such proximity.

> *He heard with his own ears the instructions of the strangers. 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 Hintsa [a late king of the nation] *in the Otherworld (2000, p. 78).*

The terms dead, alive, living, sea, and Otherworld are crammed in one sentence. This character saw his dead son 'alive' in the world of the dead (Otherworld) with his naked eyes, not in his dreams, nor under any influence of hallucinatory effects. This cannot be verified with empirical means again which is the defining trait of magical realist texts. The distinction between this world and the Otherworld in *The Heart of Redness* is felt in such a close premise that the senses of sight and hearing are frequently used to describe it.

At Mhalakaza's homestead, Twin and Qukezwa joined the multitudes that felt the earth shake and heard bulls bellowing beneath the ground. They were the pedigree bulls waiting to replace those that were to be killed (p. 79).

The spirit world can be felt, seen and heard in the physical world. Faris refers to such narratives as bridges. *The Heart of Redness* brings these two worlds together in such close position and those in the physical world can perceive what goes on in the Otherworld (the world of the dead) and those in the Otherworld can issue orders to the physical world. But as the above extract suggests, exactly who feels or hears what happens in the Otherworld is not verified. "Because it detaches itself from a clear origin in the material world, the defocalized narrative facilitates such conflations (Faris, 2004, p. 104)."

- **Victim and Executioner**

These polarities are evident in *The Bleeding of the Stone.* Depicted as victim and executioner, animal and human have ironical relationships to the point of difficulty to determine who is who. The killing, always initiated by the humans, soon reverses and is pursued to the end point by animals. Animals in this novel are victims, executioners as well as rescuers. The reversal roles in the story are interestingly played out through magical realism until the story culminates at the end with the crusification of Assouf with the spirit of the hunted sheep within him. Though it was Assouf who died, the killer Cain also loses too much in the process.

- **Flood and Thirst**

Flood and thirst are prevalent in *The Bleeding of the Stone*. Opposing forces like flood and thirst in the desert that threaten human life alike. The flood kills and the thirst kills as well. Both have different manifestation s. In one instance, we see Asouf crawling in the desert, on the brink of death, looking for a drop of water and in another instance, we see his mother dying dismembered because of flood. These two polarities, diminishing a live human to the status of a worm moving on his stomach and mutilating a dead human into pieces are equally menacing in their materialization. These polarities being all about water also bring about polarized effects. As stated in the novel, 'water grants life just as it grants death (2002, p. 70).'

- **Authorities and People**

Whatever the authorities do is phony in *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez*. Whatever they do, it doesn't hold ave any relevance to the people. Just like the changing of capital from Valencia to Nsanga Norda had no meaning at all, the other things the authorities do is just unnecessary waste of resources. They live for themselves and work to maintain their power. Once in a while, they come or send someone to Valencia and stir some kind of turbulence. According to the character machedo Palma, they do this because, "The authorities love people to say things about them, good or bad, the way I do it. It amuses them, it's all part of the democracy game. But in your case, you're too close to the truth. And take my word for it; truth isn't part of the democracy game" (1988, p. 101). Any reader, especially in postcolonial Africa can relate this to actual experiences of real life.

- **Blacks and Whites**

In *Woman of the Aeroplanes*, hybridity of incompatible entities is emphasized. As the story unfolds in the two towns, Tukwan in Ghana and Levensvale in Scotland, black and white characters play in the story, with the blacks dominating the scenes in number, action and prominence.

In this novel, blacks are inventors, initiators of partnerships, understanding and embracing while the whites also share many of the traits with a bit of cynicism. The whites are portrayed as

responsible but usually one step behind the blacks. They are not also in charge of a lot of things while their black counterparts lead the show in both towns.

The blacks go to Levensvale in search of partnership mainly for economic reasons. They go with invitation and are welcomed warmly. They hold equal ground with their white counterparts and they even dominate Levensvale, impressing the whites in their open and honest ways. The discussion for economic cooperation went smoothly, with the whites slightly trying to be shrewd. Great friendship buds among them until the two groups held a kind of huge meeting which they called 'the conference'. Even after the conference, all unburdening their hearts' loads, both historical and religious misdeeds that happened in the time of their ancestors, they reconcile and go ahead with their friendly ways.

In *Woman of the Aeroplanes*, there is harmonious relationship between the two races which sets this story apart from the other novels. The people of both races have more commonalities than differences.

The polarized concepts of life and death, black and white, and men and women are the highlighted hybrid aspects in most of the novels. These opposite entities come together and serve to provide different meanings in the selected stories.

4.4. Otherness

As they tend to give equal ground to different and opposite entities to express themselves, magical realist texts, according to Stephen Slemon take this feature as a central element. However, though these texts entertain both sides equally as they advocate hybridity, Slemon stresses on the fact that these entities do not avoid othering each other. Slemon calls it "neither managing to subordinate or contain the other (Zamora, 1995, p. 410)." In *The Heart of Redness*, we see opposite units playing out, each struggling to come out stronger. However, highlighting on the hybrid nature of the postcolonial South Africa – be it religiously or culturally – the novel allows the different sides to flow on their own will. The magical elements of it made this possible.

Slemon further says, magical realism:

> *"can transmute the 'shreds and fragments' of colonial violence and otherness into new 'codes of recognition' in which the dispossessed, the silenced, and the marginalized of our own dominating systems can again find voice and enter into the dialogic continuity of community and place (2004, p. 422)."*

In *The Heart of Redness,* the center becomes the periphery. This otherness is one tool in magical realist texts to destabilize the system of mainstream thoughts in general.

> *Throw away your red ochre blankets! Wear trousers! Throw away your red isikhakha skirts! Wear dresses! For our Lord Christ died for us on the cross, to save us from eternal damnation (2000, p. 49)… The gospel men provided much entertainment everywhere they went. Whenever they came to the twins' village there was great merriment, and people knew that they were going to laugh until their ribs were painful (2000, p. 48).*

However, creating the dichotomy of the Unbelievers and the Believers and the missionaries' Christianity and the local prophets' belief, the narratives play back and forth in ambivalence. Nonetheless, the authoritative voice tends to emerge from the local ground, othering the conventional center – Christianity and the West.

> *Mhalakaza was extending a hand of reconciliation to the white settlers. He was asking them to kill their cattle and destroy their crops as well, for the sake of their own redemption. "It's not enough for you to read the big black book," he warned them. "You must throw away your witchcraft. The [new] people have not come to make war but to bring about a better state for all." But the colonists were too stubborn to accept his invitation. What the believers had suspected all along, that the whites were beyond redemption, was confirmed (2000, p. 133).*

Here the call for redemption comes from the usually othered side. The periphery is 'extending a hand of reconciliation' and issuing warning to the center. The usually marginalized side is stating that the whites are 'too stubborn' to come to their side which is one of the traits of magical realism.

Mudumbe's *The Invention of Africa* (1988) "is to Africa, what Edward Said's Orientalism was to the East," states Brendan Cooper (2004: 222). Mudumbe discusses that the colonial system that reigned in Africa brought about polarized notions and how they challenge each other. The center and the periphery are among these opposite corners. This is the very nature of magical realism, where it emerges holding some aspects of two sides.

This notion of otherness is not only seen in the religious and political points of *The Heart of Redness* but in characterization too. The characters of Camagu and John Dalton can be discussed from otherness point of view. Camagu is a black South African who studied his doctoral degree in the United States. He worked and lived there as well for thirty years and recently came back to South Africa. John Dalton is a white businessman who was born and grew up in South Africa. These two characters pose an appealing ground for discussion of switched roles.

In one scenario, John Dalton speaks with his white friends about the future of South Africa. They tell him they are leaving because the situations in the country are unreliable. And we read John Dalton saying:

> *"Whenever there is any problem in this country you threaten to leave. You are only here for what you can get out of this country. You think you can hold us all to ransom."*
>
> *"Us? You are not a native, John. You may think you are, but you are not," says the second emigrant (2000, p. 140).*

The narrator chose an interesting term 'emigrant' to describe the whites in discussion. The tone by itself is othering. However, what is interesting here is that not only when in the company of his white friends that John Dalton identifies himself as a native but also when he is alone and by himself. The narration continues:

> *John Dalton gets into his four-wheel-drive bakkie and drives away. He has had it with these clowns and their attitude. They can all leave for all he cares. Yes, let them go. He does not need them. He has his community of Qolorha (Ibid, p. 141).*

Indeed, there are racial differences here. There are black and white characters in the novel; blacks being the dominant ones. When we come to the white John Dalton, he calls Qolorha home and the Xhosans my people. Nonetheless, he has his own stand too. That puts him in an awkward position between the Believers and the Unbelievers. He is against the building of a gambling city in Qolorha and wants to keep Qolorha as it is. This distinguishes him from the Unbelievers' stand. On the other hand, probably because of his Christian background he doesn't believe in the old prophesies of Nonqawuse which is held sacred by the Believers and that puts him against them. And both sides haven't forgotten that he is the great grandson of the John Dalton of the cattle-killing era who had killed the common ancestor of the Believers and the Unbelievers.

> *"This child of Dalton says our forebears were foolish," says Zim sadly. "Is that why his forebears cooked them?"*
>
> *"Will you ever forget about that?" appeals Dalton. "…Whenever we don't see eye to eye on the smallest of things, you bring up this cooking business! (2000, p. 244)*"

As discussed above, John Dalton is othered by the whites and the blacks as well. Though he identifies himself as a native, the natives say he is not a native and the non natives say he is not a native. He is forever suspended in this limbo.

In *The Bleeding of the Stone*, the desert is the central identity against which the human characters and the animals are marginalized. The desert is depicted as one major character, all the happenings revolving around it, the others (humans and animals) playing supportive roles around it.

The author exploits the special characteristics of the desert in building magical setups that are drawn from its natural circumstances. The desert is a consistent presence, immobile and undying. The other creatures in it, including humans are juxtaposed as mortal, moveable and changing – affected by the ways of the desert.

According to Awin Al-Fouri, the desert is not only a place where the story is set but it is taken as a protagonist which unique status and distinct traits. As a protagonist, the story revolves around the desert. Everything that happens in the story is related to the desert one way or the other. And

every other being apart from the desert is affected by the desert. He claims that the desert, "reflects the mysterious inter-related relationship that links the characters of the novel into one entity and destiny in which drama mingles with legends, philosophy, magic and superstitions" (2000: 42).

The legends are of the ancient paintings and carvings on the stones and wall of caves. Most of these paintings and carvings depict or consist of giant humans (men) and the waddan. There are some instances in the novel that suggest these paintings might be of Abraham and the lamb he was given to sacrifice instead of his son, Isaac. And the Biblical connotations that the sacrificed lamb symbolizes Christ who later came to the world and died for all mankind. There is no clear explanation of these allusions in the novel. However, since the Christian come to these caves and visit them in awe and supplication, this logical connection could be made. The Islamic philosophy of the Sufists is highlighted here while Christian pilgrims come and visit the carvings in the caves. Here Islamic thoughts are the center Christianity is the other.

The desert is depicted as the almighty while humans and animals are put aside as totally dependent of it. The fact that magical realism is a juxtaposition of two opposite realms like the magical and the real opens a favorable condition for the entities to other the other.

The different othering dimension comes from Asouf. Asouf, identifying himself with his new visitors - Massoud and Cain - as they are Muslims, too offers to show them the important sites in the desert. He says, "I can show you places I've never shown the Christians. Places no one has ever seen" (2002, p. 12). Cain responds:

> *The sights… what business do we have with sights? We're sights ourselves, don't you know that? The westerners come from beyond the seas to look at us and see how we live. Have you ever seen a sight interested in other sights (2002, p. 13)?*

As the characters are mostly Muslims as it is in the real setting dominating the desert world around the Maghreb, they not only look at the others from othering position and they also look at themselves from other's position. In the above extract Cain asserts that the desert people are actually the exotic sites that the westerners come to visit them in their natural environment. As

Faris states it, "Recognizable forms of magical realism continue to proliferate from locations both 'central' and 'peripheral' (2004, p. 108)".

As magical realist texts aim to destabilize existing notions of the western beliefs, in the *Bleeding of the Stone*, the perception is from the side of the former 'exotics' Arab world. Hence, the Islamic and Arabic thoughts and culture are dominating over the Christians beliefs here. Here the center is the desert, the sufist Islamic philosophy, the pastoralist life-style and the peripheral is those who come from the west, the Christians, the technologically advanced – machine gun and car owning – modern people.

Wizard of the Crow has also made use of the feature of otherness. It says, "Pictures of beggars or wild animals were what many tourists sent back home as proof of having been in Africa" (2006, p. 35). This is the widely known realistic fact in which the world perceives Africa. The major international media outlets can be taken as evidences here. We see Africa depicted as a setting for ongoing conflicts, famine, migration and natural disasters. We don't see the positive sides often.

In this novel, we get to see what 'Africans are like' from the impression of an American Professor, Din Furyk. This doctor meets the Aburirian delegate once. And he makes his judgments based on this one instance. The members of the delegate were very uncertain about what was happening to their Ruler when he fell ill during their stay in New York. Moreover, speculating that his problem might be this or that may bring disastrous consequences. The ministers were met by Professor Furyk when they were in this dilemma. And when he asks them questions they avoid giving out direct responses. They were not comfortable at all. The professor takes this in and concludes, "Africans, or shall I say black people, in general, are strange" (2006, p. 472).

The point here is that the Africans were supposed to conform to the expected norm in the strange country. Such suppositions are not noticed when the professor later comes with his group of white people to assess the final stages of the Ruler's illness. One of the group members, an electrician, even comes to Aburiria with a night vision goggle because he "assumed that the continent was dark night and day" (2006, p. 673). The othering tendency works in both contexts.

This comes from the understanding that the white culture is superior and central and the others are to be looked as others.

The satire here is that Professor Din Furyk himself seems to have other origins which make him insecure about his identity when he is questioned. He is very comfortable when he judges the Africans based on their face structure and behavior. And he doesn't think twice when he asks Kamiti, "Where did you learn the language so well?" after he hears him speaking fluent English. But when Kamiti asks him the same question, the professor gets irritated. He thinks, "Could he not tell I was white (2006, p. 448)?" The thoughts and actions of the Americans concerning 'Africa' and 'Africans', whether in their own country or in Aburira, is similar.

The other novel, *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez*, outright indorses that the whites' reason and logic cannot always explain what goes on in the world. The following dialogue between two black women can be a showcase:

> *"They don't realize that a mystery is the best explanation in the world,"*
>
> *"Let them look. They even want to know why the Mpoumbou rock bleeds when it's wounded. The trouble is, the whites don't realize that they came into the world long after the world itself (1985, p. 88)."*

In this story the whites are considered unintelligent for trying to stick with logic while the people in Valencia are all knowing, embracing the mystery that surrounds their area. The mockery even goes on to explain why the whites are flocking to Valencia. They came for different reasons; some to do research on the earth's cry, some to drill oil, some to investigate the origins of man… the reasons are matter-of-factly intertwined with serious reasons and mockery (1985, p. 17).

Its shows how opportunistic the whites are; coming the first reason/chance they got to exploit whatever can be exploited from African nations, such as the imaginary African city of Valencia. The satirical story gives explanations as to why the foreigners concern themselves with Africa. Though the administrators of the town are the mayor and the judge, nobody takes them seriously. The city is indirectly ruled by Estina Bronzario and her women army.

Otherness has been depicted in its traditional way in *Woman of the Aeroplanes* that one looks at another detaching itself as well as in a way different from what we see in the other novels.

> *He would picture the Africans coming, in coins of expectation; he would picture them with their drums and inventions, in little aerial skites over Glen Coe, ready to drum a dirge for the MacDonalds now, while eating palm soup spoonless (1988, p. 76).*

Tukwans call Levensvale 'land of the frozen feet' (1988, p. 171) while Levensvales are confused experiencing their 'new sweat' (p. 166) when they came to Tukwan. However, the story emphasizes not on differences but on similarities. 'But we are both towns out of time, and skin is a joke,' (p. 171) says one character implying that time is what makes people different. When people live out of the normal time, leading immortal life, it doesn't matter whether they are black or white. Interestingly tough, this can be interpreted as in ordinary time in which the world operates, skin color is something that makes a difference in one's life.

In one instance, we read a dialogue between a Ghanaian couple about going to Scotland.

> *Moro: 'I am not going to any cold land where every day the primitive people there will force me Moro the great cola farmer with Allah on my lips, to prove whether I'm human or not.'*
>
> *Fatma: 'Don't worry my husband, when any of the cold landed people come here, we shall make them so human and so much cleverer (p. 51).'*

It's all about perspective. One, in the other's eyes, can be considered primitive however civilized he/she thinks he/she is. What matters is how the entities define those polarized elements; primitive and civilization.

'Native' is usually a term that the West uses to refer to other people who lived in different parts of the world before the invasion of the whites. But here the Ghanians are referring to the Scottish as 'natives'. The perspective makes all the difference. Treat the natives kindly even if they think they created every universal quality Ewurade! (Ewurade means Good God) (p. 66) Here the

tables are turned. Africans' perception of white people looks like the usual white's perception of the African people.

What differs the way this story is written is that there is not much of a complaint against colonialism or the West in such a direct way. It rather focuses on the traditions, the unique traits, the individual genius of Ghana. It deconstructs the West's perception of Africa and uses it in exactly the opposite way as in the above example. It highlights on points of a nation's capability to lead itself out of poverty, out of mal-administration and out of anything that is negative, on its own. And using magical realist features, the author brought out Tukwan's great sides, putting it in parallel with that of the Scottish town of Levensvale.

On the other hand, the narrative shows that the westerns still perceive a group of people coming from any nation in Africa as 'African' and despite the fact that the Africans initiate the business relations they still are considered primitive.

All the novels are noted to have used magical realism beyond "opposing cultural imperialism by immersing their fictions in local beliefs, symbols and philosophies." They "reinforce imperialism by peddling the exoticism and otherness of indigenous cultures to a metropole greedy for excapism" (Cooper, 2004, p. 31).

4. 5. Animism

As a sub-genre of magical realism, animism in literature concerns itself with the elements that 'continually re-enchant the world (2003, p. 271)', as Harry Garuba puts it. Possessing distinct spiritual essence, humans, plants, animals, water-bodies, deserts, woods all have interlinked elements. The magic in magical realist texts highlight the wondrousness of everyday objects and events (Faris, 2004, p. 126).

Different local beliefs among indigenous peoples can relate to such animist thoughts that treat the natural and the supernatural almost on equal levels. Different cultures have different rituals, mythologies and belief systems. We can take the Xhosans as an example here. In *The Heart of Redness* are no different. They treat some natural entities like the fig tree, the wind, the ocean as having their own version of life or soul.

If there is a little sparkle of fire out of place, the wind comes out of nowhere and escalates the situation. “The wind is making things worse. It had been a cool and quiet day when they were at the inkundla, but all of a sudden there is raging wind that is spreading the fire” (2000, p. 218). With a little spark of fire, with an almost irrational cause, the whole village burns down within a matter of minutes.

In *The Heart of Redness*, animals talk with people. Stars talk with people. People dispatch birds on missions. Stars guide people to some places. One may be reminded of the journey of the magi guided by starts to find the infant Jesus in Bethlehem.

> *They were accompanied and protected by the Seven Sisters, the stars from which the Khoikhoi were descended. The seven daughters of Tsiqwa. He who told his stories in heaven. The Creator. Qukezwa led the way, for she knew the language of the starts… “The stars tell me that we must move until the sea stops us,” Qukezwa told them” (p. 51).*

Qukezwa also puts stones on the numerous graves of Heitsi Eibib, the prophet of her people. Placing a stone on his graves is important. Here there is a significant animistic tendency that gives the rocks put on the grave some kind of power that can connect the humans with creators. Qukezwa says, “To place a stone on this grave of Heitsi Eibib is to be one with the source of your soul” (2000, p. 23).

These animist tendencies of giving inanimate objects life and role are prevalent in the novel. By using mythologies, legends, fables and other folkloristic attributes Mda creates all sources of meaning to life, balancing the role of the living, the dead, the visible, the invisible, the animate and the inanimate.

In the novel, there is a fig tree that is centuries old inside Zim’s compound. This tree is of a certain significance in its function as a shelter for the Believer and for hundreds of birds.

> *There are four different kinds of ancestors: the ancestors of the sea, the ancestors of the forest, the ancestors of the veld, and the ancestors of the homestead. They are all regular visitors to this tree (p. 38).*

The tree is considered a shrine where the living and the dead commune. However, what is noteworthy here is the fact that entities like sea, forest, veld and homesteads have ancestors. That means they have souls. They live and die. They have ancestors and descendants. They have generations.

Conservation being the major theme of the story, such animist tenets in the novel reflect the community's belief that not only humans but everything that has life around should be protected. It also helps to strengthen the argument that everything that has life should be preserved. To preserve something that possesses life makes more sense and makes the argument clear and the decision easy if ever it comes down to choosing between destroying natural entities in order to build trade centers or keep the natural as it is.

