Ways of Dying

Black Diamond

The idea of human cruelty to animals so consumes novelist Elizabeth Costello in her later years that she can no longer look another person in the eye: humans, especially meat-eating ones, seem to her to be conspirators in a crime of stupifying magnitude taking place on farms and in slaughterhouses, factories, and laboratories across the world. Costello's son, a physics professor, admires her literary achievements, but dreads his mother's lecturing on animal rights at the college where he teaches. His colleagues resist her argument that human reason is overrated and that the inability to reason does not diminish the value of life; his wife denounces his mother's vegetarianism as a form of moral superiority. At the dinner that follows her first lecture, the guests confront Costello with a range of sympathetic and skeptical reactions to issues of animal rights, touching on broad philosophical, anthropological, and religious perspectives. Painfully for her son, Elizabeth Costello seems offensive and flaky, but—dare he admit it?—strangely on target. In this landmark book, Nobel Prize–winning writer J. M. Coetzee uses fiction to present a powerfully moving discussion of animal rights in all their complexity. He draws us into Elizabeth Costello's own sense of mortality, her compassion for animals, and her alienation from humans, even from her own family. In his fable, presented as a Tanner Lecture sponsored by the University Center for Human Values at Princeton University, Coetzee immerses us in a drama reflecting the real-life situation at hand: a writer delivering a lecture on an emotionally charged issue at a prestigious university. Literature, philosophy, performance, and deep human conviction—Coetzee brings all these elements into play. As in the story of Elizabeth Costello, the Tanner Lecture is followed by responses treating the reader to a variety of perspectives, delivered by leading thinkers in different fields. Coetzee's text is accompanied by an introduction by political philosopher Amy Gutmann and responsive essays by religion scholar Wendy Doniger, primatologist Barbara Smuts, literary theorist Marjorie Garber, and moral philosopher Peter Singer, author of Animal Liberation. Together the lecture-fable and the essays explore the palpable social consequences of uncompromising moral conflict and confrontation.

EnvironMentality.

In recent years, the work of Zakes Mda—novelist, painter, composer, theater director and filmmaker—has attracted worldwide critical attention. Gail Fincham’s book examines the five novels Mda has written since South Africa’s transition to democracy: Ways of Dying (1995), The Heart of Redness (2000), The Madonna of Excelsior (2002), The Whale Caller (2005), and Cion (2007). Dance of Life explores how refigured identity is rooted in Mda's strongly painterly imagination that creates changed spaces in memory and culture. Through a combination of magic realism, African orature, and intertextuality with the Western canon, Mda rejects dualistic thinking of the past and the present, the human and the nonhuman, the living and the dead, the rural and the urban. He imbues his fictional characters with the power to orchestrate a reconfigured subjectivity that is simultaneously political, social, and aesthetic.

Ways of Dying

Environment at the Margins brings literary and environmental studies into a robust interdisciplinary dialogue, challenging dominant ideas about nature, conservation, and development in Africa and exploring alternative narratives offered by writers and environmental thinkers. The essays bring together scholarship in geography, anthropology, and environmental history with the study of African and colonial literatures and with literary modes of analysis. Contributors analyze writings by colonial administrators and literary authors, as well as by such prominent African activists and writers as Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Mia Couto, Nadine Gordimer, Wangari Maathai, J. M. Coetzee, Zakes Mda, and Ben Okri. These postcolonial ecocritical readings focus on dialogue not only among disciplines but also among different visions of African environments. In the process, Environment at the Margins posits the possibility of an ecocriticism that will challenge and move beyond marginalizing, limiting visions of an imaginary Africa. Contributors: Jane Carruthers Mara Goldman Amanda Hammar Jonathan Highfield David McDermott Hughes Roderick P. Neumann Rob Nixon Anthony Vital Laura Wright

Four Plays

Reset in South Africa as apartheid is coming undone, "Kafka's Curse" is a brilliantly conceived and powerfully evoked retelling of the Arabic legend of the gardener who dares to love a princess and, for his transgression, is transformed into a tree.

The Selfish Shongololo
The Examination of Zakes Mda's The Heart of Redness (2000) Within a Historical Context

A Black messiah, Enoch Mistas wanders the dry South African veld, collecting apostles among the poor and disenfranchised and becomes a threat to South Africa's status quo.

