CHAPTER 5

Desire and the Law: Creative Resistance in *The Reluctant Passenger* and *The Heart of Redness*

*The Reluctant Passenger* (*2003*) by Michiel Heyns and *The Heart of Redness* (*2000*) by Zakes Mda portray communities that struggle to protect themselves, their lands, and the animals with which they dwell from being used and abused to turn a profit for businesses. Both novels portray competing claims for land as business proposals attempt to develop potential tourist locales by disenfranchising their current inhabitants through the rhetoric of Western notions of “development.” As in Chap. 4, the role of desire as “eating” appears here as government officials are bribed by business owners to approve their land-development proposals, and at the cost of sacrificing the homes, protection, and interests of the local inhabitants of these lands. These stories perform what Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin identify as “[o]ne of the central tasks of postcolonial ecocriticism” as they “contest—also provide viable alternatives to—western ideologies of development” (27). The capitalist proposals for wealthy tourist destinations continue in a colonialist view of these lands as blank spaces awaiting appropriation and transformation into capital. This chapter explores how characters in both novels successfully work within and beyond the law to prevent the destruction of particular environments which they have come to know intimately.

The protagonist of *The Reluctant Passenger*, an environmental lawyer, critiques the political scene that the novel sets up involving unethical environmental rulings and other legislation influenced by big business and bribery. Heyns’ novel highlights many environmental concerns, particularly the legal status, or lack thereof, of animals (specifically baboons) in
South Africa. As the protagonist struggles to help maintain the nature preserve for the troop of baboons at the request of his client Luc Tomlinson, the novel portrays Luc’s experiences dwelling with the baboons, demonstrating his great respect for their lives and culture. Similarly, Camagu, the protagonist of *The Heart of Redness*, argues against the development of the small village he has grown to love into a gambling city. Offering a more ecocritical alternative to the tourist town, Camagu expresses his view, informed by Qukezwa’s political analysis and knowledge of local culture and nature, that the town developed by outside businesses will offer little work or profit for the townspeople and be detrimental to their environment. In contrast, he proposes a smaller measure of a resort built with local materials by the villagers appealing to a different type of tourist who “like[s] to visit unspoiled places for the sole purpose of admiring the beauty of nature and watching birds without killing them” (239).

These novels consider the available avenues for opposing the late capitalist thrust to transform all the world and its inhabitants into objects that are available for consumption and for turning a profit. The communities in these works offer ways of thinking about promoting sustainable futures against the overconsumption of the environment associated with most capitalist development projects. As animals are valued highly by the characters in both texts, Heyns’ and Mda’s novels argue persuasively for sustainable futures for the humans and animals (and in *Heart of Redness* also the flora) that are part of their communities. Characters in both understand community in a broader sense, including humans and non-humans, and recognize that they are all potentially disposable in the logic of profit-seeking capitalists. Where some approaches to the stories espouse an animal rights perspective, I argue that an ethics of sustainability and a biopolitics informed by deterritorialized or *postcolonial desire*, here specifically the desire for animals, is essential to protecting communities in ways that rights discourse and the law cannot guarantee.

## Critique of Animal Rights

In *The Reluctant Passenger*, the protagonist, an environmental lawyer named Nick Morris, somewhat contradictorily dislikes the ungovernable or disorderly aspects of the environment and animals. For example, he has a discussion with his friend and fellow lawyer, Gerhard, about masturbation that turns into an analysis of Romantic poets where Morris discloses that he masturbates to the Lake District of England. In response,
Gerhard encourages him to consider Blake’s poetry and to “try The Tiger next time” (173). Nick explains his disregard for unruly nature:

I am not a Tiger type of person, and such fantasies as I have tend towards the tame. For this reason my involvement in the ever-deepening intrigue surrounding Luc Tomlinson’s baboons was as unusual as it was unwelcome. As far as I’m concerned, the Environment should behave itself if it wants us to look after its interests. As a matter of fact, the Lake District is just about my notion of an ideal environment: well-mannered, contained, placidly packaged, officially protected and signposted. (173)