The simple meaning being animals and objects having souls and intellect like humans, Harry Garuba stresses on two points to be "the basic creed of animist belief … one, that things possess a life of their own and, two, that when their souls are awakened their breath is freed and may migrate into other objects" (2003, p. 272). This animist tenet is prevalent in *The Bleeding of the Stone*. The *waddan* as they call it existed in the reality and is believed have been extinct for a long time, not only lives in the desert in the story but also is highly personified taking human attributes.

> *He couldn't make out anything in the dark. A body was moving there in front of him, pulling him powerfully. He was saved! Saved! It was the wadden. His victim and executioner. But which of them was the victim, which the executioner? Which of them was human, which animal? (2002, p. 60)*

In this scenario of Asouf chasing the *waddan* to kill it, then the *waddan* flinging Asouf over the ledge of mountain rocks causing Asouf to hang on the tip of the rock with his hands for hours, the rescue also comes from the waddan. In a human move, the sheep gives Asouf a rope which Asouf originally used to catch the sheep and pulls him away from the pit he was hanging over for hours. Though not sure whose contemplation it is, we read Which of them was human, which animal? As Garuba claims the soul of animals and objects awakened and freed with a possibility of migrating into other beings is evident here.

> *Suddenly, in the dimness of the glow, he saw his father in the eyes of the great, patient waddan (p. 60). He, his father, and the mighty waddan were now one… Nothing could separate them. Who seeks protection against himself? (2002, p. 66)*

Not only do animals take on animist aspects given human attributes, but also objects like rocks. But the blind rocks knew how to waken him from these passions (p. 47). This constant waking of animals and objects in the desert to a human-like consciousness gives the desert an overall animist aspect, having its own instinct.

Just like we directly witness the animist nature of things in *One Hundred Years of Solitued,* Melquiades saying 'things have a life of their own… it's just a matter of waking up their souls' (1989, p. 2), Asouf's father in *The Bleeding of the Stone* also repeats this claiming, 'Don't think animals can't understand… just because they can't speak the way you do (2002, p. 43).' Rightly so, al-Koni makes use of animals and other objects in the desert giving them human characteristics, asserting the deserts status as a protagonist. Personification is used as a literary device in such animist tenets.

In *The Bleeding of the Stone,* the major character Asouf is believed to be a progeny of the jinn – the supernatural creatures that are known especially in Arabic literature taking human and animal forms. Asouf lives in the Libyan side of the Sahara desert guarding the area and finally metamorphosing into a *waddan* which was an anticipated incident after he saw his father in the eyes of the waddan and claiming that he, his father and the waddan were one.

In *Wizard of the Crow,* traditional knowledge is important:

> *"Our ancestors tell us that a builder can only build you a house with the building blocks you bring him. You bring him stones? You get a house made of stones. You bring him wood? You get a house made of wood. You bring defective stone, wood, iron, or steel, you get a defective house" (2006, p. 211).*

Kamiti says, "All life is one and it flows like a river or the waters of the sea. Plants, humans, animals down to the creatures that crawl, all draw their share from the one indivisible river of life, just as they all draw breath from the air" (p. 274) which is the basic concept of animism.

In *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez*, the narration uses different forces around humans like animals and cliffs to say the truth that happened or about to happen.

> *To our great surprise, Fartamio Andra informed us that the court was going to try Lorsa Lopez's parrot.*
>
> *'For spreading the rumor about the lap lice and thus obliging Lorsa Lopez to commit his crime,' said Sonia.*
>
> *... The parrot was sent for. It was dressed with the colors of the coast.*
>
> *"... In your opinion, who gave the lice to Madam Lorsa Lopez?"*
>
> *The parrot laughed out loud, to everyone's surprise. It sang the hymn of the Seven Solitudes composed by Lorsa Lopez: "It was you," said the parrot. Pp 104*
>
> *... The parrot had been shot for abuse of confidence... (1985, p. 104, 108)*

The earth, the cliff and the sea cry or groan whenever something vital is about to happen. The cliff cried when foreigners insulted Valencia, when the capital was taken from Valencia, when Lorsa Lopez killed his wife Estina Benta. "I think Baltayonsa cried out more loudly than Jesus Island" (p. 5), say one of the characters in an unimpressed tone, as if earth-cry happens every day. Since most of the time something drastic happens and the cliff and the sea cry, the people are more bothered when it is silent.

The animist aspect is also evident in *Woman of the Aeroplanes.* All that is surrounding the people of Tukwan; lakes, animals, things, have extraordinary connections with the humans. Everything in the given setting is a character in the book, taking part in the things that go on. It says, "Every animal, human, thing, or presence was to be treated as equal in being, in principle, to everything else" (1988, p. 65).

Evidently, Pokuaa tries to get married to one of the blue elephants that reside in Tukwan until de Babo comes and tell her she shouldn't be reckless with her actions if she wants the town to follow her. Coconuts that once de Babo ate get 'suddenly intelligent' and followed him around

till the end of the story. A vulture that usually sits on Kofi Senya's pipe once tells one the airplanes to land safely. The lake wants to be lulled by Kofi Senya into rippling quietly.

Apart from the fact that everything about Tukwan has its own life and say, there are ancestors included in the story as a big part of the plot. The characters being immortal for most of the storyline has led Brenda Cooper to generalize that they are the ancestors themselves. However, the characters interaction with one another is on the same level and one doesn't serve the other as a predecessor. Nonetheless, we witness other ancestors that roam in the deserts, supposedly unable to depart this world, watching over the land and the people of Africa. Spirituality is another major part of the novel. One of the major characters of the story, Kofi Senya, whom Brenda Cooper calls man-god, is the one that triggers the town's spiritual energy with his mysterious and all-knowing ways.

4.6. Absurdity

The level of brutality in *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez* is something not paralleled in the other novels selected for this study. Death is something that happens naturally or committed on one by another. And the fact that life and death walk side by side making people's lives vulnerable is noted in all the novels. But none has gone to the level of explaining how every detail of the gruesome killing act as *Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez* does.

Estina Benta calls for help when she is being killed and even after she is killed by her husband.

> *The poor woman called for help, and we heard her voice, nearly drowned by her husband's bellowing … "Help me! He's killing me." Doors and windows were opened, revealing shadowy figures crossing themselves. He fetched all the tools from his pigsty; meat hooks, picks, forks, felling axes, machetes … millstone. He finished off his crime with the pickaxe. Until siesta time, the body lay in the town square, still calling out: 'Help me! He's killing me!' Dismembered, disemboweled, completely covered in red clay, crawling with flies stuffing themselves on blood and gore, her body garlanded with her guts, she lay there moaning! (1985, p. 11, 12)*

Of course, this is not possible in a realist scenario. But the fact that Lorsa kills his wife as if he would an animal is set side by side with wife's dismembered body still calling for help; giving the real and unreal equally absurd ground. The moral decay of the people; how they die, how they kill and how they turn their back on each other knowing everything and yet pretending not to know is highlighted in this single extract. Estina dead and dismembered still called for help. The help she wanted never came. People stayed in their homes, crossing themselves, as most of them are Christians. Her neighbors who are also her friends, her religious neighbors, didn't come to save her. The fact that none of them responeded to her call is unreal by itself; given their feminist stance and spirit of solidarity. It seems as though they waited until she died for them to take it up as an issue and raise their voice about it.

The failure of friendship and religiousness is also reflected in the failure of the justice system. The day after her death, the judge comes to see Estina's dismembered body on the town square and asks the reason for her death and learns she was killed by her husband because she gave him lice. She gave him lice is to mean that she cheated on him. The judge says: 'Lice, fair enough, but he could've killed her some other way" (p. 13).' That was the verdict. However, the judge didn't rely on his own judgment as he now lives in the decapitalized city. And he waits for the police to come from the new capital and investigate the crime.

The justice system is distorted that the judge arrives at the crime scene before the police does, gives verdict, and then waits for the police to come and do the investigation. The appropriate legal procedure in realist contexts is that the police investigate the crime, opens a case and that is where the judge comes in. but not here.

The day after the crime, the judge covered Estina's body with a sheet. Still, the body was calling, "Help me! He's killed me" (1985, p. 13). The dead seems to have its own conscience as the grammatical structure is changed here; from he's killing me to he's killed me. The corpse itself is confirming its own state. The people now say, still unaffected, "It is Estina's voice. He obviously didn't kill her completely," (p. 13) adding another layer of absurdity to the situation. A dead body is speaking and the people who didn't do anything during her murder are commenting that she was not killed properly. This shows the level of absurdity. The intersection of tow magical realist elements; the fantastic and the matter-of-fact tone is shown in a single scenario here.

The police arrive at last, but four months after the crime was committed. When they come, it was in such an extravaganza, escorted by motorcycles and bands. They didn't go to the town square where the body was still waiting for them. Rather they went to a photographer and looked at the pictures taken the day of the crime. And they went back to the new capital without carrying out the investigation because they had forgotten to bring a qualified doctor and a chain for the criminal with them. This extravagant protocol is a satire used to show that it wasn't enough for the police to come four months to the crime scene. They had to parade through the town as if they did a clever thing delaying. Then they avoid the scene all together and go back with a silly pretext of forgetting a chain and a doctor. The anticlimax should have taught the people a lesson. But they still waited on, for forty seven more years.

When they come with a doctor and a chain, forty seven years have passed. Estina's remains are buried and dug out several times in those forty seven years: buried because it was the right thing to do, dug out because the mayor thought the police were coming. Exaggeration is one aspect the novelists used to supplement the extraordinary happenings an dit serves the purpose of absurdity.

The greatest irony of this all is that the city of Valencia almost becomes the capital again because thousands of people gather from all over the world for several reasons, mainly to wait for the police to come. And look how the population has grown from three thousand tadpoles to four million souls in only a few years! Seven hundred thousand families of shit who've moved into these shambles under the crazy pretext of waiting for the police to return! (p. 15)

The Christians and the Muslims, the Mahometans, as the Christians in the area refer to them, all devoted to their respective religions, going to their respective temples on designate times of the day and the week, are surrounded by death, brutality and confusion. It seems as if a kind of realization hit in when they declare: "God is like the sun. Whether you die, whether you cry, whether you're born, whether you scream out or hold your tongue, he always rises. His time isn't our time" (1985, p. 25).

There is death around them. And people don't die naturally. They are killed by others. They are killed for silly reasons. Whenever someone is killed, all they do is cross themselves. The level of absurdity is too high. The crimes go unpunished. The dead are not buried. The killers roam the

city freely. They all live with this reality. But then, the woman whom they all hold at such a high esteem is killed in a barbaric way and her undistinguishable corpse is displayed for everyone to see.

> *Everyone began to sob … Hard, hot tears of impotence and hate. In everyone's eyes. In the women's eyes, in the men's eyes, in the children's eye, all gazing on this harsh wickedness, on this harsh shame of man spread out on the agate stones, on this stomach of man tipped over the proud brambles of his barbarity: the absolute ugliness of our vanity. A salt without taste! (p. 99)*

It was as if time is suspended. The people need a constant reminder of their existence. It says, "Armano Yozua called the midday prayer. We liked his deep bass voice. It reassured us that we were all still there, alive and real, waiting for the police to come" (p. 27). It is even disrupted. Place is also a joke here. The town square, the very heart of the city, where Estina Benta was killed, while no one did anything about it, where she was buried and excavated several times for the benefit of the police becomes unreal. It could be a joke. On the other hand it could hold a prominent role in the story. Even the characters in the story doubt if they are living in real time. It's only the call for prayer that comes every day that constantly reminds them of they are really living.

The matter-of-fact narration is at its best in *Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez*. When they heard their friend was killed by her husband, they say, "He could've chosen some other day to kill her. There are seven days in the week, and he had to choose our one!" (p. 7) This probably shows the level of absurdity in the community; that death is nothing to be alarmed about and it happens every day. They are just upset now the festivity cannot take place because of someone's death.

Lorsa Lopez, while waiting for the police to come and convict him for killing his wife, kills someone else. He reasons this out saying: "He bugged me with his noise. Besides, his silence might now persuade the Nsanga-Nordan Mahometans to send the police (1985, p. 77)." This is satire, irony and a lot more.

The absurdity in the story reaches its pick when we hear the criminal himself saying, "Now that Nsanga-Norda hasn't had time to send its police, I'll have to wait for the good Lord to judge my crime" (p. 129). This is irony layered with bitterness.

The entire governing system is not seen doing anything meaningful for the development of the country. Most of the ministers spend their time plotting against one another to get more favor in the eyes of the Ruler. The Ruler himself doesn't evaluate his cabinet members based on their work performance but on their loyalty to him. Therefore, in order to win his support they try to outsmart one another in totally unnecessary activities. They have no respect for themselves or others. They go to the extent of providing their wives and daughters to the Ruler's sexual whims. They strengthen their immunity and gain promotions in such degrading ways.

This absurd competition among one another is what brought the idea of the *Marching to Heaven* project afore. The plan is to take loan from the Global Bank to construct the sky reaching building. And for what? "So that the Ruler could call on God daily … resulting in rapid growth of Aburiria" (2005, p. 16), says one of the Ministers, Machokali.

Just when the reasons for the project don't seem to get any more absurd, the other minister, Sikiokuu, who failed to think of such a fancy birthday gift to the Ruler, comes up with an even more absurd idea which is a luxurious vehicle for the Ruler to use in his ascending the tallest building in the world so he wouldn't be tired. On his way, the Ruler can visit other planets like Mars. And the most amazing thing about all this is that the Ruler is actually happy with these ludicrous ideas.

The rate of unemployment is so high, those who look for jobs form very long queues wherever they think there is vacancy. The queues get long to the extent of alarming the government. The police send a few officers riding motor bikes to the sites to disperse the lines letting the people know there is no job for them. But the queues were too long for the motor riders to reach everyone standing in line and let the message be known. One of the riders comes back after "roaming for seven days through towns near and around Eldares in pursuit of the end of the queue" (2006, p. 158).

When this queue mania was taken to the top officials, they respond to it in the most absurd way. The cabinet members didn't want to voice that the people are looking for jobs because it would mean the Ruler has failed in his administrative skills. Therefore, instead of investigating the real reason behind the source of the queues and addressing the employment shortage, the cabinet agrees that the people are standing in line to express their support for the Ruler. This makes the Ruler very happy and he issues orders to the police to send motor riders to the four corners of the country to encourage more people to join the queues.

It's like there is no government in Aburiria. The officials are all corrupt with no exception and they all clatter around the Ruler, who is the most corrupt of them all. When the ministers, parliamentarians and other top officials are busy self-serving, the country decays. The country is piled with garbage and a deadly virus is killing many. The amount of dirt and garbage brings to mind the filth and stench described in *The Beautiful Ones are Not Yet Born* by Armah. The postcolonial era, which Africans put so much hope into, has failed in all corners of the continent; in Aburiria too just like Armah's Ghana.

With a help of British and French plastic surgeons respectively, one of the Aburirian ministers, Machokali, has enlarged his eyes while the other one, Sikiokuu, has enlarged his ears. These rival ministers have taken such extraordinary measures so they could see and hear beyond human range in order to protect the Ruler. There is a third official who goes to Germany to enlarge his tongue so he can be the voice of the Ruler. However, the mission fails, disfiguring him permanently. Fortunately for him, the Ruler takes his efforts into consideration and gives him a ministerial position.

These instances are just a few selected examples of what goes on in Aburiria that show the level of absurdity that rules the nation. While the people live under the line of poverty, the government officials lead luxurious lives. They have totally forgotten all governmental responsibilities. They are immersed in personal issues and the country seems to just exist on its own will. The people and the government are like two entities going separate ways, without any connecting point.

4.7. Authorial Reticence and Defocalization

The fact that strange events invade magical realist narratives puts the perspective in a questionable position. Since the tales told are uncommon, naturally it calls for a story teller whose stand is also inexplicable. Faris calls such storytellers 'naïve narrators'. Magical events are inserted in a detailed realistic setting as if they are accepted everyday occurrences in a neutral, unsurprised tone. Who is perceiving such events? Who is recounting these events? To believe or not believe being the reader's business, the narration goes on intermingling the magical and the real "without comment, in a matter-of-fact way, accepted – presumably – as a child would accept them, without undue questioning or reflection; they thus achieve a kind of defamiliarization that appears to be natural" (Faris, 2004, p. 177).

In *The Heart of Redness*, there are several evidences of a defocalized narration. For example: "Camagu learns that NoManage and NoVangeli are two formidable women who earn their living from what John Dalton calls cultural tourism (2000, p. 96). The narration continues to relate how these two women try to act as diviners and entertain tourists. But the paragraph ends with a sentence saying, "And the tourists pay good money for all this foolery!" (ibid) Obviously 'foolery' is not a term used in the perception of an objective focalizer. Someone is meddling in the narration. The reader understands that it is not Camagu's observation as it is established that he understands the women's need to work and earn income and he certainly wouldn't call their acts 'foolery'. Therefore, seeing the way the women earn the money as 'foolery' is an indeterminate perspective.

As Amaryll Chanady (1985, p. 39-40) asserts in cases of magical realist texts there are narrative shifts of perspectives in *The Heart of Redness* too.

> *He now laments the sufferings of the Middle Generations. He still cries for beautiful things. But he does not believe in not grieving anymore. We cannot say he believes in grieving, for as an Unbeliever he does not believe. It is as it should be (2000, p. 91).*

The above extract is one example for such unexpected change of perception. The narrator is telling us about the character Bhonco who is the leader of the Unbelievers. The description itself is confusing with paradoxical expressions like crying at good things and not believing in not

mourning the loss of the past. And before there could be an explanation to get a clearer understanding of the meaning of all this, the narrator(s) almost reveal themselves using the pronoun 'we'.

The Heart of Redness is full of such perspective swings or shifts.

> *Xolisiwa Ximiya is proud of her father's position. If only he had asked NoPetticoat to press his suit. But even a wrinkled suit is better than no suit at all. Zim stands up, looking regal in his traditional finery. He is smiling (2000, p. 92).*

Here the reader sees Bhonco from his daughter's perspective. She is the one who is looking at him and she is the one who is approving of his suit as it is already made clear that she approves of western outfits instead of the traditional ones. But immediately the narration jumps to Zim and shows how he looks great in his costume. This narration told in one breath is an example of contradicting focalizer and we cannot be sure through whose eyes we are looking at the situation. This is what Faris calls defocalization.

Even though Faris states that "Focalization is usually imagined to originate in an individual's consciousness (2004, p. 44)," it is a different case in magical realism. In such magical realist texts like in *The Heart of Redness,* there is no pinpointing the perception.

"People came to the homestead of Mlanjeni's father to be cleansed by the wonder child. Those who had poisonous roots and evil charms disposed of them and were cleansed" (2000, p. 16). It starts as an objective focalizer but then it becomes personal and it seems that we are looking at the situation from an individual point of view that is particularly in loath of witchcraft.

Just like *The Heart of Redness,* there is no single point of view in *The Bleeding of the Stone* as well. The story is related to us from different perspectives. We see things through the eyes of Asouf, Cain, John and sometimes an unknown focalizer as in the following extract. For example, we cannot tell who is saying, "One day the devil smuggled three waddan into his herd of goats, then sat watching him from the mountain top" (2002, p. 41).

The reason why such destabilized perception of certain accounts in a magical realist story is intensified is the presence of irreducible elements in realist settings. This is because it subjects

the standards of realistic accounts which are based on sensory data and it defocalizes the narratives, questioning the reliability of the narrator. Moreover, it is to give equal grounds for every possible perception, every possible voice that could present itself in the story. There is no control over the narrative by a single authority. No group or individual is given any prominence over the other. At times, it seems that the narrative favors one side over the other. But that is disrupted soon. According to Faris, such elements of "textual defocalization, polyvocality, decentering of narrative authority, pronominal shifting, and thematic destruction of personal authority" (2004, p. 137) are prevalent in magical realist texts like the case of *The Heart of Redness* and in *The Bleeding of the Stone*.

Woman of the Aeroplanes has a narrator that meddles with the happenings of the story in relating them. He/she adds his open opinions and views in his all-knowing standpoint. However, while telling the story, the narrator is not that detached from the story itself unlike the typical magical realist narrator which Faris calls naïve (2004, p. 91). He/ she may not hold any judgment against or for the character's acts and speeches. However, he tells us what the character is feeling along with not only the reason for the feeling but also his own (narrator's) supposed impression. In one instance, we notice the narrator's outright meddling with the character - reader's interaction by posing his own view. It says, "Babo was getting biased at everything except the single view… and that was because the single view simply did not exist except for the historically chosen fundamental issues, like the right to equal life, to equal love and to equal skin. I lie?" (1988, p. 143)

Sometimes the narrator assumes double personality, asking himself questions about his own narration. It says, "Occasionally Pokuaa would get married. What? She believed in traditional weddings that wedded her to any spirit she liked (p. 157)." Ones, the narrator acknowledges there are extraordinary happenings going on saying, "Mackie always wanted to remain as ordinary as possible in extraordinary situations" (p. 157).