Environment at the Margins

Nongqawuse's Prophecy

A new novel by a towering presence in contemporary South African literature. In 1971, nineteen citizens of Excelsior in South Africa's white-ruled Free State were charged with breaking apartheid's Immorality Act, which forbade sex between blacks and whites. Taking this case as raw material for his alchemic imagination, Zakes Mda tells the story of a family at the heart of the scandal—and of a country in which apartheid concealed interracial liaisons of every kind. Niki, the fallen madonna, transgresses boundaries for the sake of love; her choices have repercussions in the lives of her black son and mixed-race daughter, who come of age in post-apartheid South Africa, where freedom prompts them to reexamine their country's troubled history at first hand. By turns earthy, witty, and tragic, The Madonna of Excelsior is a brilliant depiction of life in South Africa and of the dramatic changes between the 1970s and the present.

The Sculptors of Mapungubwe

Texas Institute of Letters, Kay Cattarulla Award for Best Short Story Reading the West Award Nominee How does a Mexican-American, the son of immigrants, a child of the border, la frontera, leave home and move to the heart of gringo America? How does he adapt to the worlds of wealth, elite universities, the rush and power of New York City? How does he make peace with a stern old-fashioned father who has only known hard field labor his whole life? With echoes of Dreiser's American Tragedy and Fitzgerald's Gatsby, Troncoso tells his luminous stories through the lens of an exile adrift in the 21st century, his characters suffering from the loss of culture and language, the loss of roots and home as they adapt to the glittering promises of new worlds which ultimately seem so empty.

Little Suns

In a remote mountain village of Lesotho, beautiful Dikosha lives for her dancing and for song, separating herself from her fellow villagers, never leaving and never aging, while in the lowland capital of Maseru, her twin brother, Radisene, struggles to build a life for himself away from his village home. Original. 15,000 first printing.

Ways of Writing

This highly-anticipated debut collection from one of the country's most acclaimed young voices marks a massive shift in South African poetry. Kola Putuma's exploration of blackness, womxnhood and history in Collective Amnesia is fearless and unwavering. Her incendiary poems demand justice, insist on visibility and offer healing. In them, Putuma explodes the idea of authority in various spaces—academia, religion, politics, relationships—to ask what has been learnt and what must be unlearnt. Through grief and memory, pain and joy, sex and self-care, Collective Amnesia is a powerful appraisal, reminder and revelation of all that has been forgotten and ignored, both in South African society, and within ourselves.

The Plays of Zakes Mda

Welcome to Our Hillbrow is an exhilarating and disturbing ride through the chaotic and hyper-real zone of Hillbrow—microcosm of all that is contradictory, alluring, and painful in the post-apartheid South African psyche. Everything is there: the shattered dreams of youth, sexuality and its unpredictable costs, AIDS, xenophobia, suicide, the omnipotent violence that often cuts short the promise of young people's lives, and the Africanist understanding of the life continuum that does not end with death but flows on into an ancestral realm. Infused with the rhythms of the inner-city pulsebeat, this courageous novel is compelling in its honesty and its broad vision, which links Hillbrow, rural Tiragalong, and Oxford. It spells out the guts of Hillbrow—living with the same energy and intimate knowledge with which the Drum writers wrote Sophiatown into being.

A Peculiar Kind of Immigrant's Son

Cion

The Eastern Cape is a country of great natural beauty and tourist potential, and has produced a wealth of writers and writings that have responded to the landscape in a variety of interesting and enjoyable ways.

Global Matters

The study showed that African folk tradition such as myths, proverbs, legends, folklores, folktales, superstitions, reincarnations, and so forth, were extensively explored in the two texts: The study further demonstrated that the concept of intertextuality was a basis for contemporary African fictional writers to react to existing classical texts, either by deconstructing the thematic preoccupations of those texts, or by using ideas in the texts to produce something new, more informative and more entertaining. The study also indicated that the theory of poststructuralism and postcolonialism relate to intertextualism by reflecting how the purposely selected texts were no longer the sole products of their authors, but of their relationships to other precursor texts and authors. The study concluded that not only did Ngugi s Matigari and Mda s The Heart of Redness exemplify the basic concepts of the practice of intertextuality in contemporary African writings,
these novels helped to realise the significance of the poststructural theory to the study of African writings.