As the novel progresses and Nick becomes increasingly involved with Luc Tomlinson and the case for the baboons, the lawyer discover the law’s limited ability to protect the animals. “[T]he rights of animals are a much debated area in law” (259) is the best that Nick can offer in response to Luc’s query about protecting the baboons in a legal manner. Where the law fails them, I’m interested here in how and why the characters work to protect the baboons extralegally. In light of Nick’s discomfort with “wild” or untamable nature (or zoe) and his sexual fantasies about ordered and “contained” environments, his reassessment of the unmasterable aspects of the world including his own desires and “self” leads him to break several laws in the course of rescuing the baboons with Luc later in the story. Where Nick once lived a life of abstinence to avoid the messiness and feelings associated with a sexual relationship, he ends up having sex with Luc in his house while the rescued baboons they have secured in the second floor of his house dirty, rearrange, and otherwise mess up his home, which had once been so clean and ordered as to appear uninhabited. This scene indicates the importance of a positive appraisal of desire to protect animals in relation to the limits of legal or animal rights approaches, positions which I analyze below.

In The Animal Gaze: Animal Subjectivities in Southern African Fiction, Wendy Woodward reflects on the interiority and sense of “self” of the animals in southern African fiction, including The Reluctant Passenger and The Heart of Redness. For her, these literary representations of animals do important work toward changing the way we think about animals and their rights. Woodward argues that animals have subjectivities, so they should be recognized in the South African constitution and be accorded rights. In support of her animal rights approach, she draws from Martha Nussbaum’s philosophy of “moral agency,” a
philosophy which, as I’ll discuss later, Braidotti criticizes heavily early on in *Transpositions*. For example, Woodward recounts how Martha C. Nussbaum critiques utilitarian approaches to rights which position animals as having “moral standing.” She summarizes the utilitarian position through a quotation of Nussbaum:

> Because they are subjects of social justice “if a creature has *either* the capacity for pleasure and pain *or* the capacity for movement from place to place *or* the capacity for emotion and affiliation *or* the capacity for reasoning and so forth (we might add play, tool use, and others), then the creature has moral standing” (362). Nussbaum quite rightly argues for the importance of the agency of the nonhuman animal; in moral agency, then, the animal is active in this sphere, whereas “moral standing” is conferred on the nonhuman animal for the characteristics he or she embodies. (Woodward 68)

This preference for active instead of passive qualities in “moral agency” over standing or capacity is certainly a more interesting approach regarding the question of animal morality because agency suggests a recognition of the moral life and behaviors of animals, yet “moral agency” still suggests that animals should be granted rights because they have similar agency to that of humans.

Élizabeth de Fontenay also critiques this position in *Without Offending Humans: A Critique of Animal Rights*:

> Without useless brutality toward metaphysical and legal humanisms, a pathocentrist perspective does in effect allow us to establish the fact that the moral community is constituted not only by “moral agents” capable of reciprocity, apt to enter into contracts with full knowledge of what this means, but also by “moral patients,” which includes certain categories of human beings and animals. (67)

Fontenay’s argument here is that this approach to rights from the perspective of “agency” leaves out some humans and animals from being protected because they do not possess this agency. She further critiques this in her response’s to Peter Singer’s philosophy, arguing that such rights approaches are “offensive” to humans as they run the risk of sanctioning the poor treatment of non-normative humans, such as those with different mental abilities who may not necessarily be included in the category of “moral agents.”
Posthumanist accounts of subjectivity, such as Rosi Braidotti’s nomadic subjectivity, that involve a radical immanence, offer a fluid notion of the subject where subjects are interdependent, existing in assemblages with other humans and the non-human, instead of a fixed view of subjectivity in the liberal individual tradition. The law constructs dominant, discursive subjects which fail to do justice to or fully account for the fluidity and complexity of our subjectivities. Braidotti argues:

The becoming-animal axis of transformation entails the displacement of anthropocentrism and the recognition of trans-species solidarity on the basis of our being environmentally based, that is to say: embodied, embedded and in symbiosis … “Life,” far from being codified as the exclusive property or the unalienable right of one species—the human—over all others or of being sacralized as a pre-established given, however, is posited as process, interactive and open-ended. (99)

While Woodward does discuss Deleuze and Guattari’s becoming-animal briefly at times, she looks for more human qualities or attributes of human subjectivity in the animals in the literature she analyzes, which approaches a kind of becoming-human of the animal. Rights discourse, while oriented toward protecting animals from violence, ends up humanizing animals, leaving this political approach perhaps less effective than other creative options.