The story of *Woman of the Aeroplane* is related to the reader by a narrator that is difficult to pinpoint whose stand, reliability and … The narrator assumes a Ghanaian identity when relating the story. And he/she seems to be all knowing at times, and unsure other times.

“He was a man who usually jumped into the other foot indeed, Ewurade” (1988, p. 70), says the narrator about a Scottish man while still maintaining Ghanian expressions.

The other thing about the narrator is that he gets easily affected by the story he himself is telling. He totally gets into the mood the characters are in. He is nervous when they are nervous, he is happy when they are. It says, “There was a look of terror on Atta’s face as he had already released the wheels to land and was thus tttttten feet from the earth but ssssssaw no tarmac” (p. 165). Here he is even scared to the point of stuttering thinking the airplane would crash. The narrator’s empathy is something that is not seen in the other novels. He is not only empathic. There are groups that he favors over the others. He tells us that one of the characters, Moro’s authority, “was a handful of unplanted groundnuts (1988, p. 170) and also directly insults the other characters saying, Dovi followed stupidly with his stupider son Agbozo” (ibid: 172). He is not neutral at all.

In *Wizard of the Crow* the narrator relates what happens to the Ruler’s wife after she commented on him cheating on her. He puts her in isolation just for her remarks and her only visitors were spies and her children. Immediately after mentioning the children, the narrator asks himself ‘Her children? (2005, p. 9)’ The narration seems to understand the reader’s feeling well for bringing up the children after going well into the story without mentioning them. We can deduct the narrator is emphatic based on this. It sometimes also looks like that there is someone telling the story with minimum interruption from a quiet listener. And it’s the listener’s questions that we come across a few times in the story just like the above example.

At times, we witness the narration maintaining its distance from what is happening using phrases like ‘It is said that…’ or ‘Rumor has it…’ In one instance, while narrating about a chamber where the Ruler keeps skeletons of his late opponents, the narrator openly says, “Let me say as the narrator that I cannot confirm the truth or falsity of the existence of the chamber” (p. 11).

This third person narrator is sometimes omniscient, sometimes not. A few times through the story, the narrator asks the readers or some other characters that are invisible in the story or the quiet listener as assumed above, to clarify a certain incident. It goes on to say, “This tale needs many tongues to lighten the sense, for none of us was at once in Aburiria and America (p. 273).”

Once, the narrator also admits that he found a diary of one of the characters and that he's telling us a particular part of the story based on the accounts in that diary.

The other narrator we clearly know in *Wizard of the Crow* is A.G. – Arigaigai Gathere. "True! Haki ya Mungu," is the catch-word which tells us that we are listening to the story from A.G.'s mouth. A.G. is originally a police officer but one who has special gift and affection for telling tales. And the omniscient narrator tells us that A.G. takes part in most of the incidents happening in the story. Therefore, there is a possibility that A.G. could be reliable. But in one instance, we witness that he improvises the stories he tells.

These uncertainties of how a particular incident took place are what Faris calls 'maintaining narrative distance' which is one feature of magical realism.

4.8. Disruption of Time and Space

This notion of disruption of time and space is proposed by Wendy Faris. According to her, magical realist fictions "disturb received ideas about time and space (2004, p. 23)." *The Heart of Redness* has several instances of such features.

> *He is a carrier of the scars. They will live on his body forever. He has no first son to carry them when he dies, but that is another matter. The ancestors will decide about that (2000, p. 13).*

When the villagers flogged Bhonco's great grand-father Twin-Twin saying he was a wizard his wound couldn't heal for months. Finally it healed. But it started appearing on the first born of his sons and grandsons. This defying of sense of time and space in the physical world is manifested in such narrations in *The Heart of Redness*.

> *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 own world. But to this world when it still belongs to them (2000, p. 73).*

These people can transcend time and enter the past and experience the pain that their immediate forefathers, known to them as the Middle Generation, suffered because of colonialism. Colonialism emerged, according to them, because of the 'folly of belief that racked the country (Ibid, p. 72)'; the prophesy of Nongqawuse that led to the slaughter of hundreds of thousands heads of cattle that eventually resulted in famine.

As the above extract shows, this ability of the Unbelievers to go back in time and visit the space and time of their ancestors is not only narrated in a matter-of-fact manner but also confirmed by NoPetticoat, Bhonco's wife and the Believer Zim himself.

> *"We stood here with the multitudes," she says, her voice full of nostalgia. "Visions appeared in the water. Nongqawuse herself stood here. Across the river the valley was full of ikhamanga. There were reeds too. There are no longer there. We stood here and saw wonders (2000, p. 105)."*

The reader gets this first hand narration from Qukezwa of the post-apartheid era, standing by the river bank with Camagu. She is saying the above words one hundred fifty years after the incident happened. The accepted concept of time is disrupted here as the nineteen year old Qukezwa is saying these words standing in the present space and remembering a past time that she was not part of. She assumes the position of the Qukezwa from the time of the cattle killing a century ago.

There are multiple evidences that the Qukezwa of the past may well be residing in the body of the present Qukezwa. She is sometimes all-knowing as a person who lived to see the happenings in the lives of the Xhosans for a hundred and fifty years. And sometimes her knowledge is limited as expected from a nineteen year old girl that she is. "Camagu sees Qukezwa cleaning a number of big pots on the lawn near the store. He waves at her. She does not wave back" *(2000, p. 117).* Again we notice her knowing and yet not knowing with her other encounter with Camagu. She calls him a stranger after she came riding bareback and reinless on her horse, Gxagxa.

> *"Who are you?" he asks.*

"Qukezwa Zim."

"Oh, you are the girl at the shop. The girl who told me-"

"Told you what?"

"Come on, you know that we met at the store where you work. You actually propositioned me, naughty girl!"

"I have never seen you before." (2000, p. 117)

Again when Camagu goes to Zim's house for the first time, Zim introduces Qukezwa to him.

"I have met her a few times before," says Camagu as he shakes her hand.

"I do not remember meeting you," she says abruptly, and then walks out. (2000, p. 140)

Qukezwa is not evading when she says she doesn't remember meeting him. The narrator seems to want to give the impression that Qukezwa shifts back and forth between two identities – Qukezwa, the ancestor and Qukezwa, the present one. Because a few moments after she denies ever meeting him, she comes back with food and tells him, "This relish is imbhatyisa." Imbhatyisa is a kind of sea food that is of common knowledge between them.

In some of the magical realist texts, Faris speculates, characters are not themselves. They take on other identities just like the time and the space shifts take place. She gives Selamn Rushdie's Midnight's Children main character Saleem as an example. Saleem listens to the multiple voices of the other midnight children of India and Faris asks "Is he himself anymore (2004, p. 25)?" the same is true with Qukezwa. Is Qukezwa herself anymore?

Magical realism reorients not only our habits of time and space it our sense of identity as well. The mutivocal nature of the narrative and the cultural hybridity that characterize magical realism extends to its characters, which tend toward a radical multiplicity (2004, p. 25).

This knowing and not knowing of Qukezwa is translated as pretension by Camagu; a girl's coyness towards a man. And when it seems certain that his speculation might be true, Qukezwa comes out of nowhere starts playing her puzzling character. She usually appears to him when he thinks of her or when he thinks of leaving her or when he is by the lagoon that she frequents. Towards the end of the story, we learn that the lagoon was a favorite pastime for the ancestor Qukezwa.

This brings us to one of the major themes of magical realism which is resurrection (rebirth) which will be further discussed later on in this thesis.

Time is an important element in *Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez*. The bells and the voices calling the faithful to churches and mosques is how the people of Valencia know the time of the day. These calls are like clocks, time keepers.

There are people in Valencia who know what time someone dies, or what time they themselves die. In this story where prophecies are often told, people are obsessed with time of the day, with hours. *"I shall die on the day the Mahometans gorge themselves, at the hour of the leopard (1985, p. 126)."*

In one instance, time also equates God. *And people would say: now is the end of time. What nonsense! Time has no end for it was never created (1985, p 120).* The notion that time was there and will be for eternity is something that deviates from the western notion that is usually quoted saying 'since the beginning of time', 'until the end of time.'

It seems like this belief that time is beyond life and death, beyond all reaches, just going on and on recording every evil happening in their domain that at times forces them to blame it for all the wrong that happens around them. "We couldn't understand it. We blamed this screwed-up century, this pointless century, this century of bullshit. We were living in the age of the carved atom and highly polished noise… what a disaster!" *(1985, p. 7, 8)* Of the time range that stretches for eternity, the characters think that they have fallen in this one that is horrible.

The specific time and place is unknown in this story. We just know that there are two towns located side by side belonging to a similar nation but there exists a great animosity between

them. The particular time is not locatable either, except for a few hints that the whites have come and gone.

In *Woman of the Aeroplanes*, the space in which the story takes place is acknowledged by its own people as strange. However the meaning of strange is also distorted. The novel itself asks "the meaning of this strange town, whether it's more strange than normal or more normal than strange" (ibid, p. 180). The question here is what makes normal, normal? What makes real, real? What makes strange, strange? Who defines them? Who sets the standards and how?

What one can understand from this novel in relation to space, perhaps the most important point, is that however different places may be geographically, environmentally, and economically, the humans who inhabit them have similar struggles in life. Everywhere on earth, people constantly look for ways to make their lives better, to prosper economically, to eliminate things that create unfavorable conditions in their surroundings. The differences surrounding them do not make differences in their basic human needs. This idea is endorsed in the novel.

The concept of space is altered from that of the ordinary's in the setting *Woman of the Aeroplane*. The story is set in the Ghanaian town of Tukwan, with a journey to the town of Levensvale in Scotland slotted in. But the governments of the two countries couldn't find the towns as they have gone invisible. Especially, the town of Tukwan is busy hiding from being found by the authorities of Kumasi and Accra because they want to preserve their own peculiar identities from being influenced by the others. Their attempt to maintain unique identities can be taken as strength as the people are proud of their unique ways of life. The fact that they look for partnership with people that lead similar ways of life also can be a strength.

The maze that keeps changing its terrains, trapping people who try to get into the town and those who try to get outside from the inside to expose its whereabouts, represents the concept of space in the novel. It changes and adjusts when the need arises. It's the sense of the town of Tukwan being invisible surrounded by mist and adjustable hills, is not only distorted as a space but also its time frame

Time is also distorted in this story. The following two extracts can be good examples:

When David and Margaret first met thirty years ago into the future, she could safely look forward to the past (1988, p. 71).

These selected years never remained in their proper slots, and you could have a duck dancing with one foot in one year, and the other foot in another year… and good morning could come from 1960, while good afternoon came from 1965 (1988, p. 87).

In one of the instances, the town of Levensvale had to make use of Tukwan's sunshine to make the Scottish day brighter and let the Ghanaian guests feel home.

The ever recurring point in this story is the concept of time in its two dimensions which the story has created: mortal time and immortal time. What happens again and again is the interest of people to be mortal or immortal. They constantly sway in this dilemma that either time controls their lives or they control time.

4.9. Eternal Recurrence

In the *Heart of Redness*, there are three pairs of events in relation to characters that recur in the narrative; holding a parallel like significance in the two temporal settings; the past and the present.

Xikixa is the ancestor of the father of the original Believer, Twin and the original Unbeliever Twin-Twin as well as their descendants. He is a patriarch and a nobleman. He dies in the mid eighteen hundreds in the hands of the senior John Dalton who led a group of the British colonials during the Mlangeni war.

The twins saw that the leader of the soldiers was a man they had met before. John Dalton… Then to their horror, the soldier cut off the dead man's head and put it in a pot of boiling water.

"It's our father!" screamed Twin. "They were going to eat our father."

It was indeed the headless body of Xikixa (2000, p. 20).

For the twins, what was most painful was the way their father Xikixa died rather than his death. What bothered them was his joining of the Otherworld (the world in which the dead live) without his full body intact. "How would he commune with his fellow ancestors without a head? How would a headless ancestor be able to act as an effective emissary of their pleas to Qamata?" (p. 21) That was their worry.

A hundred and fifty years after, we see another Xikixa who is a chief in Qolorha area.

> *... Chief Xikixa is so weak that he cannot put his foot down and take a sensible position... the chief is the kind of person who is swayed by each speaker's argument, and at the end of the imbhizo (meeting) he does not know what side to take (p. 91).*

Not only are their roles and their names similar, but they also lack the skill and will of maintaining that status as the head.

The life and death of the old Twin (the ancestor) and the young Twin (the present time) are like a repetition of the same scenario. Twin of the present time lives a life that is different from the expectations of his family and no one knows where and when he dies either. But Twin did not live up to his father's expectations. He became a renegade who refused to follow Zim in the battle to preserve the rituals of the Believers (p. 42).

And Twin the ancestor also had a different personality. He was supposed to be a major patriarch in his nation, taking after his father Xikixa, just like his twin brother Twin-Twin did. When he was expected to marry many women and raise as many children as possible enlarging his homestead in the area, Twin married only one woman who was a former prostitute and had only one child. Where and when he died is also not known.

> *There was no doubt in Twin's mind that he wanted to marry this daughter of the starts. Twin-Twin tried to take him out of it. He reminded his brother that there were amaXhosa maidens who had never opened their thighs for British Soldiers. "What do you see in this lawukazi (Qukezwa)?" he cried (p. 23).*

This Qukezwa from the past, the wife of the ancestor Twin and the present Qukezwa who is the sister of the present Twin have a lot in common apart from their name. Their passion, belief,

courage, love, motherhood are more than identical: it is at times overlapping to the point of making it difficult pinpointing who is who.

> *Qukezwa is riding Gxagxa, her father's brown and white horse, while Zim walks next to it, holding its reins. They are moving slowly towards Nongqawuse's pool. Qukezwa led the way, for she knew the language of the stars. She rode reinless on Gxagxa, Twin's brown-and-white horse, which seemed to know exactly where to go without being guided by her (p. 46, 51).*

'Time itself is hybrid (2004, p. 33),' says Brenda Cooper attributing it to the nature of magical realism's choice of a different kind of plot structure. In *The Heart of Redness* actual and historically recorded dates are played out intermingled with circular and endlessly recurring time structures. Wendy Faris calls this eternal recurrence 'involuntary repetition which evokes the feeling of the uncanny (2004, p. 127).' In this novel, there are repeated elements of different kinds – characters, settings, events, names, etc. Some happenings go to the extent of evoking the feeling of déjà vous.

There are too many time shifts in *The Bleeding of the Stone* too. Many novels may have a specific time frame for the happenings of the story to take place. However, just like many magical realist fictions, *The Bleeding of the Stone* has an ambiguous temporal structure. Though the actual story may have taken place in a short period of time – from the time of the arrival of Cain and Massoud to the time of Asouf's death in the hands of Cain – the constant reference to the past even including flashbacks within flashbacks disrupts all notions of temporal certainty. Apart from the constant disruption of linear progress of time, its cyclic nature is also apparent in the story.

> The father – *he found himself hanging between earth and sky, holding on to a rock with his legs dangling down into a chasm (2002, p. 40).*
>
> The son – *then a moment later, after a single brief moment like a flash of lightning, he found himself hanging from a jagged rock from on the top of the mountain, his legs dangling from the everlasting pit… how had this happened (p. 50)?*

These recurrences of incidents happening possibly many years apart in a way denote the immortality and unchanging nature of the desert.

In *Wizard of the Crow,* the world used to be divided into two: the west and the rest. The west was Christian. And it used the religion as a device preaching surrender to the faith (in truth to colonialism) through its missionaries. It has served its purpose and now that era is over. But the capitalist West still looks for ways to manipulate its former colonies for more exploitation. Now religion has given way to other institutions to serve the old purpose in a different way.

> *Corporate capital was aided by missionary societies. NGOs will do what the missionary charities did in the past. The world will no longer be composed of the outmoded twentieth century divisions of East, West and a directionless Third. The world will become one corporate globe divided into the incorporating and the incorporated (2005, p. 746).*

Whatever happens in the world, whatever order takes place, it is for the benefit of those who are already developed. Even when the developed and developing no longer respond to these different terminologies and become one 'globe', it is still to serve the benefit of the developed. Whether they are cast as 'developing' or included as part of the 'global' system, they are still underdeveloped.

The former Ruler did what the cold war era expected from him: massacred communists openly to gain the favor of the capitalist West. And the one who succeeds him, Tajirika, opts to make Aburiria "the first voluntary corporate colony" (2005, p. 746).

In *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez,* there are some people whose chivalry wins the mass's heart. Sarangata Nola, the character with bold nature is one in this story. He comes from the other city (the new capital) and starts living in the decapitalized Valencia with the neglected people. His ways, actions and words all correlated with the people of Valencia and was loved and looked upon by everyone. He even built a sky-rocketing wall to protect the people from any attack, which ironically ended being a tourist attraction site rather than being protection. In this context, the irony is that he was not who he was expected to be. When the Nsanga-Nordans came to attack Valencia, Sarangata Nola, the man whom everybody thought would protect them came

with a funny proposition. He says, “Honor forbids us to shed Nsanga-Norda blood. We’ll only fight if they attack us. And only when they’ve killed ten thousand seven hundred and twelve of us” (1985, p. 108). In this corrupt way, this brave and smart character, at the end becomes the authority himself. The thirst for power, is an unending circle, forever repeating itself.

In general, these last two chapters have discussed the magical realist features prevailing in the selected five novels. The close reading has helped to single out the features that make the novels magical realist ones. Of those mentioned in the theoretical framework, ten of the elements have been used in the stories with some elements missing in some of the novels. Apart from the fantastic element which is common in all of the stories, the five novels selected for this study have used five of the magical realist features most consistently. These elements are absurdity, animism (traditional knowledge), hybridity and eternal recurrence.

Chapter Five

Aspects that Inform the Application of Magical Realism in the Selected Novels

The authors of the selected novels could have used a realist approach to tell their tales. However, they opted for the magical realist one. Hypothesizing there are specific factors making it comfortable for the writers of the selected novels to pick the magical realist technique, this chapter attempts to look into those driving aspects.

Moussa Issifou (2012) generally comments on this subject saying:

> *Magical realism is the result of an intentional break away from the modes used in the previous African novels. This departure is informed by the realization of the current generation of postcolonial African writers that the social, political and economic situations in Africa have extraordinary origins which require extraordinary narrative techniques… for adequate representations* (p. 231).

Issifou's interesting choice of word, which is 'require', shows that magical realism is being applied in the African novel out of necessity. But what are the specific aspects that inform the authors for employing magical realism in the selected novels? Is it only the existing living conditions that ignite the switch of approach in telling the stories? Are there other factors as well? These issues are discussed below.

5. 1. Traditional Knowledge (Folklore)

The need to restore the traditional knowledge seems to be strong in most of the novels. In *The Heart of Redness,* we see Camagu, a man who lived a comfortable life in the United States coming back to his country equipped with modern knowledge. However, in his homeland he is 'overqualified' and cannot get a decent job. We see him dreading the fact that he may go back to his modern life in America. But finally, he follows his guts and decides to live with the Xhosans.

> *They were accompanied and protected by the seven sisters, the stars from which the Khoikhoi were descended. The seven daughters of Tsiqwa. He who told his stories in heaven. The creator (2000, p. 51).*

The need to preserve these folkloristic elements in the culture of the given setting seems to be one drive behind the employment of magical realism in the story of *The Heart of Redness.* Here tradition represents one's roots, identity, and belonging. The sense of accomplishment is not attained even after 30 years of education and work experience. The search for home, for the bond to the past is important here. Mda highlighted these issues through Camagu's nostalgia, search for belongingness, and search for destination.

Folklore is the key drive of the magical realist approach in *The Bleeding of the Stone*. The desert rich with ancient carvings and paintings, sheltering scattered families that rarely cross each others' ways harbors several mythical and legendary stories. Living in the far depth of the desert away from any human contact, Asouf grows up with these folk stories which he realizes in his later time of life.

> *Once long ago, he said, the mountain desert waged constant war with the sandy desert, and the heavenly gods would descend to earth to separate the pair, calming the fire of enmity between them. But … the war would break out once more between the two eternal enemies. Then the sands found a way to enter the spirit of gazelles, while the mountains found a way into the spirit of the waddan … so the gods, in their anger, punished them both with a devil called man (2002, p. 21).*

The folk stories Asouf's father tells him do not stay being only folklore but become apparent in the story later on. Asouf witnesses the spirits of the gazelles and *waddans* magically haunting the plains and the mountains, defying the destructive hands of humans. Highly influenced by Tuareg mythology, al-Koni makes use of these folkloric instances shaping them into an imaginary realm and constantly recreating the reality. [Highlighted coz it may be repeated in the previous chapter]

These folkloristic and traditional aspects are also observed in the other novels as well. In *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez,* the people use proverbs and different gestures that are grounded in their traditions to comment on what goes on in their surroundings. The phrase 'seven solitudes' that is found in the title is one of these traditional aspects. It says, "Lorsa Lopez stuck seven nails, which he called his 'solitudes', and a dozen needles into his dewlap" (1985: 16).

This looks like an ordinary statement describing a man in mourning; until the 'dewlap' comes into the picture.