Collective Amnesia

The Great Farini would stride on to the stage and announce, ‘Ladies and gentlemen, and now for the highlight of the day, the ferocious Zulus.’ The impresario Farini introduced Em-Pee and his troupe to his kind of show business, and now they must earn their bread. In 1885 in a bustling New York City, they are the performers who know the true Zulu dances, while all around them fraudsters perform silly jigs. Reports on the Anglo-Zulu War portrayed King Cetshwayo as infamous, and audiences in London and New York flock to see his kin. What the gawking spectators don’t know is that Em-Pee once carried nothing but his spear and shield, when he had to flee his king. But amid the city’s squalid vaudeville acts appears a vision that leaves Em-Pee breathless: in a cage in Madison Square Park is Acol, a Dinka princess on display. For Em-Pee, it is love at first sight, though Acol is not free to love anyone back.

The Heart of Redness

Kristin Uys is a tough Roodepoort magistrate who lives alone with her cat. She is on a one-woman crusade to wipe out prostitution in the town for reasons that have personal significance for her. Although she is unable to convict the Visagie Brothers, Stevo and Shortie, on charges of running a brothel, she manages to nail Stevo for contempt of court and gives him a summary six-month sentence. From Diepkloof Prison, the outraged Stevo orchestrates his revenge against the magistrate, aided and abetted by his rather inept brother Shortie and his erstwhile nanny, Aunt Magda, who believes mass action will force the powers that be to release Stevo. Kristin receives menacing phone calls and her home is invaded and vandalised. Even her cat is threatened. The chief magistrate insists on assigning a bodyguard to protect her. To Kristin's consternation, security guard Don Mateza moves into her home and trails her everywhere. Nor does this suit Don's long-time girlfriend Tumi, former model and successful businesswoman, who is intent on turning Don into a Black Diamond sooner rather than later. And Don soon finds that his new assignment has unexpected complications which Tumi simply does not understand. In Black Diamond, Zakes Mda tackles every conceivable South African stereotype, skilfully (and with the lightest touch) turning them upside down and exposing their ironies, often hilariously. This is a clever, quirky novel that captures the essence of contemporary life in Gauteng and will resonate with all South Africans.

"Local Natures, Global Responsibilities"

Rural Botswana is the backdrop for When Rain Clouds Gather, the first novel published by one of Africa’s leading woman writers in English, Bessie Head (1937–1986). Inspired by her own traumatic life experiences as an outcast in Apartheid South African society and as a refugee living at the Bamangwato Development Association Farm in Botswana, Head’s tough and telling classic work is set in the poverty-stricken village of Golema Mmidi, a haven to exiles. A South African political refugee and an Englishman join forces to revolutionize the villagers’ traditional farming methods, but their task is fraught with hazards as the pressures of tradition, opposition from the local chief, and the unrelenting climate threaten to divide and devastate the fragile community. Head’s layered, compelling story confronts the complexities of such topics as social and political change, conflict between science and traditional ways, tribalism, the role of traditional African chiefs, religion, race relations, and male-female relations.

This Day and Age

‘There are many suns,’ he said. ‘Each day has its own. Some are small, some are big. I’m named after the small ones.’ It is 1903. A lame and frail Malangana – ‘Little Suns’ – searches for his beloved Mthwakazi after many lonely years spent in Lesotho. Mthwakazi was the young woman he had fallen in love with twenty years earlier, before the assassination of Hamilton Hope ripped the two of them apart. Intertwined with Malangana’s story, is the account of Hope – a colonial magistrate who, in the late nineteenth century, was undermining the local kingdoms of the eastern Cape in order to bring them under the control of the British. It was he who wanted to coerce Malangana’s king and his people, the amaMpondomise, into joining his battle – a scheme Malangana’s conscience could not allow. Zakes Mda’s fine new novel Little Suns weaves the true events surrounding the death of Magistrate Hope into a touching story of love and perseverance that can transcend exile and strife.

Kafka's Curse

Nothing but the Truth

In the New Literatures in English, nature has long been a paramount issue: the environmental devastation caused by colonialism has left its legacy, with particularly disastrous consequences for the most vulnerable parts of the world. At the same time, social and cultural transformations have altered representations of nature in postcolonial cultures and literatures. It is this shift of emphasis towards the ecological that is addressed by this volume. A fast-expanding field, ecocriticism covers a wide range of themes and areas of interest, particularly the relationship between literature and other 'texts' and the environment. Rather than adopting a rigid agenda, the interpretations presented involve ecocritical perspectives that can be applied most fruitfully to literary and non-literary texts. Some are more general, ‘holistic’ approaches: literature and other cultural forms are a ‘living organism’, part of an intellectual ecosystem, implemented and sustained by the interactions between the natural world, both human and non-human, and its cultural representations. ‘Nature’ itself is a new interpretative category in line with other paradigms such as race, class, gender, and identity. A wide range of genres are covered, from novels or films in which nature features as the main topic or ‘protagonist’ to those with an ecocritical agenda, as in dystopian literature. Other concerns are: nature as a cultural construct; ‘gendered’ natures; and the city/country
dichotomy. The texts treated challenge traditional Western dualisms (human/animal, man/nature, woman/man). While such
global phenomena as media (‘old’ or ‘new’), tourism, and catastrophes permeate many of these texts, there is also a dual
focus on nature as the inexplicable, elusive ‘Other’ and the need for human agency and global responsibility.