Braidotti also critiques Martha Nussbaum’s universalism (after Kant), which assumes a stable humanist subject. Nussbaum’s formulation seems to view animals as fixed, individual subjects who possess agency, whereas the vital materialist Deleuze views both subjectivity and agency as dispersed, interdependent, and the subject as a process in assemblage. Braidotti also critiques Nussbaum’s position for the way she tries to intimidate new or experimental approaches and philosophies by asserting that they are relativist. Another problem with universalism is the failure to appreciate local knowledges and hence a tendency toward a monocultural, dominant view of the world. Woodward, however, nicely avoids this by recognizing and analyzing the importance of shamanist traditions and the indigenous knowledges of South African peoples.

In essence, Woodward’s somewhat humanist approach and the posthumanist approach I espouse are after the same goals—the protection of animals—although her project seems limited to that particular kind of life that possesses “moral agency,” whereas mine seeks to protect the
community in a broader sense. That is, I am concerned with the protection and improvement of the conditions and treatment of animals, the environment, and the others of man that have been excluded from man’s central position in humanism and therefore viewed more easily as disposable because of the negative valuation of difference that results in racism, anthropocentrism, and phallogocentrism. While *The Reluctant Passenger* and *The Heart of Redness* offer a view of animals as deserving of rights, and *The Reluctant Passenger* engages in this discourse of rights more directly, both novels also offer more creative ways of thinking about sustainable futures. Thus they call for working inside the law and also other creative ways of protecting the animals, human and non-human, of their communities.

For Braidotti, sustainability consists of multiplying subjectivities “not for profit” and increasing the possibilities of positive attachments. A significant part of her project entails establishing a positive view of *zoe*, in contrast to negative views of it espoused by Agamben and others. For Braidotti, the others of man—women, native others, animals, earth others, and so on—are closer to *zoe*, whereas man is closer to *bios* or discursive life (104). She explains that

> whereas “life” or *bios* has been conceptualized as a discursive and political notion ever since Aristotle, *zoe* is the non- or pre-human “outside” of the polity. It has been rendered in figurations of pejorative alterity as the “other of the living human”, which means the inhuman or divine and the dead … . Against this forensic turn in contemporary philosophy [Agamben’s association of *zoe* with death, for example], … [is] the need to cultivate positive political passions and ethics of affirmation. (*Transpositions* 265)

She also explains how *zoe* disrupts a “unitary” vision of the subject—a non-humanness at the heart of the human that flows through bodies. This sustainability perspective replaces one of rights, as she argues: “The notion of co-dependence replaces that of recognition, much as the ethics of sustainability replaces the moral philosophy of rights” (123). In contrast to a rights perspective that argues that animals be included in the community and be granted protection because of their similarity to humans under our notion of humanism and the law, this approach of co-dependence recognizes that the “human” has never been human, never existed independently, but always depends on a relation with the non-human.
Part of Nussbaum’s approach to animals also includes the argument “that animals be recognized as subjects” (13). Thus Woodward bases her “rights” approach to animals on their subjectivity, and therefore their being subjects in the law. Cary Wolfe argues that this approach to protecting animals is not sensible:

I think we would all agree that an admirable desire of humanism would be to respect the standing of at least some nonhuman animals and to protect them from exploitation, cruelty, and so on. But the attempt to articulate that desire, which is an admirable one, in terms of the rights framework ends up foreclosing and undercutting that desire by reinstating a normative picture of the subject of rights that ends up being humanist and anthropocentric through and through, that ends up with a being that looks a lot like us, so that, in the end, nonhuman animals matter because they are just a diminished version of us. It seems to me self-evident that trying to think about the value of dolphins in terms of their being diminished versions of Homo sapiens makes no sense. (“After Animality” 186, emphasis added)

For Wolfe, rights approaches then inevitably begin to look for human characteristics in animals as a means of securing their protection. While his reading of the law and animal rights perspectives often focuses on the work of Derrida, specifically Derrida’s essay “Before the Law” from which he derives the title of his book on biopolitics, Wolfe’s emphasis on the “undercutting” of desire is something worth taking up from Deleuze and Guattari’s perspective. Both Derrida, and Deleuze and Guattari, write about Kafka’s The Trial, which includes the story entitled “Before the Law,” as a starting point for, or in the course of, their thinking about the law and what it means to be “before the law.” Wolfe spends much of his work on biopolitics describing Derrida’s position, noting, for example, the lack of response in law as, constructed in the technicity of language, its automatic nature leads merely to reaction. Yet in this interview he emphasizes “desire” in relation to the law. As this project has explored the role of desire throughout, Deleuze and Guattari’s writing about desire and the law, specifically their Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature, adds another fold to biopolitical thought.