Apparently, Lorsa grew dewlap like that of cattle's when he locked himself in the pigsty unable to comprehend the fact that he murdered his wife. He ate his pigs and dogs during that time and grew the dewlap as a result. And sticking seven nails in this dewlap he sings wherever he goes. This has come to be known as the seven solitudes of Lorsa by the people of Valencia. This is connected with the people's knowledge of the area around the cliff which is called Seven Solitudes. This cliff is believed to cry whenever something goes wrong in the city. And this has correlated with the lamination of Lorsa. Both man and nature mourn in their own ways.

5.2. Historical Background

History both in the political and religious arena has recorded extreme accounts of brutality and greed. The level of deception and oppression witnessed in the African history in relation to slavery and colonialism and also neo-colonialism must have called for a magical approach to describe the existing realities.

5.2.1. History in Relation to Politics

The historical grounds of *The Heart of Redness* is the erroneous cattle killing movement that took the lives of hundreds of thousands heads of cattle in the mid eighteen hundreds. This movement was started by a prophesy that claimed that the cattle in the Xhosa nation at the time were contaminated by foreign diseases (like the lung-sickness that attacked the cattle of the area at the time) and that they must be destroyed. If the nation obeyed, there was a promise in the prophesy that the colonizer would be wiped out of the land and new cattle will arrive with the ancestors to begin a new world.

In *The Heart of Redness,* the need to resort to a magical realist narrative approach seems to arise from this historical backdrop which is superstition. The prophetess Nongkawse and her little cousin saw ancestors in their uncles' farm. These ancestors told the two teenagers that the people of Xhosa needed to kill their cattle and destroy their crops so all the ancestors would rise and come with new cattle. Nongkawse and her cousin told their uncle, who was a diviner, about what

they saw and he in turn told it to the nation. The people including the chiefs believing this prophesy (except for a few unbelievers) carried out the impossible-like task of killing their cattle and burning their farms. Finally prophesy failed leading the nation to famine and giving in to the colonials. All these things happened in the actual world, only a century ago. The actual historical accounts seem magical on their own. However, resorting to the magical realist narration, Mda successfully captured what really happened, mixing it with unexpected and extraordinary twists, juxtaposing the fact, the fiction and the magical to tell his own story that is the 'redness.'

The 'redness' which paradoxically equates 'darkness' and 'backwardness' as vastly explained in the novel, finally becomes the pride, the original identity, and even the hope. What happened long ago in the heart of redness; in the heart of backwardness, saves the day now.

In the case of *Woman of the Aeroplanes*, the past relationship between Africa and United Kingdom (Blighted Kingdom as one of the characters calls it) is being changed by new relationships that are being established in a new way. For this, the Africans, Ghanaians to be precise, are seen taking initiative of traveling to the Scottish town of Levensvale, starting a different kind of association that is based on mutual consent. No one is imposing one's interest on the other.

However, one thing is noticed being constantly thrown into the narrative which is the term 'guilt'. Interestingly, both sides acknowledge of this perception of guilt. The past seems to be forgiven, but definitely not forgotten. The other interesting thing is that the tone on the Ghanaians side is for the most part satirical while the tone on the Scottish side is sometimes acknowledging of the satire, sometimes serious, sometimes ignorant. The following is one example.

> *"And we are not going to get some reparation kitikiti for the few but shameful years that the one ancestor of yours engaged in slavery?" Atta said with a grin.*
>
> *"All right!" Mackie said with the same grin doubled. "Shall we then allow one percent of the net profits for any such historical sins?" (1988, p. 104)*

The main character of the novel, Pokuaa, suggests that the Scottish should take a quarter of a percent of their dual business profits for 'reparations for guilt'.

> *"Guilt?" asked the perplexed Gilmore.*
>
> *"What the lady means is that those of us here who sometimes suffer a feeling of guilt for what some of our ancestors did to the slaves so-called of Africa,"*
>
> *"But my dead friend, what do you mean so-called?"*
>
> *"What the good gentleman means is that you cannot define a person merely as a slave; for if you do that you destroy what remains of his humanity (p. 104).'*

However informed by what happened during the time of slavery in Gold Coast and during the time of colonialism, the tone of this story is not bitter. It is rather light and satirical. The Ghanaian side doesn't throw the past in the faces of their Scottish counterparts now and then. Still, when the Scottish side crosses the limit and the need to remind them of history arises, they use a kind of mockery like the above.

Historical accounts of slavery and colonialism can be taken as the background to this story, especially its application of the magical realist approach, among others.

5.2.2. History in Relation To Religion

Religion is said to have played a great role in the implementation of colonialism (Rodney, 1972). Christianity was introduced to Africa prior to or simultaneously with colonialism. This is one historical scar that Africa still bears. Religion was instrumental in the African's yielding to white's colonial rule.

In the case of *The Heart of Redness*, another religion, a belief in prophets which was the religion of the Xhosans at the time has also contributed its share in ushering colonialism into the region. The prophesies, the rules issued by the prophets led the nation to self-destruction. The Xhosans who were not defeated in the wars, known as the Zulu wars in western literature, surrendered after the prophesies.

Zakes Mda's magical realist approach seems to arise in part from these religions' involvements in assisting the colonialists' agendas. Mhlakaza (whose Christian name was Wilhelm Goliath) maybe an actual person who had lived in the real world but Mda has employed the position of this person by giving him an attribution of a character who moves easily among all religions and who can serve as a spokesperson and interpreter of Nongawuse's prophesies (2000: 48-9, 75-6).

The case of the prophet Mlanjeni can be taken as evidence that what informs the magical realist approach used in the novel could be religion. One of the prophets in the story of *The Heart of Redness*, Mlanjeni, can light his pipe on the sun. When he dances, the rain falls. However, he dies of tuberculosis (2000: 16, 49). These two opposite realms of the magical; lighting pipe on the sun, juxtaposed with the everyday occurrence of dying of TB is significant exposing the 'folly of belief'. His extraordinary abilities and his ordinary death are told in a similar matter-of-fact tone.

Mda uses the character Twin-Twin to express his stand. When he is asked to be a Christian for the god of the Christians is powerful, Twin-Twin says: *"He is not powerful at all… Is he not the one who sat idle while the white people killed his son? I for one am tired of all these gods* (2000: 259)." The narration goes on to say: *He was indeed disillusioned with all religions. He therefore invented his own Cult of the Unbelievers – elevating unbelieving to the heights of a religion* (Ibid).

One point about religion raised here is that religion is used to manipulate people into submission. It was historically proven during the time of colonialism. Still, may they be white or black, the religious leaders use their religious status to maneuver people into fulfilling their interests. Pastor Mensah manipulates his white followers in Levensvale to an unnecessary level in a supposedly payback to what the white priests did in his country while the Scottish priest was surprised a stranger had more church members than him (1988, p. 195, 205).

Woman of the Aeroplanes attempts to establish that religions are phony. It's about the number of followers, it's about power. It says, "They embraced through the nod of Burns and the smile of Korner, but the theology remained stuck to their cassocks (p. 204)." The priests haven't internalized the doctrines they teach. It's all fake, is the tone of the novel.

But beyond the manipulation and the fakery, the novel raises one question. The Christian belief that one can be saved through Christ who is the way to God (the father) has its own equivalent in traditional African belief. 'The atentenben and the odrogya speak to God directly, through that old African belief that worship is joy (p. 204).' All believe that there is one God. The saviors and the way they are worshipped are different. This means the whites believe something, the blacks another. Who determines who goes to heaven at the end? And how?

The answer is given by the only mixed race character in the novel, Timmy Tale, who the author apparently uses to express neutral stances. Timmy equates righteousness to truth. He confronts the blacks and the whites during the conference and tells them: "… so-called world religions are a matter of culture and not necessarily truth. Just because you have millions worshipping in one way, doesn't mean that one hundred people worshipping another way have less truth. No!" (1988, p. 209)

The conference was a platform where people from all races, beliefs and statuses came together and confronted the truth. It was like a battle of words for those who consider themselves victims and those who are regarded guilty of historical and religious offenses.

In the conference, the argument heats up with two religious leaders, both from Tukwan and Levensvale, taking the stage and presenting their cases in a straight-forward manner. Canon Burns, the Scottish, claims, "I don't believe you have to destroy established religions to prosper," while Pastor Mensah retorts, "Yes, canon, yes, but help us with the established churches: tell us how much blood they have on their hands, how many betrayals they have caused" (p. 210). These are instances that prove that apart from history, religion is another drive behind the employment of magical realism in *Woman of the Aeroplanes*.

5. 3. Absurdity of Existing Realities

As times change, economic, social and political structures change, human needs also change along. In order to meet these needs, the world seems to be using Africa as an unlimited supplier of resources. And to get human and natural resources, different methods are used on Africa whether openly like the time of slavery and colonialism or in disguise, in the name of globalization. Whichever way, Africa gets the crumbs of riches originally exploited from it.

These cyclic events are happening through time because Africa is still seen as a potential source of resources by the rest of the world and time and time again, is being sold by its greedy dictators. Its leaders could put a stop to this eternally recurring humiliation. This concept is shared by most of the selected novels.

The repetition of incidents over and over again could call for an alternative means of expression as history repeating itself is something extraordinary. It could trigger the novelists to use another mode apart from realism to capture not only the repeating aspect but also the motive behind.

5.4. Desire to Suggest Solutions

Magical realism, as discussed above, arises out of the need to use unlimited imagination to depict extraordinary situations in life. However, it could also be motivated by the need to show extraordinary solutions to these extraordinary problems. The selected novels can be showcases in this regard.

In *Wizard of the Crow,* the story suggests that people need to unite even under the most demonic, ruthless of rules. In a military dictatorship that doesn't have any place for women, where even the first-lady of the country does not have any immunity against the patriarchal domination, we see female characters like Nyawira forming a group of women that taunted, defied and resisted the government using peaceful means. We witness a group of women, armed only with traditional dances, confusing the mighty military rule into believing that there is a giant underground armed group attempting coup d'etat. In the face of a government that is highly armed, whose record of human rights violation is unmatched, supported by the superpowers of the world, a cabinet filled with corrupt officials who plan to build the second Wall of Babel for their delusional Ruler who in turn ask for donation for it from Global Bank, a number of women stood. They had nothing but songs and dance moves that are inherited from their ancestors, and a witty strategy of making selected appearances during a presence of international figure or media. It was like facing Goliath with a piece of rock. Indeed, the corrupt, brutal rule went on because greedy people are part of the reality. Still, they made a huge impact on it that they shook and overthrew at least one Ruler.

In *Woman of the Aeroplanes*, we see a town whose people are engaged in different activities; in business, in religious affairs, in technological innovations, in agriculture, and many other. The novel has a tone that suggests people need to get out of their comfort zone and come up with devices that the time requires to overcome problems – not only economic and political ones but also to fight the stereotyping against Africa. In this story, Africans are portrayed as inventors, initiators of international business transactions, decision makers of their own fate, welcoming and accommodating. They are not the ones whom others come to visit, they are the ones go the others to visit and strike deals. And they equally bargain and name their price. They welcome their white friends into their turfs with their own invitation and amenities. We see them leading their white counterparts through the tremulous airplane journey that symbolizes life. We see them equally fighting whatever the bizarre journeys throw their way. We see them equally winning. The tone is that a people has to and is able to use whatever means is available to make life better and that it actually works.

The other solution *Woman of the Aeroplane*s suggests to defy racism is by clinging to humanity. The story stresses on humanity, pressing it to the extremes even in the face of humiliation based on skin color. Kropp Dakibu (1999) also agrees with this stating, "Woman of the Aeroplanes has created "a dialogue between north and south in which individuals and cultures recognize common humanity and both parties can interact fruitfully as equals" (p. 361).

In *The Bleeding the Stone*, we see sacrifice as a way out. Assouf, assaulted by a foreign greed for whatever the desert he lives in has to offer, loses his father and mother. Still, he doesn't give up the one thing that he believes is sacred in the desert; the wild sheep called Wadden. For Assouf, the Wadden is the very essence of the desert which is the only home he knew. Assouf finally dies in an unusual way, crucified like Christ. At one point, he resembled the hunted sheep to his persecutors. He embodied the sheep and the protector of the sheep, his father and he himself at the same time. The novel seems to suggest maybe one needs to sacrifice himself to save others. The sacrificed maybe the oppressed but in the process, the oppressor loses too.

The Heart of Redness shows that the solution to a problem like a fabricated history that brought humiliation on a nation is defying it by any mean. Here the story does the defying by taking it to another level, by writing one's own truth as best as it makes sense to one.

In *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez*, the tone suggests maybe the solution to the problems in the world is to change the world order itself. In the story, the existing patriarchal system is challenged and turned up. The women representing society and the men representing authorities interact in an unprecedented way. And we see Valencia, the town where the people live, as the only survivor when the sea swallows the nation at the end of the story.

In the selected novels, magical realism was not used for its mere artistic values. Rather it played different roles as a device serving different purposes. And the magical realist narrative made it possible for authors in playing it out in any dimension they wanted to show life with. This could be taken as one motivation that urged the authors to exploit the multiple elements it consists of in their novels.

These aspects are assumed to be traditional, historical, and existing social conditions. Apart from these tangible forces, the writers are assumed to have used magical realism as a defying mechanism to stand apart from conventional western modes of expressions that are considered as representative of all cultural contexts.

Chapter Six

The Significances of Employing Magical Realism in African Novels

Magical realism serves as a decentering device resisting the established conventional modes of expressions. It is known to deviate from the realistic by integrating magical features in realistic scenarios with the narrative going on in an unaffected tone. This being the recognized nature of magical realism, this chapter tries to explore why it is employed in the specific novels selected for this thesis. The major roles the magical realist mode has played in the given stories are discussed below.

The significances of employing magical realism can be seen from two perspectives; its significance as an approach and its significance in relation to its thematic preoccupations. The significance of using magical realism as an approach is obvious. One is employing it as a decolonizing agent, decentering grand narratives incorporating African age-long folk expressions in the international writing trend. As Quayson claims it, local values of magical realism in African novels are not only used as resistant characters or approach but to alleviate Africa's long standing beliefs to the level of standardized modes. 'The continual re-enchantment and re-traditionalization of African thought, belief, and practice (p. 160)' is what is constituted within magical realism. The other specific significances are discussed as follows.

6.1. As a Political Critique

Magical realist narratives are said to subvert the Western's authoritative stance in setting the standards of narratives using the inclusion of magical elements in a realist setting. Beyond that it is a significant type of telling a story in postcolonial contexts in criticizing existing political situations, especially in postcolonial contexts. Brenda Cooper asserts this stating, "The thread that binds politics and the techniques of this genre is tension, danger and ambiguity, threads that often tighten around the novels and produce raw marks on their narrative structure" (2004: 32). This is evident in the novels selected for this study.

6.1.1 Military Dictatorship

Wizard of the Crow is a novel that addresses multiple issues of maladministration in a nation and other global issues through satire. Taking things out of proportion and stretching them beyond limits, Ngugi shows the postcolonial African state's unbearable condition. The people are unemployed, poor, sick, unable to voice their thoughts and the country is dirty, underdeveloped, led by a group of people who are greedy beyond believable limits.

Ngugi seems to have Idi Amin Dada in mind when he writes of the Ruler's behaviors and deeds. Referring to Samuel Decalo's *Psychoses of Power* (1989), Omar Sherif Diop states that during his presidency, Idi Amin Dada "killed 250,000 Ugandans … prominent intellectuals, politicians, educators, entrepreneurs, and administrators were assassinated, their bodies dumped in the Nile and devoured by crocodiles (2002, p. 8)."

Likewise, Ngugi's Ruler in the imaginary land of Aburiria uses his military to eliminate anyone he doesn't like and throws their body for crocodiles in the Red River. The narration sarcastically comments that he feels sorry for the crocodiles if they go without human flesh for days. It is humanly impossible for a single person to torture, kill and throw bodies to rivers. He is indeed aided by several others in the cult he has created. The dictatorship may be in his name but the fault lies with many others as well.

Ngugi may depict the Ruler based on an extraordinary experience that actually happened in the real life. However, the narrative goes beyond the mere reflection of the real, adding fantastical and comically satirical elements to it. In an interview with Bronwyn Mills (2001) Ngugi himself said, "How does one write about massacres, for instance, in a way that would shock the reader when in reality thousands and thousands of people have been slaughtered in our lifetime? A novelist has to find ways of addressing the issues … The fantastical, the fable, is just one possibility." This is what is evident in *Wizard of the Crow* and the other novels. *Wizard of the Crow* has exploited elements of magical realism in order to express the situations that go on in Aburira. The Ruler has power over anything and is addressed as such.

The Ruler is addressed by his ministers and other officials as 'Your Mightiness,' 'Ruler who art our father here on earth,' 'Our holy father,' 'Almighty Esteemed Father,' 'Your Holiest and

Mightiest Excellency, Beloved of the Whole World'. The Ruler plays a godly figure not only out of his personal interest because others feed his ego in that regard as well.

> *He had sat on the throne so long that even he could not remember when his reign began. His rule had no beginning and no end; and judging from the facts one may well believe the claim. Aburiria had never had and could never have another ruler because had not this man's reign begun before the world began and would end only after the world has ended? The Ruler had power, real power over everything including … yes … Time. (2005, p.5 - 7).*

The dictatorship is delineated as having no limits. And the people have started considering the Ruler as the Alpha and Omega. The narration may fold the unbelievable within believable details like controlling time and reigning forever. And it may seem impossible. However, ruling for many years, African dictators are known as the only leaders by multiple generations.

6.1.2 Corruption

In the case of *The Heart of Redness*, maintaining ironic distance from the magical happenings in such narratives, the narrator relates stories of disillusionment through the major character, Camagu. Camagu returning from a thirty year stay in America, armed with a PhD and remarkable caliber, couldn't find himself a job in the newly independent South Africa because he is 'overqualified'.

However, Camagu's over-qualification had nothing to do with his current jobless state. Those who enjoyed the fruits of independence and change are those who played part in it or those who got lobbied by others. Qualification had no role in it. Mda uses the 'freedom dance' as a mandatory knowledge in keeping up with the steps of the country.

> *The interviewers were impressed. They commended his achievements. He had done his oppressed people proud in foreign lands. And now, the freedom dance? Alas! His steps faltered. "Who is he? We didn't see him when we were dancing the freedom dance (2000: 29)."*

This political reality is prevalent everywhere in Africa. If change comes in a country, only those who take credit for that change will benefit from it. In *The Heart of Redness,* it is clearly shown through Camagu's lack to land on his feet in his own country.

On the other hand, corruption is likened to evil, a stench that never goes away, in *Wizard of the Crow*. It's decadence. The government is not corrupt only in the obvious way; amassing as much money as possible from the poor public. It also takes advantage of the people's misery into changing it for image building in the eyes of the West. Whatever the government does is calculated so as to gain more acceptance and money from the developed countries which is all for the benefit of a few individuals while millions of people live in poverty, stricken with diseases and the country rots.

> *Each card was handed over with thousands of Buris* [Aburirian currency] *... The money had piled up so quickly that, with his desk drawers stuffed, Tajirika was forced to send Nyawira to buy sacks and cartons for the rest of his abundance (2005, p. 104).*

The educated, the rich and the powerful do nothing for their people. They also don't trust one another. The wizard puts this in a sentence: "They were interested in only two things: to be empowered and to cripple their rivals (2005, p. 207)." Their whole attention and interest only in themselves has made them forget their responsibilities for their country and their people.

The project *Marching to Heaven* is one showcase that symbolizes the reality in Africa that governments use such petty excuses to collect fund from developed countries. And the worst part is the money never reaches the people.

Government bodies like the police are ineffective in most of the stories, especially in *Wizard of the Crow* and *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez.* Crimes committed in both stories go unnoticed by the justice system because the system is weak and corrupt. In *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez,* the police takes 13 years to come to the crime scene while in Wizard of the Crow, the people hesitate to notify the police about crimes committed because they know the police takes a long while to come and it would be useless. One may seem more extraordinary

than the other. Still the effect is the same. Both scenarios indicate the failure of governmental institutions.

Economic issues stand out in *Woman of the Aeroplanes* than in the rest of the novels. Of course, economic subjects cannot be seen separately from the political or social matters. These issues are interwoven in many ways. However, this novel concerns itself more with the economic independence, economic cooperation with other people, importing and exporting not only goods but also ideas.

6.1.3 Neo-colonialism

The point of neo-colonialism is most stressed in *Wizard of the Crow.*

> *This is a second-degree invasion: the first invasion was physical and it failed; this second one, as we have been openly warned, is more subtle … subtle for the reason that you may feel you are wrong if you fight against it. It is a phantom: ignore it and you look a fool, fight it and you look outdated! (2006, p. 262)*

> *… money knew no religion, race, skin color, or gender; that money was the root of all money, the only constant law of the new global order (p. 497)*

The west was silent when the Ruler killed communists. The massacre, the bloodshed was nothing as long as it served their purpose. But when they hear about the continuous queues, they come to lecture him that he is slacking. The queues were just pretexts to visit the Ruler and tell him to change his ways so he could walk on their track, in their pace.