**When People Play People**

An award-winning play about the relationship between brothers. Nothing but the Truth is the story of two brothers, of sibling
rivalry, of exile, of memory and reconciliation, and the ambiguities of freedom. The play was John Kani's debut as sole
playwright and was first performed in the Market Theatre in Johannesburg. It won the 2003 Fleur du Cap Award for best actor
and best new South African play. In the same year Kani was also awarded a special Obie award for his extraordinary
contribution to theatre in the USA.

**The Heart of Redness**

**Sometimes There Is a Void**

In a new novel by one of the premier writers of the "new" South Africa, an exile returns from America--where he fled during
the apartheid regime--to find his newly democratic country in shambles. Reprint. 15,000 first printing.

**The Lives of Animals**

The Dead Will Arise tells the story of Nongqawuse, the young Xhosa girl whose prophecy of the resurrection of the dead
lured an entire people to death by starvation. The Great Cattle-Killing of 1856-57, which she initiated, is one of the most
extraordinary and misunderstood events in South Africa's history. Jeff Peires was the first historian to draw on all available
sources, from oral tradition and obscure Xhosa texts to the private letters and secret reports of police informers and colonial
officials, and the original edition of The Dead Will Arise won the 1989 Alan Paton Sunday Times award for non-fiction.

**Dance of Life**

A startling novel by the leading writer of the new South Africa In The Heart of Redness -- shortlisted for the prestigious
Commonwealth Writers Prize -- Zakes Mda sets a story of South African village life against a notorious episode from the
country's past. The result is a novel of great scope and deep human feeling, of passion and reconciliation. As the novel opens
opens Camugu, who left for America during apartheid, has returned to Johannesburg. Disillusioned by the problems of the new
democracy, he follows his "famous lust" to Qolorha on the remote Eastern Cape. There in the nineteenth century a
teenage prophetess named Nonqawuse commanded the Xhosa people to kill their cattle and burn their crops, promising that
once they did so the spirits of their ancestors would rise and drive the occupying English into the ocean. The failed prophecy
split the Xhosa into Believers and Unbelievers, dividing brother from brother, wife from husband, with devastating
consequences. One hundred fifty years later, the two groups' descendents are at odds over plans to build a vast casino and
tourist resort in the village, and Camugu is soon drawn into their heritage and their future -- and into a bizarre love triangle
as well. The Heart of Redness is a seamless weave of myth, history, and realist fiction. It is, arguably, the first great novel of
the new South Africa -- a triumph of imaginative and historical writing.

**A Study of Ngugi's Matigari and Zakes Mda's The Heart of Redness**

"A voice for which one should feel not only affection but admiration." --The New York Times The Whale Caller, Zakes Mda's
fifth novel, is his most enchanting and accessible book yet-a romantic comedy of sorts in which the changing face of post-
apartheid South Africa is revealed through prodigious, lyrical storytelling. As the novel opens, the seaside village of
Hermanus, on the country's west coast, is overrun with whale watchers-foreign tourists wearing floral shirts and toting
expensive binoculars, determined to see whales in their natural habitat. But when the tourists have gone home, the Whale
Caller lingers at the shoreline, wooing a whale he calls Sharisha with cries from a kelp horn. When Sharisha fails to appear
for weeks on end, the Whale Caller frets like a jealous lover-oblivious to the fact that the town drunk, Saluni, a woman who
wears a silk dress and red stiletto heels, is infatuated with him. After much ado-which Mda relates with great relish-the two
misfits fall in love. But each of them is ill equipped for romance, and their on-again, off-again relationship suggests
something of the fitful nature of change in post-apartheid South Africa, where just living from one day to the next can be
challenge enough. Mda has spoken of the end of apartheid as a lifting of the South African novelist's burden to write on
political subjects. With The Whale Caller, he has written a tender, charming novel-the work of a virtuoso among international
writers.