While he doesn’t consider Deleuze and Guattari’s writing about Kafka, and therefore their specific writing about the relationship of their vitalist project to the law, Wolfe does address how Deleuze’s work, which might seem at first to promote the equality of all life in an affirmative biopolitics, is useful in terms of biopolitical thought. He explains how
a pragmatic application of Deleuze’s philosophy bypasses the potential problems of an affirmative biopolitics: “By a pragmatist account, philosophy for Deleuze, as Paul Patton puts it, ‘is the invention or creation of concepts, the purpose of which is not accurate representation’ but rather to provide ‘a form of description which is immediately practical,’ one ‘oriented toward the possibility of change’” (Before the Law 93). In other words, while their ethics of affirming zoe might appear to promote the flourishing of all life, this is not an accurate portrayal of life but instead a practical politics for resisting dominant thought, capitalist logic, and the consumption of everything that lives.

Desire poses a more direct and revolutionary threat—one that works outside of the rationality of the law, an authority which currently excludes most animals from the community. That is, rather than appeal to the authority or work within the confines of the law which has rendered animals in their current position, which has, through its exclusionary violence, failed to protect them, staying with that desire and its productive nature offers opportunities for working toward this protection in new ways, outside of the law.

In Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature, Deleuze and Guattari argue more specifically against the law as a means to justice. They offer a corrective to the view that the law secures justice: “where one believed there was law, there is in fact desire and desire alone. Justice is desire and not law” (Kafka 49). This perspective on law agrees with Wolfe’s discussion of the “undercutting” of desire that pertains to rights approaches. The law, when viewed as the only outlet to protect animals, “undercuts” desire, then, by reterritorializing desire into the existing legal framework, appealing to its authority or authorities, thereby undermining its revolutionary potential. Or more specifically, for Deleuze and Guattari, the law does not undercut desire but instead is one of two kinds of desire: the transcendental law or the schizo-law. They argue:

We should emphasize the fact of these two coexistent states because we cannot say in advance, “This is a bad desire, that is a good desire.” Desire is a mixture, a blend, to such a degree that bureaucratic or fascist pieces are still or already caught up in revolutionary agitation. It is only in motion that we can distinguish the “diabolism” of desire and its “immanence,” since one lies deep in the other. Nothing preexists anything else. It is by the power of his noncritique that Kafka is so dangerous. (60)
In other words, for them, the law itself doesn’t necessarily undercut desire, but the law perhaps is one arena where desire is either reterritorialized or takes off on a line of flight. The non-critique here gestures to the potential of desires to transform to positive ends or conversely to become violent. Continuing their reading of *The Trial*, they argue:

> From this point on, it is even more important to renounce the idea of a transcendence of the law. If the ultimate instances are inaccessible and cannot be represented, this occurs not as a function of an infinite hierarchy belonging to a negative theology but as a function of a *contiguity of desire* that causes whatever happens to happen always in the office next door … If everything, everyone is part of justice, if everyone is an auxiliary of justice … this is not because of the transcendence of the law but because of the immanence of desire. (*Kafka* 51)

This position radically calls into question Nussbaum’s moral universalism, or “universal rights,” as it is revealed that law is just an arena of sorts for desire that springs forth from the immanence of the body. Desires that are not reterritorialized, that remain schizo-law, are therefore specific to the singularities of the material assemblages “next door” and, as they privilege deterritorialized desire and schizophrenia throughout their work, schizo-law provides the possibility for political action against dominant thought and dominant constructions of desire which have resulted in the failure to protect particular members of the community.