The American ambassador tells him, "We are now embarking on a new mission of forging a global order. That is why I am now visiting all our friends to tell them to move in step with the world" (2005, p. 580)." The Ambassador clearly equates his country with the world. This is understandable as his country is the superpower at the moment. Still, he has the audacity to come to … and directly ask him to change his ways.

The following extract shows how the west capitalism thinks. Ngugi makes the American ambassador character say it out loud which seems odd.

There was a time when slavery was good. It did its work, and when it finished creating capita, it withered and died … colonialsm was good. It spread industrial culture of shared resources and markets. We are in the post-cold war era, and our calculations are affected by the laws and needs of globalization … So I have been sent to urge you to start thinking about turning your country into a democracy (2005, p. 580).

6.1.4 Globalization

The African has been under constant suppression by Western powers for centuries. The subjugation has had different forms; political, economic and psychological. First there was the slave trade, and then came colonialism. Neo-colonialism replaced colonialism and now it's under the banner of globalization that Africans are being exploited. All these forms of suppression have created a kind of African personality that is in ambivalence of keeping its original identity and adopting a foreign one.

Kamiti Wa Karimiri, the protagonist who tells the story of his travels through time and space says:

I saw this: around the seventeenth century Europe impregnated some in Africa with its evil. This pregnancy gave birth to the slave driver of the slave plantation, who mutated into the colonial driver of the colonial plantation, who years later mutated into the neo-colonial pilots of the postcolonial plantation. Is he now mutating into the modern driver and pilot of a global plantation? (2005, p. 681)

Globalization is one of the major issues that Ngugi wa Thiongo has highlighted in *Wizard of the Crow*. Individual countries are robbed of their distinct identities in the name of globalization and this is something magical realism deals with as one component.

Unlike the other novels, *Woman of the Aeroplanes* doesn't seem to take politics as a core point of focus when it is seen at a glimpse. Nonetheless, the narrative touches upon it in relation to social and economic issues as one cannot separately exist without the other. Dictatorship is portrayed in a very satiric way in one of the adventures the airplane travelers take. The plane lands itself in one part of Africa where the land is ruled by a king whose major passion is holding football

matches. The king kills goal scorers as well as those the goal is scored on. Either way the players die. The king shoots at players whatever they do while spectators cheer on. The narrator tells us both the players and spectators are 'all subjects as well as objects (1988, p. 162)' of the king.

When the airplane travelers accidentally landed in this place and observed this football match, they were appalled and told the people to "Kill him and start anew!" (p. 163)' That is when the players and spectators turned toward the king and chased him. This absurd situation has apparently been going on for long and the players and spectators are used to the game. They needed outsiders to tell them that it was not right and to put a stop to it. We don't know what happened at the end; if the people killed the king and started afresh or not, for our range of view is limited to the movement of the travelers.

This is probably true in most of the African nations that are led by dictators. There is one totalitarian ruling a nation of millions according to his interests. That dictator has weapons; actual guns, corrupted bureaucracy, and any other means of weakening his people. And it goes forever. Until the people say no. Until they fight back. This magical realist narration may look like stretched out of proportion but still reflects the existing truth.

The other political critique comes from a totally different point of view: it's not only a group fighting a corrupt and dictator government to replace it with a better one. It also works the other way. A group also fights a stable and uncorrupt government just for the sake of taking over power. The struggle for power always exists. It says, "Power, power, for I see nothing wrong with overthrowing even the most perfect ruling council!" (1988, p. 241).

Rushdie sums the significance of magical realism as a political assessment saying, "Magical realism isn't just a fad…The fable, the surreal story, is just another way of getting at the truth, and if it has good, deep roots in the real—the 'realism' part of magic realism—then it can intensify a reader's experience of the truth, crystallize it into words and images that stay with one. That is the appeal" (2015, p. 3).

6.2. As a Social Commentary

Since magical realism deviates from the conventional realist mode, it is called subversive and revolutionary. It does not adhere to what is in the authority. Rather it exposes and critiques social and political evils that seem to be rampant in postcolonial settings. Implicit criticism of society, particularly the elite, is one of the prevailing features of magical realism. The different political, economic and social circumstances in African settings need more than realistic representations in literature as there are extraordinary accounts to be related. This section will deal with magical realism's significance as a social commentary.

6.2.1 Exposing Moral Decay in Society through Satire

Because of neglect by their governments, and failure by the administrative systems, societies struggle to maintain moral values in their everyday interaction. This is shown in all the novels explicitly and using satire, *The Bleeding of the Stone* being an exception with the moral decay coming from an outside force. On the other hand, *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez* takes this to an extreme level.

Death is so common in Valencia, it is regarded as a must-happen thing. The very place where students should live and acquire knowledge, the university, is closed because there are more than three thousand corpses (bodies of students) 'stinking there (1985, p. 3)'. But the amazing thing is the people didn't do anything apart from saying, "It smells terrible there" (p. 3). Instead, what amazed them is that the earth didn't cry before the shooting of the students.

When Estina Benta dies, we hear multiple characters complaining that her husband could've killed her another day. And then the satire comes. The narrator goes on to tell us that people were surprised when they heard about the woman's death. It says, "No one had ever killed anyone in Valencia. Even the authorities, who in our country have the right to kill, had only ever exercised this right on three small occasions of no importance whatsoever" (p. 9).

And then the narration goes on to tell us one of the small occasions of no importance whatsoever was actually the killing of three thousand something students. And it defends the authorities

saying that the students were on a hunger strike but didn't die and the authorities pitied them and killed them, "because death had declined to kill them" (p. 9).

The narrative attempts to establish that citizens don't usually kill citizens. Authorities are the ones who kill citizens. But Lorsa Lopez killed his wife and it became the center of attention of the city.

The commentary on the society is harsh. It also incorporates how a human conscience cannot be intact once its owner commits a wrong-doing, especially killing a loved one.

Lorsa Lopez stayed in a pigsty for seven months after he killed his wife. When he came out seven months after, he must have eaten all the pigs and dogs in the pigsty for he was the size of hippopotamus, even growing a dewlap. Plus his parrot was saying, "Raw, he ate them raw (1985, p. 16). As a sign of mourning, Lorsa Lopez stuck seven nails, which he called his solitudes, and a dozen needles into his dewlap.

The people, knowing their friend was brutally killed for a lame reason (under the pretext that she cheated on her husband), still call her whore ever after she died. "Lorsa Lopez became our bad conscience. We'd looked on while he killed his whore. He now slept in the coffin he bought, and came and went barking and bellowing the hymn of the Seven Solitudes. We saw him … as if we'd lent him our arms to commit his crime" (1985, p. 18). The use of the term 'whore' may throw one off-balance. However, it's as if they believe in the reason the parrot gave them; that Estina Benta gave him the lice and it was justifiable that he killed her. The problem is they didn't stop him when he set out to kill her.

The other moral decay of the society is expressed through the death and resurrection of a man. When this character dies in the story and 'only' revived back to life nine days after his death, the people complain that the doctors have fake certificates and that's why it took them nine days to bring the dead to life. "You can't blame them," said Fartamio Andra. "The authorities sell diplomas instead of making people earn them" (p. 69).

The people are hypocrites. They were there when Estina Benta was harshly killed by her husband, Lorsa Lopez. They do nothing when Lorsa lives among them. They just wait for the

police to come and investigate the crime they know very well about. Still, when some other character commits a lesser crime, like trying to marry off his daughter to a man he knows without her consent, the whole town treats him like the devil. It says. "It was Sunday. The people going to Fr Bona's mass talked about the man who'd been covered in shame and who – what a disaster, God of all the heavens! – continued to breathe the air of the people of the coast. After all, isn't shame a sin?" (1985: 75, 76) They want justice for death but they want the photographer to kill himself.

6.2.2 Commenting on Environmental Issues

Conservation of the environment is the leading theme of all the novels. When the need to resurrect failed, the need to conserve what is left from the original state of the nation became the next step. This seems to be the central point of the whole story. The resurrection did not happen. It is a fact that the Xhosans sacrificed their whole belonging – led by a prophesy – for the old that is contaminated with the evil hands of the British to die out and a new world begin. But that didn't come true. In fact, believing in that prophesy had led them to lose everything, first willingly and later by force. Still, *The Heart of Redness* tries to depict the believers holding on to their belief and this time using it to preserve what is left.

The fig tree by Zim's house is portrayed as a shade for the believer who spends most of his time under; especially, during his meditation time. It is also a home for hundreds of weaver birds. The size and majesty of the tree is described as: The amahobohobo weaverbirds are adding more nests to the city that is already dangling and would be weighing the tree down if it had not gathered so much strength over the generations (2000, p. 38).

These birds can actually communicate with Zim as he knows their bird-language and they also obey him when he sends them to do something for him. He used them to pester his archenemy Bhonco, the Unbeliever during the climax of their feud and they conformed to his wish by shouting at Bhonco wherever he went all day long.

"Hundreds of birds inhabit this tree. Perhaps thousands. People think it is a foolish of the Believer to be so close to so much meat without killing even a single bird for supper" (p. 38). What is understood here is that believing had led them to destruction in the past. But now

believing is associated with preserving what is left of the original setting – the land, the wild, the culture.

Different scholars have established that the protagonist in *The Bleeding of the Stone* is actually the desert. The desert along with the Sufist philosophy of the Islam religion they follow have shaped the way they think just the way it does everywhere else. Put against the historical fact included in the novel with an excerpt from *Histories by Herodotus*, the fact that the people of the desert chose a certain life that keeps them away from other human communities is evident in the story.

But this desert is threatened by the intrusion of human, the ever enemy of nature. The gazelles are all slaughtered for their meat. Those who survived have migrated south. The *waddan* is already extinct because of human's greed. And the last *waddan* which is not a waddan actually but Asouf – is slaughtered by Cain Adam, the symbolical first killer. Though the desert is resilient in maneuvering human attacks, it can only do so much.

> *"He… crawled on all fours to try and find some shade beneath a tall, green palm tree standing in the middle of the wadi. His heart was beating violently, the sweat trickling from his body. When he reached the tree, the shade had vanished (2002, p. 6)."*

The trees are no longer willing to give shades to humans, the gazelles have already gone south, and the *waddans* are already extinct. Now it's only human living in the desert. However, the killing goes on. Now, humans kill humans.

The overall relevance of the use of magical realism in *The Bleeding of the Stone* seems to be a social commentary. Symbolism being at the heart of the novel the magical realist approach plays out as a social critique. The character Cain Adam is one of them. Just like the Cain in the Bible, Cain in the novel assumes similar roles. He is the one who kills most of the gazelles and other animals in the desert because he has ravenous cravings for meat. As Faris puts it, "Socieities, rather than personalities, tend to rise and fall in magical realist fiction (Zamora, 1995, p. 10)." In this society's ups and downs, Cain Adam plays his own share that symbolizes the role of the original killer, like in the Bible. The communities in the desert are not only of humans' but also animals'. And Cain, with the assistance of an American man with machine guns, cars, and

helicopters, is instrumental in destroying the desert's animals. The extraordinary length Cain goes to find, kill and eat the animals in the desert symbolizes how destructive man is to his environment.

The other symbolism comes from the dying of Asouf. Asouf is the keeper of the part of the desert he lives in, where the ancient paintings and carvings are found. He receives guests and gives them a tour of the area. However, one of his guests, Cain Adam, kills him at the end of the story, hanging him on one of the rocks, in a position Christ was crucified. Asouf dies in order not to show Cain where the *waddan* is. Just like man kills to live on, man also dies to save. This unpredictability is one element of magical realist texts, according to Faris. She claims that one of the themes of magical realist fictions is the unpredictability and lack of control over events in which magic underlines the non-programmatic nature of reality (2004, p. 3)." Such symbolisms are used in the magical realist narratives of *The Bleeding of the Stone* as devices to comment on social vices.

In *Wizard of the Crow*, the pile of dirt everywhere including the stench of the corrupt officers, in *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez*, the repeatedly mentioning of the cliff, the sea, the earth, in *Woman of the Aeroplanes*, the forest and the desert all these symbolize the existing conditions of different settings of Africa. Aburiria stinks out of neglect, Valencia's cliff and sea cry now and then, and the forest and the desert surrounding Tukwan are guarded by ghosts. These settings, however beautiful they had been in the past, are now soiled and misused and they express their decay and loss themselves in different magical realist modes to anyone who cares to understand. This is the other significance magical realism serves.

6.2.3 Commenting on Absurd Reality

Using different magical elements, the novels have displayed the absurd reality in the different settings. The unemployment in *Wizard of the Crow* is a masterly application of showing how things are really absurd in postcolonial contexts. The unemployment has reached an extreme level and everyone in Aburiria seems to be out of job. This is displayed in the endless queues that the people make all over the country.

The comic satire in this is that the queues start from two places; the agency that put down its vacancy sign and replaced it with 'for a job, come tomorrow' board and the shrine of the *Wizard of the Crow*. The idea here is that you get a job either from the company that took the trouble to put up the 'no-job' post or from a sorcerer. Either way, getting a job is something unreal. And the people are taking unreal measures in order to address their problems. The queues go on and on and have formed circles. Because of this, the police officers sent to disperse the queues take several months to come back to their post. And when they come back their motorbikes and themselves are beyond recognition out of overuse and exhaustion. When the government understands that dispersing the queues is impossible, they send a second batch of police officers encouraging the queueing mania to go on telling the international media that the people are out of their houses and forming lines in order to express their love and support to the Ruler. They are voting in favor of him with their feet. This extraordinary happening may seem like a comic narrative but it is grounded in serious reality.

Similarly, in *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez*, the police take forty seven years to come to a crime site and investigate the case. The novelist could have made the delay only in months and it still would have been absurd. But taking it to an impossible extreme and delaying the investigation for forty seven years makes one wonder why. Here the most absurd thing is that a city gains it old state. The government delays the investigation for nearly half a century because one they are part of the crime and two they want to show the people who is in power. However the delay backfires and the city gets its former state as a capital because thousands gather to wait for the police to arrive. This impossible situation shows how politicians fail again and again in postcolonial contexts.

In *The Bleeding of the Stone*, Cain, the American meat lover eats all the desert gazelles in order not to miss the one sheep that he wishes to eat by chance. He ends up attempting to eat the shepherd instead because he started seeing the sheep in everything in his intent search for its meat. The narrative does not give clear idea whether it was the mad hunter's eyes that made the illusion or if the shepherd really changed into sheep. That is one of the novel's fantastic elements. However, here the point is that man goes an extreme absurd way in quest of his needs, even wants, a non-emphatic way, putting others in danger as longs as his needs are met.

Maladministration, failure in the justice system and violence of basic human and animal rights because of greed are among the core points that absurdity shows through the magical realist approach in the novels.

6.2.4 Exposing Africa's Position in Relation to the West

The idea that the whites are usually after their own benefits, economic or otherwise, in their relations with the Africans is reflected in all the novels. The only white person living in Valencia, Father Bona the priest, acted unholy during the killing of one of the citizens. He said, "Call the police, but first give me seven days' supply of calf's liver" (1985, p. 23), and ended up taking the liver that was not confirmed if it was calf's or human's. It didn't matter as long as it was liver.

The only white man among the Xhosans during the cattle resurrection night, John Dalton, was doing his own business. "John Dalton was seen going up and down selling candles to the Believers… that was the beginning of his trading empire" (2000, p. 210).

Cain, the white character in *The Bleeding of the Stone*, came to the desert of Libya for a sole purpose: to eat desert sheep's mutton. He organized a big operation assisted by helicopter, trucks and guns in his search for that one living *wadden* (sheep) and this operation killed most of the gazelles of the desert. One of the desert people tells Cain, "You pretend to be kind to animals, and yet you are greedier than all the meat eaters in the desert. The worm tickling your teeth's fiercer than the one in mine (2002, p. 111)."

In *Woman of the Aeroplanes*, Mackie, the Scottish man, literally smuggled the Ghanaians, their animals and goods into Levensvale without official papers because he believed they brought profitable business to his town. He dares everyone who opposed the presence of the Africans saying, "Do you want these fine people to take their business elsewhere (1988, p. 89)?" And when he meets the Tukwan people for discussion, "Mackie stood before the mirror, trying to select the most financial smile…" (p. 102). However in this novel, the Africans are not taken advantage of or cheated. They hold their own ground and they know when they are being deceived. They even joke about it saying, "The safest thing to do is to try to dupe them small.

Then they should also try and dupe us small… What is more honest than this: cheating somebody and knowing that somebody is cheating you too! Equal draw!" (p. 108)

6.3. Highlighting on Women Issues

Marino Suskind claims, "The historical determinations that framed the efficacy of magical realism to forge a sense, shared by writers and readers across the world, of the genre's potential create the necessary conditions to repair historical harms produced by different forms of oppression and exclusion" (2014, p. 85). Of course, one form of oppression and exclusion is the one committed against women. Women, shouldering triple burdens; because of their being female, their being black and their being poor, have found voice in magical realism.

This is the most dominant issue that is raised through the magical realist approach in all the selected novels. This can be taken as one way of subverting the conventional realist modes that center on male issues. All the novels share one thing concerning women. In most cases, the men do not understand it when women try to do something for themselves and the society or when they say no to the 'conventional' role plays. A paragraph in *Wizard of the Crow* clarifies this. It notes:

> *Male authority at home was absolute, and this was the one belief shared by despots and democrats alike, colonialists and anticolonialists, men and women and leaders of all established faiths. How dare these women question that which was so clearly ordained in Heaven and on Earth? (2006, p. 262)*

This is what is called triple burden of women which is also echoed in Ngugi's novel.

> *Black female worker and peasant is the most oppressed. She is oppressed on account of her color like all black people in the world; she is oppressed on account of her gender like all women in the world; and she is exploited and oppressed on account of her class like all workers and peasants in the world (p. 262).*

The idea here is that race, gender and status have handcuffed women in Africa. And in all the novels, women's representation in society, their undermined power and their sacrifice is reflected through magical narrations.

6.3.1. Women's Representation

The most striking representation of women in *The Heart of Redness* comes from the two female characters of the Qukezwa from one hundred and fifty years ago and the Qukezwa in the present.

In the novel, contrast is used in delineating these two characters; one is a prostitute and the other is a virgin. Both have only one son each; both sons are named Hietsi. The prostitute gives birth to her son from Twin, the man she loves and marries in her later life. The virgin gives birth to her son through an immaculate conception. Though they live in this world one hundred and fifty years apart, they share a strong, magical bond. It seems as though the spirit of the old Qukezuwa lives in the body of the young Qukezuwa for they think, speak and act in similar ways. One might wonder if the young Qukezuwa is the reincarnation of the old one. The narrative about these women is divided part by part; one story coming after the other. The story of these two women with similar attributes are narrated in different sections. But toward the end of the story, the narration mix up the past and the present and it becomes difficult to distinguish which Qukezwa is being talked about. Their names, their horses' names, their sons' names, their interests and their whereabouts are all similar. However, since the narrator refrains from mentioning the temporal space, there is no certain way to know which Qukezwa is being referred to. This seems to be a deliberate move on the author's side. And this is further discussed in the eternal recurrence section.

The role of the old Qukezuwa was to serve as a spy during the battle the Xhosa people had with the British colonialists. Qukezuwa was one of the prostitutes who sold their bodies to the whites and gathered information and passed it on to their soldiers.

The role of the young Qukezuwa is to keep the wild coast of Qolorha from unwanted and imported vegetations. She has a dagger which she carries around and whenever she came across such trees, she cut them. She knows which ones are original and which ones are not. She was accused of her actions and stood before the court for it. However, she was later set free after Camagu came to her defense.

Women are also depicted as flexible. The cases of Qukezuwa the ancestor and NoPetticoat can be taken as evidences here. Qukezuwa the ancestor was a vehement believer of the prophesies.

She went as far as she could go waiting for the miracles. However, she finally changed her ways when she realized that change won't come. She does this to survive and so her child could also survive (2000: 250). NoPetticoat is the wife of Bhonco, the Unbeliever. While she maintained her position as Unbeliever, she compromised and started working for the cause of the Believers.

Xolisiwa Ximiya is another female character in the story who is a strong-headed Unbeliever. She has reached the highest level of education in the context of Qolorha and she is depicted as someone who fancies living in the West. She has a vehement hatred for Nongkawuse's prophesies and advocates for the building of the casino town in Qolorha. She is the only child of the Unbelievers, Bhonco (the scar bearer of his Unbeliever ancestor Twin-Twin) and his wife NoPetticoat. However, Xolisiwa Ximiyia in the end couldn't escape from the scars of history.