**The Zulus of New York**

Ways of Writing is the first volume of essays devoted to a critical appraisal of Zakes Mda, the award-winning South African
novelist and playwright. In his plays and novels, which draw on both Western and indigenous performance traditions, Mda
engages with the history of southern Africa during and after apartheid. Writing from a position of exile, as well as from within
his native country, he examines the lives of ordinary people and the ways in which they come to terms with the effects of
apartheid. Mda has distinguished himself not only as a playwright and novelist, but also as a literary and cultural theorist and
activist. He is a significant voice among the many in contemporary South Africa that exploit innovative forms to explore a
culture in transition. This book demonstrates the wide range of both Mda's work and its critical reception, with discussions of
his fiction and drama by scholars from South Africa, Europe, and the US. The essays reinforce the impression of an original
and challenging writer whose creative skills have been used to focus attention on the plight of the underprivileged. This
volume provides stimulating reading to anyone with an interest in Zakes Mda, in particular, and in South African writing in
general.
Welcome to Our Hillbrow

A Picador Paperback Original The hero of Zakes Mda's beloved Ways of Dying, Toloki, sets down with a family in Middle America and uncovers the story of the runaway slaves who were their ancestors. Toloki, the professional mourner, has come to live in America. Lured to Athens, Ohio, by an academic at the local university, Toloki makes friends with an angry young man he meets at a Halloween parade and soon falls in love with the young man's sister. Toloki endears himself to a local quilting group and his quilting provides a portal to the past, a story of two escaped slaves seeking freedom in Ohio. Making their way north from Virginia with nothing but their mother's quilts for a map, the boys hope to find a promised land where blacks can live as free men. Their story alternates with Toloki's, as the two narratives cast a new light on America in the twenty-first century and on an undiscovered legacy of the Underground Railroad.

The Dead will Arise

Winner of the M-Net Book Prize Shortlisted for the CNA and Noma Awards In Ways of Dying, Zakes Mda's acclaimed first novel, Toloki is a "professional mourner" in a vast and violent city of the new South Africa. Day after day he attends funerals in the townships, dressed with dignity in a threadbare suit, cape, and battered top hat, to comfort the grieving families of the victims of the city's crime, racial hatred, and crippling poverty. At a Christmas day funeral for a young boy Toloki is reunited with Nora, a woman from his village. Together they help each other to heal the past, and as their story interweaves with those of their acquaintances this elegant short novel provides a magical and painful picture of South Africa today. Ways of Dying was awarded South Africa's prestigious M-Net Book Prize, awarded by the TV channel M-Net to books written in one of South Africa's official languages, and was shortlisted for the Central News Agency (CNA) Award and the Noma Award, an Africa-wide prize founded by Shoichi Noma, onetime president of Kodansha International.

Rachel's Blue

What happens when a rapist fights for paternity rights over the rape-conceived child? Weaving together the personal struggles of its characters with the earth-deep worries of a small town, Rachel's Blue deftly pulls readers into a close-knit community only to show how suffocating such a community can be.

African Traditional Culture and Modernity in Zakes Mda's The Heart of Redness

At the instigation of the sciolist, Toloki, the professional mourner introduced in Zakes Mda's early novel Ways of Dying, takes the opportunity to travel the world in search of new ways of mourning. He finds himself abandoned in Athens Ohio, but a chance meeting with a Halloween reveller leads him to the poor hamlet of Kilvert, home to descendants of fugitive slaves. A community of traditional quiltmakers, the people of Kilvert, and notably the Quigley family, offer Toloki hospitality while never completely coming to terms with what they regard as his shamanistic attributes. From them he learns the stories told by the quilts and the secrets held by the sycamores - ghost trees that are the carriers of memories - and he becomes aware that this is a community which strives to keep alive their past in order to validate the present. They cannot let go, for the past is all they have. And it is through the quilts and the sycamores and the messages they carry that the old story is told of the slaves in the plantations of the south and their eternal quest to escape and find their freedom, interwoven with the story of life in present-day Kilvert. It is also a time of growth for Toloki, bringing about a softening of his former austerity and enabling him to determine the path his future will take.

The Madonna of Excelsior

A Literary Guide to the Eastern Cape

In the timeless kingdom of Mapungubwe, the royal sculptor had two sons, Chata and Rendani. As they grew, so grew their rivalry--and their extraordinary talents. But while Rendani became a master carver of the animals that run in the wild hills and lush valleys of the land, Chata learned to carve fantastic beings from his dreams, creatures never before seen on the Earth. From this natural rivalry between brothers, Zakes Mda crafts an irresistibly rich fable of love and family. What makes the better art, perfect mimicry or inspiration? Who makes the better wife, a princess or a mysterious dancer? Ageless and contemporary, deceptive in its simplicity and mythical in its scope, The Sculptors of Mapungubwe encompasses all we know of love, envy, and the artist's primal power to forge art from nature and nature into art. Mda's newest novel will only strengthen his international reputation as one of the most trenchant voices of South Africa.