What’s at stake in this understanding of law as nothing but desire is the realization that a rights approach needs to be backed up by the desire to enforce it for it to work toward the protection of animals or the environment. The import of Deleuze and Guattari’s insight into the law, however, is that the law itself is empty, is nothing but desire. In other words, and I’ll discuss this further in my treatment of the novels below, if the desire to protect animals, the environment, humans, and so forth does not exist in the exercising or administration of the law, the law itself (and the passing of more laws ad infinitum, even) will surely fail to protect them and ensure their futures. If those positioned as authorities of the law are colonized by Oedipus and their desires are therefore reterritorialized by capitalism, the laws themselves will not stand a chance against the disposing of these others for the accumulation of pleasure and profit by the arbiters of the law. If the law is really desire and its officials are colonized by capitalism’s definition of desire as lack that must be
filled through consumption and accumulation, their authority in the law enables the potential of capitalist desire to render all that lives “disposable” to their personal interests and make everything available for consumption and profit in a logic of exchange. Thus it becomes all the more important to theorize desire differently and to think outside of capitalist logic which defines desire as lack, viewing desire instead as an opportunity to make ethical attachments toward sustainable futures. Since what appears to be law is really desire, if we take that observation seriously, decolonizing desire or resisting its colonization toward a postcolonial desire then becomes a significant intervention into the political field as part of a project to protect the others and the environments of our communities. Since capitalism bombards us with its definition of desire constantly, portrayals of what I’d like to call “postcolonial desire” in these novels offers a line of flight away from capitalist logic: a field of desire which can reorient one’s sense of self and relationships to others, animals, and the environment.

Woodward argues that animals can be focused on in literature and writing because human rights have been secured in South Africa. She writes:

Now that human rights appear to be in place in a democratic South Africa—even while much of our racialised history remains intact—writers can represent animals more expansively without engendering criticism of foregrounding animals at the expense of humans. White writers in particular may have felt constrained not to portray animals as ethical subjects when the majority of South Africans were without rights. (14)

To be sure, the putting in place of human rights is a significant achievement, and yet, as she seems to acknowledge here in recognizing that the “racialised history” has not changed much with the advent of rights, the securing of these rights doesn’t radically alter the state of affairs or ensure the protection and improved treatment of those now granted rights. Additionally, the secondary consideration of rights for animals continues to privilege the human over the animal, ensuring the continual deferment of protections for animals. Similarly, calls for the addition of more kinds of right, like Elke Zuern’s argument for the case of “socio-economic rights” (66) as part of human rights, while certainly important in their attempt to redress economic inequality and its violence, which much current rights discourse overlooks, require their enforcement by
the authorities of the law. Zuern summarizes her research: South Africans argue “that freedom can only be realized when civil, political, and socio-economic rights are protected and enforced” (xii). The phrasing of this observation gets to the heart of the matter in that the passage of the rights in law, if we agree with Deleuze and Guattari, guarantees nothing without an accompanying schizo-desire that would desire to protect the community. To further extend these rights to animals, then, without thinking desire differently toward a postcolonial desire does little to protect them or the locations where they dwell. Where the recognition of rights is important in a legal sense, poor conditions obviously still persist for many of those who are now extended rights in South Africa. For example, the poor conditions for miners which led to the strikes at many mines, including the Marikana platinum mine in August 2012 where several strikers were shot by the police, are evidence that the putting in place of human rights has not guaranteed the protection of South Africans formerly left outside the law’s protection during apartheid. Deterritorializing and decolonizing desire is a necessary part of any approach to protecting the inhabitants, human and non-human, of South Africa.

The law “manifestly lacks balls” (260), as Gerhard puts it in The Reluctant Passenger in his summary of Luc’s description of the law as a “eunuch.” Michelè Pickover reveals evidence of this powerlessness of the law throughout Animal Rights in noting the complicity of the law with corporate interests. She explains how in many animal protection issues such as vivisection, factory farming, the trade in wild animals, and conservation, the government officials who oversee and make laws protecting animals are often also involved with the corporations; or indeed in many cases, such as factory farming, corporations are often left to follow the laws on their own, without any oversight. For example, she writes: “The South African government either lacks the political will or the resources to police and regulate the industry” of trophy hunting, and she notes that “[t]he truth is that trophy hunting promotes a culture of violence and guns. This is in direct opposition to the needs of South African society, which is desperately trying to free itself from its violent past” (48). She also describes how this instrumentalization of animals continues in an apartheid legacy: “Wild animals were exploited to fund the apartheid war, the secret agencies, the Special Forces and the individuals connected to them. It is no secret that the Nationalist government and its military machinery were involved in the illegal trade in ivory” (51). These
obvious conflicts of interest in the form of a desire to extract a maximum profit from animal bodies and being charged with the task to protect them speaks to the many ways in which the law is compromised through its colonization by capitalist desire. As Pickover’s reporting on the exploitation of bodies during apartheid reveals, authorities often acknowledge or disavow the rights of others and choose to administer the law as it suits their agendas and financial interests. This problem—that the access to rights and to the protections of the law are made to depend on those administering it (perhaps best described in Kafka’s “Before the Law” with the countryman seeking access to the law from the doorkeeper)—was most obvious during the apartheid regime with the passing of laws denying the rights of black South Africans. In the context of this discussion of the law being colonized by capitalist desire, perhaps the most pertinent of these laws limiting the rights of black South Africans were those acts which prevented or hindered these communities from acquiring decent paying jobs, ensuring that the white community would benefit financially. In *The Reluctant Passenger*, the villainous Judge Conroy describes these financial benefits of apartheid to Morris upon telling him of his former plan to hand over the fortune he collected from corrupt dealings as a lawyer: “You no doubt imagine yourself too morally fastidious to benefit by money derived from an evil regime. I need hardly point out that for decades every white South African to a greater or lesser degree benefited by the policies and practices of that regime” (404). Heyns’ and Mda’s novels shed light on many of these problems as they portray the corruption that informs environmental rulings: *The Heart of Redness* describes the conflict of interests of the government official deciding on the development project for Qolorha by the Sea; Heyns’ novel in particular describes the government’s collusion in the abuse of baboons in vivisection.