> *She had successfully weaned her parents from redness, until NoPetticoat's (her mother's) rebellion… The sooner she leaves this heart of redness (the backward Qolorha) the better. But this is not the end of Xoliswa Ximiya's troubles. She wakes up one day and finds that the scars of history have erupted on her body. All of a sudden her ancestor's flagellation has become her flagellation… The Unbelievers were shocked to hear of the scars on their daughter's civilized body. They thought that the scars had come to an end, as Bhonco did not have a male heir to inherit them. In all history, they have never been imposed on a woman (2000, p. 260-61).*

Xoliswa is the only female character in the line of the Unbelievers who strongly condoned what happened in the past. She only looks forward and forward means total change; a change that totally dismantles what is originally there in the physical and cultural setting. At the point of her departure from Qolorha after learning that her cause was lost, the scars that were inherited (bequeathed) from generation to generation, the scars that now lie on her father Bhonco's back erupt on her back too. Xoliswa once dismissed the story of the prophesies saying, *"…It is part of our history of redness. It is a backward movement (Ibid: 160)."* However, she couldn't avoid the scars as she had avoided 'redness' all her life. This shows that the effect of tradition on individual is prominent. Individuals may choose to value or not value the traditional elements of their respective cultures. However, their attitude toward it being negative or positive, it affects them anyway. Xoliswa Ximiya and Qukezwa are both born and brought up in Qolorha. But each

followed her own way of dealing with the traditional values though both never managed to escape from its outcomes.

> *"You know very well, Camagu, that Nongqawuse was a little girl who craved for attention? She decided to concoct her own theology… these were the delusions of a young girl!" says Dalton.*
>
> *"It is true, you know? Who's always seeing visions of the Virgin Mary? Young girls. Our lady of Fatma… our lady of this and that…" says Camagu (2000, p. 246).*

Though Dalton and Camagu hold different positions in the debate about believing and not believing in prophesies, both assume a similar tone in disregarding women's claim to see visions. Given the historical ground of the failed prophesies of the young prophetess Nongkawuse, they may have verification of the issue. However, the implicit argument seems to be women's lack of holding visions and if they do, the potential danger behind it.

However, Zakes Mda tries to balance this tendency of considering women as sources of destruction by making them leaders and survivors; initiators and finishers. Though much of the show and the dialogue come from the male's side, in this narrative the men perish. The men characters who follow the women's prophesies are the ones who act, do something. The men characters who disobey the women's prophesies are the ones who don't do anything significant in the story except talking. In the end they all lose. The women rather persist; survive.

All the talk, the argument, the fight comes from the men's side. But in the end, it is the women who save Qolorha; preserve Qolorha. Though the Xhosans surrendered to colonials and the prophesy of Nongkawuse is considered to play a major role in it, finally she is said to be the 'savior' of Qolorha. When white developers eyed the area to make it a casino-town by destroying the wild, it is Nongkawuse's legacy that rescues it making the area a tourist destination site.

Woman of the Aeroplanes is a story that not only attempts to show the hardships and subordination of African women, but also the whites'. *She [Margaret – the Scottish character] knew that marriage was a kitchen: the right amounts of cynicism, originality, bed-love and warmth kept the brew going (1988, p. 74).*

When the two men, Appa and de Babo, carried out the selection process of people to travel to Levensvale, they didn't include women. Of course, Pokuwaa was included since the planes belonged to her and she brought this initiative herself. Apart from her, the rest of the women were treated as subordinates to their husbands and they could go if it was their husband's wish too. So Azziz, one of the Tukwans, chose to take his wife Akyaa to Scotland to cook for him. That was her sole purpose of accompanying him. However, she did something else in Levensvale. She became an entrepreneur.

Azziz thinks his wife is beautiful but not smart. And when she even makes good business in Levensvale (Scotland), he just didn't believe it was because of her intellect. He *was flabbergasted at her success* and even tells her that she "made thousands of pounds just by standing beside the workers with your chatterchatter and your great skin" (1988, p. 195).

The novel doesn't look like entertaining such matters in a big way at a glance. However, women issues is the most imbedded matter that the story centers around.

In *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez,* the woman who is highly regarded in her society, Estina Bronzario, is murdered. The people, who didn't do anything when she was killed, now put on an extraordinary show for her, putting diamonds on her coffin and holding extravagant funeral festivity. She seems to agree with this idea too. She says, "I am regarded as one of the great souls of the Coast, so I can't just be a woman. I've learned to bang the table, and that's made me feel that I really am made in God's image" (1985, p. 64).

In a city full of people, with a mayor and a judge administering it, Estina's body waited thirteen years for burial. The sheer exaggeration of time lapses and incidents is one way the author used effectively to show the extraordinary reality in the setting. Finally it was Estina Bronzario and her female companions (who can be called her female army) who decide to bury the bones. The thirteen years delay by itself has a lot to explain. It says, "The police haven't been because it was only a woman who was killed," said Estina Bronzario" (p. 19). This is a double edged explanation showing the absurdity of life and how it is even more absurd for women.

The story of *Wizard of the Crow* has two protagonists: a woman called Nyawira and a man called Kamiti. The narration gives them equal say and ground to play out their roles. However,

interestingly, we see the city calling the woman and her wanting to save the people. On the other hand, the man says he is being called by the wilderness to save himself from the evils of the city. Comparing both, the one with the means to save others seems to be the man but the woman is portrayed as selfless and brave. When describing the woman protagonist, Nyawara, the narration notes the following assuming men's perspective. It states, "It was rare in Aburiria for a woman to have such strong morals, and it clearly indicated something not quite right about her" (2005, p. 228). As the narration is mostly satirical, this 'strong morals' and 'something not quite right' coming together in a sentence to describe a person fits into the general tone.

Women are also the first to act together against the building of *Marching to Heaven.* And it was a shock to everyone. It narrates, "In Aburiria, politics was strictly a masculine affair; men would never think that women could plan and execute anything like what had happened" (2005, p. 219).

6.3.2. Women's Power

In *The Heart of Redness*, women have magical powers; in life and in death, in this world and in the other. We notice one of the most powerful prophets in the Xhosa land, Mlanjeni, actually believes that women can influence him. *Women had an enfeebling power on him. So he kept himself celibate (2000, p. 14)*. The other account is when Zim, the Believer, is not able to die or live. He couldn't die nor live because of the women around him. His wife, NoEngland, died a while ago and is now calling him to join her in the Otherworld. His daughter, the young Qukezwa, is not willing to let him go. NomaRussia, the girl he once had an affair with, also wants to speak with him before he goes to the Otherworld because she has a message to send through him to his wife. Torn between these female forces, Zim stays in a limbo for quite a while.

Interestingly so, this state of Zim is not just related to the reader by the narrator. Rather it is verified from different perspectives.

> *The Believers appeal to Qukezwa, "It is because you are holding him with your heart. Please release the poor man. He has done his duty on earth. Let the elder go! (2000, p. 262)"*

Qukezwa is angry when the elders plead with her to release the poor man so that he may go in peace. Why does everyone want her father to die? (p. 250)

And 'a healer and a diviner' in the area predicts, "NoEngland [Zim's wife] will finally win, for she is in cahoots with very powerful ancestors (p. 250)."

These matter-of-fact narrations, rooted in a mundane setting of conversation, emotion and consultation, speak of the power of women that stretch the boundaries of the ordinary.

In Woman of the Aeroplanes, the women's power is highlighted through Pokkua, the mostly silent but efficient leader of Tukwan. The title of the book is also about her as she is the one who owns the planes. She is an entrepreneur who opened a new era for Tukwan through impossible business ventures with a European town that has similar traits to that of her own.

Adding magical elements in the novel, the writer has chosen a different route to go to show how black women are perceived and exploited in their communities. Not directly telling how the situation is, but giving women position and voice. And the possession of the women characters in the novel is not only material but also spiritual. *Fatma suddenly had something which he Moro [her husband] had physically but not spiritually: authority (1988, p. 235).*

The story of *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez* begins with a death of a woman and ends with the death of another woman. The young and beautiful Estina Benta is killed by her husband at the beginning of the story. Lorsa Lopez, her loving husband kills her out of jealousy, and holds vigil for her throughout the novel calling it 'Seven Solitudes'. At the end Estina Bronzario, the man-woman as they call her, dies after trying to protect the women of Valencia for the entire story.

The people highly associate the existence of the cost with that of Estina Bronzario's. And what's most interesting is they constantly refer to her as 'man'. And I tell you the only man the coast has is a woman, Estina Bronzario. When she's killed, the Coast will cease to exist (1985, p. 16). "Greetings, Sarangata Nola! We've come to tell you that in Valencia the women are also men" (p. 34). The women seem to live in constant fear that someday the men will convince them, forcefully or otherwise, that they are women. Here the 'men' and 'women' terminologies go

beyond the mere gender representation. They hold something more prominent; position in the society – power.

In *Wizard of the Crow*, we see one of the male characters, Tajirika – Nayawara's former boss, talking about Nyawira saying that he was appalled to be associated with her – "a simple secretary, a simple housewife", and how she could try "… subverting the mightiest of Governments" (2005, p. 229)." Tajirika is missing the point here. Unknowingly, he is testifying that a woman, a simple housewife, can cause such a massive impact on anything, if and when she puts her mind to it. And that is exactly what Nyawira did.

The idea that a woman can do anything, even going to the level of shaking an established military dictatorship, forming her own group with an efficient leadership, is one of the central issues that the novel addresses.

The Ruler is baffled by what Nyawara and her fellow women did. He thinks he could have given them money or land if they came asking him for it. He could have punished their husbands if they complained about them. Why would they revolt against him then?

He missed the whole point here. The money is not his to give. The land is not his to give. He is not supposed to meddle in domestic matters. He is the head of the government. He is supposed to establish systems that allow the country's economy, politics and social orders to operate on their own. However, he is wrapped in his own egocentric world, he couldn't see beyond. It says, "He was baffled by anyone not motivated by greed. He could never understand the type who talked of collective salvation instead of personal survival" (2005, p. 235). And that's why he couldn't understand people getting together to fight for shared goals and benefits; least of all women.

6.3.3. Women's Sacrifice

Women's contribution in keeping the Xhosa nation safe from the clutches of British colonials is given prominence in *The Heart of Redness*. The general picture of the actual historical account on which the novel stands is that women sacrificed their nation to the whites using the false prophesies. But the untold stories of sacrifices paid by women to save their country are highlighted here. The Qukezwua who lived a hundred and fifty years ago is one example. The

narrator clearly takes the women's side in the following narration; exposing the immaturity of the men in not acknowledging the women's sacrifice.

> *Khoikhoi women sold their bodies to the British soldiers in order to smuggle canisters of gunpowder to their fighting men. Twin and his friends made snide remarks behind these women's backs. They slept with British soldiers, the men remarked. They seemed to forget that it was for the gunpowder that was saving the amaXhosa nation from utter defeat that the women were prostituting themselves (2000, p. 21).*

These women issues raised in the magical realist narrative of *The Heart of Redness* assert one thing; to destabilize the grand narrative that the Xhosa nation was defeated because of false prophesies of women. In this novel, women are presented as brave, loving, caring, kind and strong. They are different from what history has labeled them to be.

In *The Bleeding of the Stone,* women are depicted as submissive, powerless and dependent on men. Unlike in the case of *The Heart of Redness,* female characters are not given any prominent role in the novel.

Asouf is once referred as a girl by his own mother because he couldn't go and do business with other people. He also believes that his mother would not survive without him if he dies and that keeps him going. There are some girl characters that make shoes for men and they do it so meticulously because they want to impress the men into marriage. The story of these female characters is told by a third party. The reader never gets to see a first glimpse of the lives of these female characters. They are just depicted as dreamy young girls who make shoes for men they don't even know in the hopes to make an impression. Wendy Faris discusses these issues in relation to stereotypical gender role in society. She refers to Virginia Woolf's usage of terms for such women like 'angel in the house, intensely sympathetic, endlessly charming, utterly unselfish' (2004, p. 180).

However, though regarding such female characters this novel stands by the conventional way of writing depicting them as the marginalized groups without giving them any voice, the one female character, the mother, is whom the major character Asouf comes to at the end of the day.

Wherever he goes, whatever he does, she is like a compass to him. She is his home, his destiny. She is his inspiration, and his purpose in life. When she dies taken by the flood, it takes Asouf many days to collect her remains. He then buries her dismembered body at different sites across the mountains. In a way, she is the center in the story.

In *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez*, the hard-headed character, Estina Bronzario, tells her female followers to write the following sentence on her headstone when she dies: 'She was ready to live (1985, p. 65).' This is to mean that a woman never actually lives. The novel acknowledges that not only does she not live, she is not also happy throughout her lifetime. The only way she can compensate this is by staying strong. It says, "It's good when a woman shows courage; she is truer to herself then than when she's happy" (p. 111). Happiness here is a luxury that a woman cannot count on. All she has to be is strong and endure the storm that is life, especially in the third world context.

Generally, the selected novels entertain the idea of African societies with women having leading roles. This is one commonality all the novels share in relation to women issues, that they give women the leading role in society to gain a better result in administration. And for the most part, we notice that working out well for the contexts they live in. In *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez*, we see women resorting to use of violence. For them violence is power and power is violence. This comes from believing men are violent and that is how they manage to rule society. The women are trying to assume that manly power using violence. They threaten to kill men and they shame people who do not conform to their questions. And they proudly say, "In Valencia, women are men too" (1985, p. 121). In *Woman of the Aeroplanes*, women are business focused and that is the source of their power. Interestingly, they start out under the shadows of the male spouses and partners. But the business gets better once they take charge. In *Wizard of the Crow*, women are politically active though they fight the imposing system from underground. They come forward at the end, triumphantly. Though there is no significant change in Aburiria in administration, the women make a statement in the process; that they can shake even the strongest dictatorship. In *The Heart of Redness*, women are prophetesses. Though history recorded that the women's prophecy led their society into doom, the novel re-writes that in a way

that the women tried to do what they could in the way they believed to prevent their nation from invading forces.

6.4. As a Tool to Re-Write History

Faris states, "Magical realism not only reflects history…it may also seek to change it, by addressing historical issues critically and thereby attempting to heal historical wounds" (Faris, 2004, p. 138). This is evident in the novels selected.

6.4.1 Re-Writing History through Alternate Frame of Time

Time, history, racism and religion are all intertwined in *Woman of the Aeroplanes*. The history that happened in the past time, the racism and other evils done to the Africans by the western forces, particularly using religion as a device is what marks the central idea of the novel. However, the story unfolds in an unexpected way, concerning itself with moving on, acknowledging the past, having all the facts, and yet making up for it courageously with old enemies. Time heals wounds seems to be one significant theme that *Woman of the Aeroplane* entertains. In the story, blacks, whites and also people with mixed races come together, traveling to one another's places, doing businesses. Their relationship is harmonious and acknowledging mutual interests and working toward a common goal. It says, "Time was speeding up into small spaces and pulling things together from further and further away, things that may not have been clearly related in the past at all" (1988, p. 193).

However, in the climax of the story, there is a conference held with most of the characters attending and that is when historical errors committed by the western's side is laid on the table, open for discussion. It reads, "Those suffering murder, war, disaster and racism, those coffee skins being forced to arrange their skin over blackboards so that the pink mathematicians would decide whether one plus one equals humanity or not (p. 116)."

6.4.2 Re-Writing History by Disrupting Existing Truth

In *The Heart of Redness*, the historical incident of the cattle killing in the Xhosa nation between April 1856 and June 1857 may be taken as a mass-suicide. But in The Heart of Redness, it is presented as a kind of rebellion, a mass-resistance. The whole idea behind the killing of cattle

and the destroying of crops was to regain the glory of the past and to send the colonialists to their doom. In the novel, Mda highlighted on the concept of resurrection rather than the failed prophesy and the destruction it brought along.

Nongqawuse, the prophetess, as history has recorded was a teenage girl who had convinced her nation of the Xhosans in South Africa into mass killings of cattle and burning of crops that took two years before it culminated in giving in to the British colonialists. The major character in The Heart of Redness also remembers taking a history lesson that labeled Nongkawuse as 'a young girl who deceived the amaXhosa nation into mass suicide (2000, p. 35).'

Though what is known in history is summarized as the above, in *The Heart of Redness* there are two evident tendencies of re-writing that 'shameful history' of the nation. One is the assumption that the British colonials might be behind the whole prophesy case and trying to write the history from that point of view.

> *This attitude reinforced Twin-Twin's view that The Man Who Named Ten Rivers* [the British magistrate in South Africa at the time] *had planned the whole cattle-killing movement. And that he had cleverly invented these prophecies and used Nongaqwuse, Mhalakaza and Nombanda to propagate them among the amaXhosa people. He wanted the amaXhosa to destroy themselves with their own hands, saving the colonial government from dirtying its hands with endless wars. This view was gaining currency among those Unbelievers who were not Christians (2000, p. 157).*

The second attempt at re-writing history is though prophetess Nongqawuse who is believed to have destroyed her nation in the past; the rescue of Qolorha from the land-grabbing hands of the neo-colonialists comes from the legacy of Nongqawuse herself. Finally, when the government decides that Qolorha will not be touched by developers and it will stay as a tourist attraction site, Zim says, "I knew that Nongqawuse would one day save this village" (2000, p. 201).

Annie Gagiano states, "The image of Africa in the world evoking a benighted and devastated continent, a portion of the earth that was bypassed by modernity" (2015, p. 84) has been reflected in western literature. Joseph Conrad's 1908 novel *Heart of Darkness* is one of them.

Norman Page (1995) speculates that apart from his personal impressions, Joseph Conrad must have been influenced by the speech made by King Leopold II the year he was writing *Heart of Darkness*. The king had said that his country was "placed face to face with primitive barbarism, grappling with sanguinary customs that date thousands of years," and that his mission in Congo was to stop this from going on. As a result, in his unbalanced depiction of Europe and Africa, Conrad perceived the Congolese's resistance to an invading, foreign force and their attempt to fight the force with arrows in ambushes, as an act of barbarism while he painted the act of European forces annexing the land that belonged to the Congolese by means of modern weapons as noble. The Europeans were just on a mission to civilize the 'uncivilized'. Conrad in general depicted the central part of Africa as a hostile environment that was filled with hostile and disease-ridden people.

Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness* seems to be a counter-argument for literature such as Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Just like Conrad's portrayal of Central Africa as dark and incomprehensible, the story of the cattle killing that took place more than a century ago in present day South Africa is also recorded in history as catastrophic that was committed by Africans. Mda attempted to take his readers through it; writing a counter argument for it. In this novel, Mda does not generalize that what the fateful prophesy had brought on the Xhosan land was something advantageous to the people. He rather created two groups: Believers and Unbelievers; trying to show a balanced view of what happened. The novel portrays the prophetess who started the cattle killing campaign as young, naïve, disillusioned which is accepted in existing literatures. He also painted her as a religious figure who, in her way, fought for the freedom of her people out of the impending invasion. Mda changed the story of a shameful act done by Africans into a shameful exploitation of European forces committed against African people and African's resistance against it. The message to the West here is 'you accuse the Xhosan prophetess of destroying her own people but what were you doing there yourselves? Haven't you caused more harm? This wouldn't have happened in the first place if it wasn't for your presence there.'

The Heart of Redness deconstructs the established belief that the Xhosans had made a fool of themselves by killing and destroying their own cattle and crops in order to drive the white

colonialists out. The novel has established its own truth, its own side of the story, that what the Xhosans believed was true. Their truth is that a society does anything in its own way and right to protect itself from anything that may pose harm to it.

The magical realist approach has been handy here in mixing the actual history with fiction and moreover bringing actual people from the past to the present in its element of the fantastic. The narrative successfully utilized the suspension of disbelief which served a vital role in not providing proof if what is happening is actually happening or not.

6.5. As a Device to Reflect on Identity

Lois Zamora and Wendy Faris claim, "Magical realism also functions ideologically [and] less hegemonically, for its program is not centralizing but eccentric: it creates space for interactions of diversity" (1995, p. 3). By acknowledging differences, magical realism gives equal platform for any kind of identity to express itself. It also serves as a device to look for authentic identity that existed prior to this time of hybridity.

6.5.1. Restoring Original Identity

Resurrection or self-determination is one of the major themes of the story of *The Heart of Redness*. The need to restore one's identity before it was soiled by the colonial intrusion seems to be one of the reasons why magical realism is used in this story.

> *Because the British had cut his head off, Xikixa was not being an effective ancestor. A good ancestor is one who can be an emissary between the people of this world and the great Qamata (god). Without a head Xikixa was unable to bring cohesion to his progeny. That was why they were fighting among themselves, and were destined to do so until his headless state was remedied. Only the resurrection of the dead could restore the elder's dignity (2000, p. 129).*

The head of the nation was cut off by the colonials. Therefore, it seems rational that the rest of the body is not functioning well. This is the explicit interpretation for what happens here. Though cutting heads of soldiers is a highly realist occurrence in times of war, in *The Heart of Redness* it is taken to the next level. The soldier who lost his head, Xikixa, the one who was a

great ‘patriarch and patrician (2000, p. 13)’, is now transferred into another station of life with the rank of ‘ancestor’. However, his role as an ancestor mediating between the people in this side of life and God is threatened for he left this life without a full body. In mythologies, Christian or otherwise, there are people who are believed to intercede between humans and God. Mda may have borrowed this from such mythical stories. However, dead is dead whatever way the life is taken; but not in the case of *The Heart of Redness*. Here leaving this life with a full body intact is mandatory to serve the ancestral duty in the Otherworld. Because Xikixa died with his body dismembered, he could not carry out his pacifying role as a successful ancestor. Because of this, his descendants are suffering. This can be rectified only with resurrection. Again Mda must have borrowed the Christian’s belief that on judgment day all dead will resurrect with full body. He also must have been encouraged by Nongqawuse’s prophesy of resurrection.