When Rain Clouds Gather

In my thesis entitled African Tradition and Modernity in Zakes Mda's The Heart of Redness, I analyze the way Western modernity and African traditions interact in Mda's novel. I suggest that both modernity and tradition interact to produce a hybrid culture. This will become apparent in my analysis of the way Mda depicts the cattlekilling episode and the effects of Nongqawuses prophecy, and also in the novels contemporary characters. Mda shows the development of an African modernity through the semi-autobiographical figure of Camagu who is not slavishly indebted to Western ideas of progress, but is a hybrid of African values and a modern identity.

Cultivating Resilience

As the pace of cultural globalization accelerates, the discipline of literary studies is undergoing dramatic transformation. Scholars and critics focus increasingly on theorizing difference and complicating the geographical framework defining their approaches. At the same time, Anglophone literature is being created by a remarkably transnational, multicultural group of writers exploring many of the same concerns, including the intersecting effects of colonialism, decolonization, migration, and globalization. Paul Jay surveys these developments, highlighting key debates within literary and cultural studies about the
impact of globalization over the past two decades. Global Matters provides a concise, informative overview of theoretical, critical, and curricular issues driving the transnational turn in literary studies and how these issues have come to dominate contemporary global fiction as well. Through close, imaginative readings Jay analyzes the intersecting histories of colonialism, decolonization, and globalization engaged by an array of texts from Africa, Europe, South Asia, and the Americas, including Zadie Smith's White Teeth, Junot Díaz's The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao, Kiran Desai's The Inheritance of Loss, Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things, Vikram Chandra's Red Earth and Pouring Rain, Mohsin Hamid's Moth Smoke, and Zakes Mda's The Heart of Redness. A timely intervention in the most exciting debates within literary studies, Global Matters is a comprehensive guide to the transnational nature of Anglophone literature today and its relationship to the globalization of Western culture.

Cion

This book addresses the role and potential of literature in the process of contesting and re-evaluating concepts of nature and animality, describing one's individual environment as the starting point for such negotiations. It employs the notion of the ‘literary event’ to discuss the specific literary quality of verbal art conceptualised as EnvironMentality. EnvironMentality is grounded on the understanding that fiction does not explain or second scientific and philosophical notions but that it poses a fundamental challenge to any form of knowledge manifesting in processes determined by the human capacity to think beyond a given hermeneutic situation. Bartosch foregrounds the dialectics of understanding the other by means of literary interpretation in ecocritical readings of novels by Amitav Ghosh, Zakes Mda, Yann Martel, Margaret Atwood and J.M. Coetzee, arguing that EnvironMentality helps us as readers of fiction to learn from the books we read that which can only be learned by means of reading: to “think like a mountain” (Aldo Leopold) and to know “what it is like to be a bat” (Thomas Nagel).

She Plays with the Darkness

Zakes Mda is the most acclaimed South African writer of the independence era. His eight novels tell stories that venture far beyond the conventional narratives of a people's struggle against apartheid. In this memoir, he tells the story of a life that intersects with the political life of his country but that at its heart is the classic adventure story of an artist, lover, father, teacher, and bon vivant. Zanemvula Mda was born in 1948 into a family of lawyers and grew up in Soweto's ambitious educated black class. At age fifteen he crossed the Telle River from South Africa into Basutoland (Lesotho), exiled like his father, a “founding spirit” of the Pan Africanist Congress. Exile was hard, but it was just another chapter in Mda's coming-of-age. He served as an altar boy (and was preyed on by priests), flirted with shebeen girls, feared the racist Boers, read comic books alongside the literature of the PAC, fell for the music of Dvorák and Coltrane, wrote his first stories—and felt the void at the heart of things that makes him an outsider wherever he goes. The Soweto uprisings called him to politics; playwriting brought him back to South Africa, where he became writer in residence at the famed Market Theatre; three marriages led him hither and yon; acclaim brought him to America, where he began writing the novels that are so thick with the life of his country. In all this, Mda struggled to remain his own man, and with Sometimes There Is a Void he shows that independence opened the way for the stories of individual South Africans in all their variety.

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