> *Finally the date of the resurrection was set by the prophets. The full moon of June 1856… But the day came and went like any other day. No miracles and wonders… This was the first disappointment (2000, p. 130).*

The resurrection did not happen. And there were disappointments. But disappointment is an understatement for what happened after the failure of the prophesy. The nation starved to the point of eating grass and dogs (2000, p. 254); to the point of surrendering to the long-resisted colonialism. However, Mda took this notion of resurrection from the prophesies and changed it for his agenda which is the need to restore the national and cultural identity, self-determination. Colonialism has severed the head of the nation and the body failed afterwards. Now colonialism is over, there is a need to restore the head back to the body and resurrect; for a new day has come.

6.5.2. Building Self-Worth

Taking pride on one’s identity is the other major aspect *Woman of the Aeropalne* stresses on. “Give him water from that little stream, in case he dies and has to be resurrected if we decide that he is a worthy human being,” said Nana (1988, p. 83) What differs this novel from the rest is its total understanding of self - worth which goes to the extent of believing ‘we are superior’. It’s not only that ‘we have our own stand, our own right, our own civilization’. It goes beyond that and tries to establish the superiority of the Ghanaian traditions, beliefs and ways of life. They

pride themselves with their weather, their inventions, their religion, their food, their way of life and many more.

6.5.3. Assuming Other Identities

In *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez,* everyone accepted the fact that man is the superior human being and that the highest aim of a woman is to become a man. This might sound like a weak conclusion but if we look at it from another angle it is also an irony. The ultimate goal of a woman is to become a man means that man is the one who reaps all benefits in this world and being or becoming him is a reward or a privilege.

This notion of wishing and trying to become someone else because of self-hatred and low-self esteem is also reflected in *Wizard of the Crow*. The need to assume some other entity's identity does not stop with the officials wanting to be white. Kamiti's changeable identity is also the other one. Kamiti starts out as a human being but he also changes into a crow sometimes. His human persona doesn't completely change into a bird form out of nowhere. Rather, he leaves his human body and ascends to the sky with a duplicating second body just changing the form; still keeping the human consciousness. Faris calls such "merging and changing of identities as central" concepts in magical realist fiction (2004, p. 26).

Tajirika, the other character in *Wizard of the Crow,* is a black African and wants to be white. He finds a company in America that can give different identities through plastic surgery and genetic engineering. But before Tajirika can fully assume a white physical identity, the company gets closed (2005, p. 742). Therefore, Tajirika ends up with a white leg and arm with the rest of his body being the original black. The unending satire unfolds the story of the 'rich and educated' African struggling with his identity that is heavily diluted with that of the westerns.

The malady that strikes different corrupt officials at different times is rooted in the deep sense of insecurity, because they don't rely on their work but on the Ruler's mercy, and takes them to psychological breakdowns at times. The difference here is that they all share exactly the same problem. They get disoriented and all the word that comes out of their mouth is 'if'. This 'if' has something to do with the color of their skin. When the Wizard of the Crow finally helps them find their voice again, the full sentence comes out having a sense of 'if I were white'. For

example, the Ruler and Tajirika, the one who at the end succeeds the Ruler as an Emperor, had this problem at different times. These characters have everything in their respective hierarchies; money and power. They couldn't get any richer or more powerful than that. So their ultimate goal is to become white. They think of this secretly; only to be known when they are sick.

The wizard (Kamiti) tricks them into seeing that now is not a good time to be white as the whites have lost their colonies. He persuades them *'Black is beautiful' (2005, p. 188).* He doesn't do any witchcraft. However, the patients do not know that. He admits this to his best friend, later wife, Nyawira, saying "I was merely playing a role … I worked with thoughts and images already in their own minds" (2005, p. 207). He makes them see themselves and tries to familiarize them with what they really are. They see themselves with new eyes and work to appreciate who they are.

Kamiti's ability to identify people's personality by the smell they emit when he meets them is most challenged by the smell of Tajirika's. Tajirika's biggest problem, which is self-hatred because of his skin color, is depicted here as the ugliest human psychological state. No corrupt or no brut's smell has revolted Kamiti as that of Tajirika's. Kamiti says, "Tajirika's rot proved more terrible than any that I had experienced before: a black man celebrating the negation of himself" (2005, p. 208). This in a way is self explanatory that one's identity and the ability to accept oneself is the beginning of understanding and orienting one with the reality surrounding him. That way one can help himself and others. Self-hatred or denial paves the way to hating others and polluting the surrounding too. Through the use of magical realist approach Ngugi seems to underline the reason behind African leaders apparent hatred for the nations they rule is deeply rooted in low self-esteem.

This seemingly comic outplay of circumstances is deeply rooted in today's African reality. Africans are in constant attempt of adopting a western persona, in attires, speech, and general lifestyle without ever managing to attain it fully. This is what Homi Bhabha explains in relation to ambivalence. According to him, "The ambivalence of your desire for the other" (1994, p.72) has limitation in its success because "neither is sufficient unto itself… the very question of identification only emerges in between disavowal and designation" (p. 72). In other words, these self-loathing characters are somehow acknowledging themselves in their denial of themselves. In

their attempt to be the 'other', they are giving recognition to themselves. One is not complete without the other; these opposing organs 'self' and 'other' will always exist and in the postcolonial context, they maintain balance through the ambivalence created in between.

6.6. As a Tool to Escape from Reality

Faris says one of the themes magical realism stresses on is flight. And the other is death. Both are considered as a kind of escape. And these magical realist characteristics are evident in most of the selected novels.

Distorted time is probably the dominant magical realist feature in *Woman of the Aeroplanes*. The significance of distorted time seems to be looking for an escape from the ordinary time in which history operates as it is; that it was in time, in history that all the preposterous things happened to the Africans. It is in the ordinary time that slavery happened, colonialism happened, racism happened, corruption, dictatorship, armed violence on human by human happened. And the space in *Woman of the Aeroplanes* operates in distorted time which escapes all these evils and exists in harmony despite all kinds of differences. "I think these towns are the best things on this sorry globe! This riot of a football game they call life" (p. 181). This in a way acknowledges that the setting is in our world. But the towns chose to follow a different time cycle. Because in the new time cycle, which they call 'out of time', man is not dehumanized and humiliated because of another man's greed.

At the end, their reluctance to join ordinary time comes from knowing life is not the same there. Still, they were convinced mortality means death is inevitable and with that life becomes more precious. They bravely acknowledged and welcomed ordinary time, believing death is change and change is good. Be it living in an alternate, out of ordinary time or opting for mortality which ends in death is still flight, which is one dominant theme of magical realism.

Brenda Cooper claims that Kojo Laing has created a utopian state in Tukwan. That is true. The setting, the mood and the atmosphere all signify a town where everyone – not only humans but everything that surrounds humans all live in harmony, with the only threat coming from a possible invasion from outside, the political powers of Kumasi.

Tukwan is the ideal town where 'every animal, human, thing, or presence was to be treated as equal in being, in principle, to everything else (1988, p. 58).' Here through magic, everything is possible. Cooper calls such situations in writings as 'energy released in the imagining of ideal places, freed from the stresses and cruelty of reality (2004, p. 193).' Creating such a place like Tukwan, and making it possible for the inhabitants to live in such harmony has been a 'device for postcolonial writers' that has become 'an imagined alternative to racist imperialism and its corrupt legacies (p. 193).'

The other point that makes the use of magical realism in *Woman of the Aeroplanes* be taken as escape mechanism is the erratic jump of time that the situations are occurring in. There is no definite time frame used in this novel. Sometimes, it's the 1960s, sometimes it's the 1950s. When Tukwan was preparing to make the first journey to the town of Levensvale in Scotland, it was the 1950s. In parallel, Ghana was also preparing to get its independence from the English colonizers in the 1950s. After independence, when Ghana's situation couldn't get better, rather when it was just the identity of the oppressors that was changed, Tukwan was in its own sanctuary, away from it all.

Once, Tukwans in Levensvale talk about time and we get the impression that it is perhaps 1965. This is the hope of Tukwan that the novel reflects, that the future holds possible links with other places, creating business cooperation and friendships as well.

6.7. As a Way of Putting Faith in the Future

The other thing that the novels share is that they are hopeful about the future despite all the absurdities. This is more emphasized in *Woman of the Aeroplanes*. The white characters are aware of the historical errors made by their ancestors and are ready to change that in their time. Reincarnation is used as a tool here. The character called Lord Provost says this in one of the instances. "I still can't believe that my ancestors were involved with colonies and other cruelties … I weep for their damned and broken souls … but since most of them have improved by reincarnating themselves into us here, then I have hope in the future" (1988, p. 128).

So the postcolonial era in the context of *Woman of the Aeroplanes* is characterized by equal terms of doing business, technological advancements, social and political status. This may be

considered in two ways; as delusional or escaping the reality and as optimistic about the future. The fact that times are changing, generations are changing seems to give the positive drive to the story in this novel that things actually may change for the good.

This novel stresses on the point of 'humanity' rather than race, status and gender. The hopes, fears and future prospective are portrayed as similar by all characters in spite of their skin color. The magical realist narrative here highlights human's positive traits and encourages all men and women, black and white and otherwise to feel or think of each other as human; nothing less nothing more. "The man that goes to the moon can surely go to humanity!" (p. 129)

The magical realism in *Woman of the Aeroplanes* making use of crazy inventions and journeys, resurrection and distorted time, in *Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez*, with the killing frenzies, and absurd justice system, in *The Bleeding of the Stone* with the hunting of already extinct animals, in *The Heart of Redness* with the prophesies and in *Wizard of the Crow* with the fake witchcraft and impossible projects, all seem to be waiting for something. Some are waiting for change, others for justice. When some are anxious to seize things that are supposed to be unattainable others try to welcome something that is said to be gone forever. In all this, one understands something; that Africa is depicted through magical realism in different contexts as hopeful; waiting for something that seems to be impossible within the confines of reality.

Chapter Seven

Similarities and Variations of the Selected Novels in Their Employment of Magical Realism

This chapter demonstrates the two major components of this thesis, the practice and the significance, of magical realism comparatively in the selected five novels. This is one objective the research has set out to achieve at the beginning. Showing the treatment of magical realism by comparing and contrasting the trend as well as the purpose will help understand Africa's stand concerning the magical realist approach.

7.1 Comparative Review of Most Consistent Magical Realist Features in the Selected Novels

All the novels have made use of several of the features that critics in different schools of thought have associate with magical realism. The most consistently used magical realist elements in all the novels selected for this thesis are hybridity, animism and eternal recurrence of [absurd] events. As the presence of fantastical elements is a given in magical realist works, it is also included here just to show its employment comparatively in the five novels. Based on this comparative assessment, one can infer that African novels may have a trend of their own in their employment of magical realism.

7. 1. 1 Irreducible Elements and Their Reception by Narrators and Characters

Fantastic elements are found in all the novels with *Woman of the Aeroplanes* and *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez* being the two leading novels that made use of the inclusion of too many irreducible elements. The other novels have also incorporated magical happenings and bodies in their stories though not as much as the aforementioned two novels do. In addition to the variation in the amount of extraordinary occurrences, the way the narrator and the characters receive these unreal happenings also differ from novel to novel. The narrator and most of the characters in *Heart of Redness* have accepted the fantastic elements as real and we don't see them responding to them in such a special way. The narrator and characters in *The Bleeding of the Stone* seem to consider the desert, the setting of the story, as a potential space where anything can happen anytime and they don't perceive extraordinary happenings as strange.

In *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez* the unreal and the real come one after another with a matter-of-fact narration on the narrator's side when the characters who are entire population of the setting are kind of spectators of what goes on with limited surprise and unlimited patience on their part. What differs this novel from the rest is that the narrator is also a character and for the most part what is about to happen is known before hand. Exaggeration and absurdity dominate the way the fantastic elements are presented.

Woman of the Aeroplanes is the one novel that made use of extraordinary occurrences to the maximum. It is also the one novel that consists of characters who are totally unaffected by the fantastic things surrounding them. Their response to unreal goings on is a kind of response they would have to a real event. The narrator is not different either. *Wizard of the Crow* is different in its usage of fantastic elements. In fact, it attempts to give explanation to the few extraordinary happenings which is somehow fantastic in its way. The narrator relates an unreal tale and then brings in characters who are doctors or wizards in order to back it up with some kind of explanation. However, it ends up creating a comic effect while the believing or not believing in those tales remains suspended. Overall, the novels have all fantastic elements with different level of employment and with different level of reception from the narrators and characters' part. However, it is definitely one of the most consistently used magical elements in the five novels.

7. 1. 2 Polar Oppositions and Their Co-existence in Hybridity

Though the presence of polar entities is evident in all the novels, the way these polarities interrelate with each other has different forms in each novel. Most highlighted binary divisions all the novels share are men and women, life and death and black and white. With the exception of *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez,* the story which insisted on men and women being irreconcilable binaries, the others have found the critic's 'third space' which is discussed in the theoretical framework.

In *Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez*, the binary oppositions of men and women are portrayed as enemies. In this novel, we perceive these polarities through the women's eyes; probably because the character/narrator is a woman. The men are imagined as brutal and powerful by the women. Men are killers, women are victims. Elaborated mourning and wakes are held for the women who are killed in the story. But when men are killed by unknown assaulters, it is considered a

payback for what they did in the past. Moreover, the authorities are symbolized by the men while the people are the women. The authorities (men) are depicted as brutal, corrupt and irresponsible, and the people (women) are brave, visionary, responsible and winners in the end. When men and women are given such opposite and irreconcilable stances, other polarities like life and death are represented co-existing in such close proximity; one invading the other's space, if not in harmony. In the novels with the exception of *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez* and *The Bleeding of the Stone*, men and women are given equal space and voice, sometimes the women coming out stronger than the men in social circumstances (*The Heart of Redness*), in politics (*Wizard of the Crow*), in entrepreneurship (*Woman of the Aeroplanes*).

The Bleeding of the Stone emphasizes most on life and death. What distinguishes this novel from the rest is its tone of relating that the dead are not really dead. They come back taking different forms. We see Asouf's father coming back from the dead and appearing in the eyes of the extinct sheep. The story gives us an impression that Asouf's father is the sheep, Asouf himself is the sheep. And the sheep is somehow Christ; dead a long time ago and yet still living; appearing in some people's presence, disappearing in others'. Asouf and his father, Christ, the sheep - all are hunted for a crime they didn't commit. And at the end, in the story their collective beings merge on the crucifying cross and the story gives us an impression that that entity has resurrected. This story by implication stresses on the fact that human, animal, nature and God have unique association that when one is harmed, the other feels the pain.

In the case of the two novels *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez* and *The Heart of Redness* death is prophesized in advance while in *Seven Solitudes* it goes to the extent of knowing when and to whom it is coming. In *Wizard of the Crow* death is rampant with satire thrown in now and then as a strategy to make it believable. In *Woman of the Aeroplanes*, death is discarded altogether giving life the upper hand as the characters are immortal. However in the end, they welcome death hesitantly; believing it is what makes life worthy of living.

The other highlighted binary division is the presence of both black and white races in all the novels. Apart from *Woman of the Aeroplanes*, whites are represented as opportunistic and manipulative. This notion is most emphasized in *Wizard of the Crow* with the other novels playing it out differently. However, *Woman of the Aeroplanes* gives this divisions equal grounds,

makes them equally responsible for what goes on and for what's about to happen. Indeed, it subtly throws in factual historical accounts in. It seems as if to note the past has indeed happened but the present is here and the future is coming. And we (the blacks) have time to change history and discourse.

7. 1. 3 Animism

Animism is the other magical realist aspect consistently used in all the novels. Highlighting the extraordinariness of everyday objects and events is one manifestation of animism which in turn is a magical realist element. The other is human's close relation with nature and folk culture. This also includes the inclusion of myth, legends, ancestors, spirits and the like in the narratives. Some of the inanimate objects like winds have a conscience of their own just like humans do. These animist tendencies of giving inanimate objects life and role as well as giving animals human attributions are common in the selected novels.

In *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez*, death walks down village streets while dogs bark at him. The earth cries when something bad is about to happen. Parrots are called to courts to testify and they do. Dead people talk long after they are dead. In *The Heart of Redness,* winds sniff a smell of fire and come running to turn a sparkle into bonfire. There are also trees where ancestors still gather under. Starts guide people showing them ways, not the traditional way serving as a compass but literally telling people to go this way or that. In *Woman of the Aeroplanes*, coconuts follow a man wherever he goes like pets. Ducks get sad when one man who frequents the lake they live in goes to a meeting without calling them to accompany him. When a lake gets angry starts sending its ripples into frenzied patterns, a pastor comes and soothes it into calmness murmuring something to it. There is a vulture that sits on one of the characters' pipe. Airplanes and birds hug each other when they meet after sometime just like people do. In *The Bleeding of the Stone*, there is a sheep that throws ropes for humans to pull them out of holes. In *Wizard of the Crow*, people's souls leave their bodies and assume a bird's persona while the people are still alive.

As seen above, *Woman of the Aeroplanes, The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez* and *The Heart of Redness* have included animist elements more than the other novels. However, each novels has stressed on human's close connection to nature and everything that is around him. For example

in *The Bleeding of the Stone*, the desert is given more prominence over human. Indeed the human's insatiable quests and activities have shaped it into what it is now. However, it also influences the lives of the humans just as much. Its rugged contours and vast terrains, the harsh storms it unleashes determine the people's state of living. We don't witness the desert talking or having feelings just like we see other inanimate things do in the other novels. However, in its own way, we know the desert have senses and acts and reacts. *Wizard of the Crow* is the novel that made use of animism the least. Still, the main characters are very close to nature and like to listen to what it says.

Ancestors are present in all the novels. In *The Heart of the Redness*, they are very influential in current times by informing how the norm should be. In the past, the people of Xhosa have paid huge sacrifice in order to resurrect their ancestors. And at present, though the community in the setting is divided as Believers and Unbelievers, their daily activities are highly tied to their ancestors; both groups living their lives according to the rules their forefathers have lain. In *Woman of the Aeroplanes*, ancestors are interestingly still alive. Just like in other aspects, this novels has taken the case of ancestors to the extreme. The people of Tukwan and Levensvale are immortal until near the end of the story and that allows ancestors and progenies to live together. The women in *Wizard of the Crow* have challenged their powerful government with the wisdom they inherited from their foremothers.

Each novel has entertained animism in its own way for different purposes. However, one common target stands out; preservation of nature, protection of environment. The ancestors are still lurking around to protect deserts and forests. The inanimate objects play roles to fill in the shoes of humans. The animals take human attributions in order to communicate nature's needs to the people in their language. In general, animism in the novels plays a moderating role between human and nature.

7. 1. 4 Eternal Recurrence of Absurd Realities

Eternal recurrence is also known as 'involuntary repetition' or 'cyclical time'. Denoting the repetitive happenings of events; that everything is trapped in history and likely to happen again and again, it is one of the most prevalent features of magical realism in the selected novels.

Lives are lived in these magical realist texts just like in realistic narratives. However, death overpowers them. And sometimes, like in the case of *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez*, most of the narrative is about dying than living. People talk after they die creating a sense of doubt in a reader's mind if there is life in death too. Absurdity rules in most of the novels, especially in *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez*. When the government changes capital cities, it takes the entire thing that belongs to the old one to the new one including buildings, lakes, bridges, mosques, etc.

When a person is killed, a judge comes first and gives verdict and then that same judge waits for the police to come and investigate the crime. And the police take 47 years to come to the crime scene. *Wizard of the Crow* and *Woman of the Aeroplanes* follow close to the story of *Lorsa Lopez* in their inclusion of absurd scenarios. The *Marching to Heaven* project and the queue mania can be evidences. In *The Heart of Redness*, citizens are still disputing over something that happened a hundred years ago. In the Bleeding of the Stone, the father and the son are living similar lives in separate times.

The novels painted settings where rampant killing, corruption, and injustice happen again and again in an eternally recurring, unbreakable cyclic time. These cyclic occurrences of events, creating a sense of historical pattern is one aspect investigated in the novels. In these different contexts across Africa, there are things that are happening repeatedly and these magical realist narratives have captured them.

The Heart of Redness gives similar names and traits to some characters tried to recreate similar events over and over again. In *The Bleeding of the Stone*, the father and the son live similar specific experiences in their respective lives in different times. *Wizard of the Crow* explicitly shows how the term used to be 'religion' in the past and has become 'globalization' now which means the same thing: serving the interests of the developed countries. In *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez*, new people with new visions and new ways join the struggle of the mass for justice but the hope vanishes once the true colors of the new people are revealed. We witness power corrupting even the best of them in a ceaseless cyclic occurrence.

7. 2 Comparative Assessment of Most Emphasized Thematic Concerns Raised through Magical Realism in all the Novels

7. 2. 1 Inclusion of Folklore in a Decolonizing Mission

One or more features of folklore are reflected in each one of the selected novels. In the *Bleeding of the Stone,* folk art and folk literature are included. Though the context is the Maghreb which is predominantly a Muslim territory, we have Christians in the story that come to the caves found in the Libyan desert to visit ancient paintings of a shepherd and his herd; their awe and supplication underlined. This very old folk art of an apparent importance to the Christian visitors of this area currently inhabited by Muslims has a temporal and ideological significance. The paintings show that this place was once a home for Christians. They must have moved or been removed from this area for undisclosed reasons. However, they have left their marks that have endured centuries in this harsh weather of the desert. And the folk arts serve two purposes at the moment. They are pilgrimage sites for the Christian faithful who come out here to pay tribute while they are means of income for the Muslim shepherds who live in the area working as guides. The folk arts reconnect people in different generations, in different religions and in different spaces. Moreover, through the inclusion of this folk art, the novel disrupts the colonial discourse making a statement that Africa is not a land of the savage and the pagan. Religion was here long ago, probably before it reached the West. And the fact that the imperial powers used it in their colonizing mission is absurd. Folk literature is also included in this novel; the Sufist philosophy orally told by an elderly spiritual person to those who listen. Such ancient doctrines have been transferred from century to century both through writing and orally.

Folk literature and performing folk arts are elements of folklore included in *The Heart of Redness.* The story of the cattle killing year that happened a century and a half ago is told from generation to generation through word of mouth as much as the written form. For the written form has been manipulated by the colonial authorities, there is a current generation that believes the cattle killing incident was ensued by a South African young and attention-seeking prophetess. However, the oral literature has set another form of discourse which praises the prophetess. This folk literature tells the young generation that the prophetess has actually tried to do something in order to save her land and people from the invading British forces. This has resulted in forming two groups of people in the Xhosan area in South Africa; Believers and Unbelievers. The

Believers are in favor of what Prophetess Nongkawuse had done saying she had tried to save Xhosa her own way while the Unbelievers still say she is to blame for the disaster. The oral literature has refocused the blame on the white colonialists claiming that the cattle killing year wouldn't have happened if they didn't come to the Xhosan land in the first place.

The other folkloric element incorporated in this novel is performing folk art. The Unbelievers' group has a dance rhythm which helps the group to travel back in time and visit the past. The Unbelievers are a group of elders who didn't believe in Prophetess Nongqawuse. They are led by Bhonco, a direct descendant of the original unbeliever Twin-Twin. These elders think the worst of the cattle killing movement impact has passed and they are now in a better situation. But they refrain from enjoying these better days and becoming happy by inducing sadness through a dance. When they step into the rhythm of the dance, they totally lose themselves and travel in time to the past where their forefathers suffered and invoke that experience. In this way they make themselves not forget what Prophetess Nongqawuse's prophesy did to their nation. So they resume their struggle against the Believers who still believe that the prophesy was correct.

Wizard of the Crow is a novel that made use of folkloric elements of social folk custom and folk literature. In different public gatherings, women are called to dance dances of different meanings that are inherited from their ancestors. These dances are supposed to illuminate the events as well as to show that the government embraces local traditions. However, the women are seen ceasing these opportunities to show to the government their opposition. The women dancers are brave enough to challenge the fearsome military dictatorship only armed with their dance steps, only emphasizing on the parts of the ancient dance of resistance and defiance showing the authorities that they had enough of the maladministration, the brutality and the oppression. Apart from these folk social customs, folk literature is also included in the story. The women characters specifically are portrayed as keepers of their traditions in dances and oral literature. Apart from showing their resistance to the government using their dance rhythms deemed by the government as appalling and disrespectful, they also keep their oral literature going by telling it to the young generation through fables, songs and proverbs.

In *Woman of the Aeroplanes*, folkloristic elements do not come out as strong as the other novels. What's interesting here is that this African town called Tukwan, apparently found in Ghana, is

blessed with an inventor who does fantastical works. The character Kwame Atta can invent many things from what material is not clearly mentioned. His inventions alleviate the problems of the people but we don't see him inheriting the knowledge from any elder or transferring it to any young Tukwanian. For example, one of his inventions, The Stupidity Machine, helps the people of his town from thinking too much and start quarrelling in the absence of their leader. This machine, once it was created, assumed its own will and started doing additional things. Moreover, it made friends with a couple of youngsters and fed on mosquitoes. It is unclear to categorize Atta's inventions as folk or technological. However, the meaning is clear: the whites invented airplanes and sent them to us to help us with transportation. We can create machines and send them to the whites to help them with any problem they may have.

In *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez*, material culture and performing folk art are evident. We see the leading characters of the novel who are women making different kind of medicine at different times for different purposes. The women assume their real enemies are men. Therefore, in order to evoke their enmity with them and maintain their feminine power over the masculine one, they dance what they call rumpus after they prepare a kind of medicine they rub on their womanly parts to empower themselves. They prepare the medicine from leaves, wine, earth, saliva and other ingredients by mixing it in a pestle and pounding it with a mortar. Usually the physical folk life element is carried out with a performing folk art just like the above example. An elderly woman prepares a kind of medicinal mix from live toads, oils, ash and soil as well as palm twigs in order to call the long awaited rain. The women prepare this while they sing and dance.

The Bleeding of the Stone is a folk literature that redemption (like rain in the desert) comes when a particular stone in the setting of the story bleeds. *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez* is taken from folk literature of the area that the earth cries near the islands called Seven Solitudes. *Wizard of the Crow* is also another folk literature told from generation to generation that there is a powerful witchcraft done by a wizard known as Wizard of the Crow. The Heart of Redness is inspired by the folk knowledge of redness which is associated with the local costume made from red cloth. All the novels, with *Woman of the Aeroplanes* slightly falling behind, made use of different folkloric elements. With the exception of *Woman of the Aeroplanes*, the other novels have taken their titles from folkloric elements of their respective traditional backgrounds. They

show Africa is a land of people with millennia-old medicinal wisdom, religion and artistic excellence as well as problem solving traditions. Generally, they aim to deconstruct the colonial discourse that Africa is behind the rest of the world in everything.

7. 2. 2 Highlighting on Socio-Political Issues

The most underlined theme of all that all novels have in common is the issues of women. Women issues are raised in all the novels with *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez* and *Wizard of the Crow* leading in their emphasis. *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez* outright endorses women to take political leadership if the world has to be a better place. Portraying men as initiators of disputes, irresponsible, brutal, and not far-sighted, it lets the women coming out as responsible and brave. They conserve nature and they nurture tradition. They promote positivity around them. They fight for something they believe in to the point of sacrifice themselves. *Wizard of the Crow* portrays women as defiant in the face of a merciless military rule. They initiate rebellion using the simple means of traditional dances. Their strategies and executions of the appraisals have challenged and shaken the government that was deemed untouchable even by armed powers. *Woman of the Aeroplanes* has a number of women including the leading character Pokuwaa as businesswomen and entrepreneurs. These women explicitly and implicitly lead their families, their family businesses and their nation without boasting about it. Because they do it quietly and efficiently, the men have no idea who is in charge. They still think they are the heads of family and community which is not the case. *The Heart of Redness* has a woman prophetess at the heart of the story. Arguments and disputes circle around this real life figure who leaved a century ago. Nongqawuse has men and women, individuals and groups still fighting over what she did back then. The young and old women characters of the novel constantly quarrelling over taking two opposing stands on Nongqawuse's prophesy that led the Xhosans into a year old cattle killing activity a hundred and fifty years back with the story inclining more to the supporters' side at the end. Though the leading character of the novel is a man, Camagu, we see him being constantly distracted, manipulated and influenced by a set of women characters.

The *Bleeding of the Stone* is different in its treatment of women issues. Instead of depicting strong women in the story, it has followed a different route depicting them as submissive and voiceless, still showing their sacrifices and contributions to their communities and to the men in their communities. There are a group of young women who make shoes for men. They do it

meticulously in the hopes of attracting a potential husband. There is the mother of the main character, Asouf, whose name we don't know. She cooks and keeps their home. In the end she's killed by flood and Asouf collects her remains from different sites in the desert.

The first three novels have women as heroines. Estina Bronzario in *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez*, Niyawara in *Wizard of the Crow*, Pokuwaa in *Woman of the Aeroplanes*. *The Heart of Redness* consists of a real life woman character. *The Bleeding of the Stone* includes nameless female characters. However, each novel has entertained women's power, sacrifice and representation in their respective settings with emphasis.

Wizard of the Crow and *The Seven Solitude of Lorsa Lopez* can be regarded as highly politically charged novels. Both stories deal with corrupt and dictator governments and show how these governments have been undermined by the least suspected revolutionary elements of the society: the women. The one thing these two governments consistently do is massacring their own people in the attempt to mollify any type of opposition. The novels seem to suggest maybe it's time to try challenging such corrupt and dictator governments with women's ways. *The Heart of Redness* also stresses on how the corrupt governments bring disaster on their nations in their greedy and individual-centered administrations. The political errors in this novel are mostly manifested in the damaging of environment.

Woman of the Aeroplanes suggests that the world has to stop its obsession with political agendas and instead focus on improving economies of nations. Let the economic aspects lead the socio-political ones and see if change would come seems to be the suggestion. This novel is also different in treating black and white, man and women, rich and poor on equal plane. It gives equal grounds and voices to all and let the end result play out on its own. And what's noticed here is there are no losers or winners. Fair game results in fair consequences. It suggests to take history as history and move on with new strategies to make the future better. Unlike the other novels, *The Bleeding of the Stone* sees politics within the frame of indigenous/foreigner relationship rather than authorities and people. Here the desert plays a major role. It is an entity by itself; influencing all within its domain to the extent of denying and granting life. In this framework, the white is depicted as bully, self-centered hunter while the local is innocent and responsible to the point of sacrifice. The foreigner and the local are portrayed as the hunter and

the hunted. Interestingly, the hunted is being hunted on his own territory. However, in the end the local wins; resurrecting after sacrificing himself leaving the hunter with his insatiable greed knocking on his conscience.

All novels have raised pollution of environment as a major social issue that needs to be addressed. The coast of Qolorha, the cliff of Valencia, the desert of Lybia, the capital city of Aburira, and the forest and desert surrounding Tukwan are all given prominence in these stories. The coast in Qolorha is in danger because of corrupt administrators, the cliff in Valencia shouts because of the mass-killings going on, the desert of Libya is almost devoid of its animals, the capital city of Aburiria is piled with uncollected garbage because there is no system set to deal with it by authorities, and the desert and forest around Tukwan protected by ancestors who are still alive. *Woman of the Aeroplanes* again differs here in its usual positive stance of things unfolding in its story. The natural environment of this specific setting has faithful and fearful protectors while the rest are endangered because of government neglect.

7. 3 General Comparison of the Novels in Relation to Magical Realism

In the case of Africa, magical realism is primarily known to be a postcolonial device mainly employed as a decolonizing agent in narratives. The selected novels in this study have also incorporated mainly African traditional values and historical discrepancies through hybridity and otherness highlighting on their usage of postcolonial features. However, the practice of magical realism as explored in the selected novels has also shown that African writers also draw postmodernist techniques like disruption of time and space as well as authorial reticence.

Moreover, the novels' usage of magical realism may vary from one story to the other. The current situations, historical experiences as well as traditional values in their respective contexts together with the authors' personal preferences of relating tales have influenced their practices of magical realism and the purpose they have assigned it to. However, when looking at the novels from a general perspective, their similarities are more visible than their differences.

The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez is number one in incorporating all magical realist features. *Woman of Aeroplanes* is number two incorporating all but with a different outlook and tone in its depiction of postcolonial realities. *The Heart of Redness* follows the aforementioned two novels in its employment of the magical realist features. *The Bleeding of the Stone* is somehow different

from the others as it doesn't have many characters and city scenarios. The setting being a desert has somehow puts it apart. *Wizard of the Crow* is the least magical realist novel of the selected five ones for this study. Its comprising of fantastic elements is limited compared to the others. It is more of a realist narrative with a few selected units going astray. There are no full-fledged outlandish extraordinary occurrences taking place in the story.

Satire and ambiguity are used as narrative strategies in all the novels with different degrees. The use of satire is evident in all the novels with limited treatment in *The Bleeding of the Stone*. When *Wizard of the Crow* uses satire as a strategy to throw the reader off-balance and ignite doubt whether to believe or not believe in what's happening, *The Heart of Redness* uses it as a building material of a middle ground between polarities like the Believers and Non-Believers. *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez* includes satire to create a kind of atmosphere noticed in One Hundred Years of Solitude where matters are utterly hopeless. Waiting for the police for forty-seven years while burying and digging up a victim's remains shows how bleak life is in that setting. However, the police coming to investigate the crime in such an extravaganza and going back in such haste because they had forgotten a doctor and handcuff reveals how ridiculously irresponsible the authorities are, how ignorant and disrespectful of their people they are. At the same time, it serves as a comic relief in such a dreary environment and condition. *Woman of the Aeroplanes* has used satire to ease tensions among different groups in the story.

In the selected five novels, the employment of magical realism varies in its distinct features and also in the role it plays to depict different experiences of the African characters in the stories. In *The Heart of Redness*, magical realism seems to be rooted in the superstitious beliefs a specific historical account is based on. Mda, basing his choice of using this approach in connection to historical realities, has exploited the technique to highlight the positive aspects of tradition that have been overshadowed by negative attitude toward it. Using magical realism, he attempts to build on specific cultural values. He acknowledges the hybrid nature of the post-apartheid South Africa while still insisting on maintaining and protecting the local colors, in conserving its nature or its customs.

In *The Bleeding of the Stone*, al-Koni favors some elements of magical realism over others. His need for employing this approach seems to be informed by folkloristic elements that are

prevalent in the communities of the desert which is the setting for the novel. In employing magical realism, *The Bleeding of the Stone* emphasizes on ecological aspects of environment and shows that man is instrumental both in destroying or maintaining what is around him. Asouf's slow but sure journey of metamorphosing into a sheep, taking the attributions of Christ is also shown through magical realist features highlighting the notion that man, god and nature are all interconnected through mysterious ties.

Magical realist features are integrated in the story of *Wizard of the Crow* mainly to comment on political errors in the postcolonial setting the novel has created. This novel harshly criticizes the administration in postcolonial Africa that gave too much hope to the people when colonialism was ended but failed miserably in its greed for power and money. Though Ngugi used the fictional country Aburiria as suffering from corrupted dictatorship, he also made it a representation of the African reality by making different references to different nations in the continent. Moreover, using magical realist elements like otherness, Ngugi comments on the ambivalent identity that is created in postcolonial Africa. Homi Bhabha's notion of ambivalence is noticeable in this novel. 'Othering' takes place not only between two bodies based on racial, status and gender orientations, but also within oneself. The Aburirian character Tajirika wants to be white. The Ruler of Aburiria wants to be God. The black character wants to be white because he thinks he will not be whole until he is the male white who is the most privileged human being on earth. The Ruler wants to be God because he has all the money and power on earth and he has nothing else to aim for except becoming a divinity himself.

This magical realist feature of ambivalence is also noticed in *The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez*. The women of Valencia want to be men. This also comes from understanding the gender differences have brought status differences and the women found themselves the bottom space of hierarchy. Women questions are the underlined issues raised through magical realism in this novel. The story starts with a woman murdered by man. She calls for help even long after she is murdered. The other women do not let go of her death easily. Her death was monumental in ensuing unrelenting defiance of fellow women of the city until the end. The story ironically ends with another woman, a very important and powerful figure, dying too. This time nature avenges the murder in a dramatic closure. The women always claim that they hear the cliff, the earth, the

sea calling and shouting when something bad happens. The novel shows the close connection of women and nature as giving and nurturing life.

Woman of the Aeroplanes employs magical realism in a distinguished way from the rest of the novels. It focuses on showing solutions instead of problems. It has created a utopian postcolonial space where Africans are out of their usual quests to fulfill basic needs and are now innovators of technological pieces, initiators of transactions with Europe, dealers of businesses on equal grounds. They are still very close to nature, acknowledging ever being around them as having life and conscience, respecting their ancestors and traditional values. They are advanced economically, they look up to a woman leader for guidance, they have pastors and wizards of equal status. Politics is implicitly played out in this novel. Economic and social activities are given more emphasis than politics. The politics doesn't lead the socio-economic endeavors. Rather the social and economical engagements set the political agendas in this context. It is a new suggestion of solution to the problems in African or other postcolonial settings. By persisting from the beginning to the end on maintaining positivity, leaving the past to the past and concentrating on the present and the future, the novel has used magical realism uniquely.

Generally, all the novels have made use of magical realism for a number of purposes. The employment of magical realist features may vary in type and number. However, there are features that all the novels have used in common. All the novels have used the technique to comment on their respective situations, as well as to suggest future ways. The novelists have incorporated traditional values among other features in an effort to write their past history, current reality and potential future ways their own ways.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study has attempted to explore the manifestations of magical realism in selected texts in the African context. Though magical realism is an internationally favored approach of novel writing at the moment, this study focuses on the African experience of employing it. In doing so, the researcher analyzed the distinct features of magical realism that the African novels have made use of. Moreover, the issue of what informs the application of magical realism in the novels has also been considered by investigating the grounds from which the need to employ the technique arises from. The significance/relevance of utilizing magical realism in the novels has also been discussed.

The research has found out that from the magical realist elements set out in the theoretical framework, some features dominate in all the novels and these are animism, hybridity, and eternal recurrence. As the selected novels for this study are magical realist texts, they all incorporate fantastic elements in their stories. While some of them used it widely, others have employed it subtly. From this it is possible to infer that these novels are coming out with their own kind of magical realism that highlights the African traditions, historical experiences and current absurd realities.

The thesis has also looked into the informing aspects of this narrative mode in the novels. Based on the examination of the novels, the thesis deduces that African magical realism is informed by African traditions or unique expressions, historical experiences and current situations.

Magical realism used as a narrative mode in the texts has served multiple purposes. Looking at each novel specifically, the following aspects could be concluded. In *Woman of the Aeroplanes* magical realism is used as an escape method from reality. The symbolic flights in the fantastically charged airplanes from a place in Africa to Europe and back and forth can be taken as one pointer of escape which is known as one theme of magical realism. *Wizard of the Crow* has applied magical realism as satire to mock, to ridicule and to expose the flaws in the political system of its respective setting. In *The Heart of Redness,* magical realism is employed to re-write a part of a local history that has been deemed as shameful and destructive. *The Seven Solitudes*

of Lorsa Lopez has used this technique to reveal the absurdity of life in the face of governmental maladministration. In *The Bleeding of the Stone,* magical realism is implemented to highlight the power of nature against the destructive hands of man.

Looking at the five novels in general, apart from the established relevance of magical realism as a subverting mode of expression working differently from realism, the writers seem to have used it to create awareness and initiate dialogues about political, economic, social and a whole lot of other issues that are fundamental in different contexts of Africa.

Most importantly, using historical experiences and local traditional colors as backdrops, the novelists have exploited the magical realist technique to highlight the positive aspects of tradition that have been overshadowed by negative universal literary attitudes. Using magical realism, the authors attempted to build on specific cultural values. They acknowledge the hybrid nature of the postcolonial Africa while still insisting on maintaining and protecting the respective local colors or customs. They also emphasize on ecological aspects of environment and show that man is instrumental both in destroying or maintaining what is around him.

All these issues could have been addressed through realistic narrative modes. However, the authors resorted to the magical realist mode. Through satire, creating exaggerated scenarios that are stretched out of proportion, incorporating extraordinary events in a perfectly mundane everyday scene while maintaining a matter-of-fact tone, they draw the reader's attention to the reality. And the fact that they have a purpose for doing this is evident.

It is possible to conclude that the aim of the narratives' inclusion of magical elements is to ring a wake-up call in readers' conscience. People are so used to the reality which is wrapped up in poverty, disease, war, and general underdevelopment; it may take a different approach to make them look at the existing realities from a different perspective. And magical realism seems come in handy in creating that kind of effect in readers' mind. This wake-up call doesn't just stop at showing what the reality looks like with a different window. It also suggests that the future could be better with certain alterations in mindset and action concerning different orientations. It also emphasizes that it is not only up to Africa and Africans to bring this much needed change. There should be an integrated and willing participation of the citizens of the whole world.

The final conclusion is that African novels employment of magical realism appears to have its own distinct expression. The fact that the novels incline more on depicting and stressing on the extraordinary realities of their respective contexts, specifically in relation history, tradition and current situations decorated with fantasy and humor has convinced the researcher that it is possible to conclude that the African version of magical realism could be said animist, satiric and hyperbolic - acknowledging hybridity and calling for a break for cyclic repetitions of historical errors.

The researcher recommends future researchers to take up a comparative study of magical realist literary works among different contexts worldwide (from different continents) and to try and see the similarities and differences. And possibly this will enable researchers to abandon the borrowed term ‘magical realism’ and come up with an African version of it.

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