To return briefly to Mda’s *The Mother of All Eating*, discussed in Chap. 4, it is the messenger’s desire which takes off on a line of flight and threatens the power and privilege exercised by THE MAN and his fellow government’s officials, who are colonized by the reterritorialized desire of capitalism. THE MAN’s attempt to stop the messenger’s revolutionary behavior, which I’ve referred to in Chap. 2, acknowledges the way in which capitalism colonizes desire:

The people don’t have any leadership that will create a critical awareness in them, that will open their eyes. Whenever new leadership emerges, even
if it begins as honest leadership, it is swallowed by the culture of eating, and becomes one with it [...] The people are doomed to ... [an obvious kick, and a scream] Okay, Okay, I admit ... it will take a very small thing to spark action in them, and to arouse them to an anger that has not been seen before. (35)

THE MAN tries to quell the messenger’s revolutionary desire by attempting to convince him that his behavior and the position of the people is one of impotence, as is the case for humans in relation to the gods in Oedipus. His descriptions of the people as “blind” recall the “blindspots” of Plumwood’s discussion of what happens as a result of the colonizing force of reason, and his observation that “honest” leadership may be colonized by the culture of eating confirms her argument about the colonization of political systems as well. After experiencing the violent kick from the messenger, however, THE MAN acknowledges that the desire of the people is what he lives in fear of as it resists his easy management and control. Indeed, it is what is threatening his life at this point in the play as the messenger refuses his bribes, and he fears that this desire has the potential to change the state of affairs, threatening to unseat and remove all the corrupt officials who “eat” the community.

**Desire in The Reluctant Passenger**

South African author Michiel Heyns, whose Lost Ground won him the Sunday Times Fiction Prize in 2012, has also received accolades for his translations of South African literary criticism and literature from Afrikaans into English, such as Marlene Van Niekerk’s Agaat. He also currently maintains a blog entitled Books and Dogs, where he writes often about his dog Simon and dogs in literature (“Michiel Heyns”). Heyns has written previously about the potential of affect to challenge and threaten the cool reason often exercised in the violent treatment of animals and others in his earlier novel, The Children’s Day (2002). His second novel, The Reluctant Passenger (2003), features a white South African middle-class environmental lawyer, Nick Morris, who takes on a case for Luc Tomlinson and a troop of baboons. The subjects of law, rights, and desire discussed earlier come into focus in the story as the protagonist becomes more involved in the case for the baboons. At the beginning of the novel, Morris detests the unmasterable and disorderly aspects of himself and the environment. Heyns’ offers a critique
of reason and mastery as Morris is frustrated by any disorganization or things that don’t adhere to the norms of human rationality or reason. For example, Morris wishes he was an accountant as he originally planned, where the world is neatly divided and ordered into columns of debits and credits. He also resents his neighbor’s dog, who shits on his lawn, and he chooses to live a celibate life with his girlfriend so he won’t have to deal with the messiness of sex or love. In an early scene, the dog actually knocks him into a pile of shit as Morris attempts to clean it up to restore cleanliness to his yard. In response, Morris violently wipes the shit all over the dog’s body, viewing animals in a pejorative sense as mere producers of dirt and filth. Morris prefers order and is a perfect employee under capitalism, an ideal manageable subject of capitalist biopolitics, as he is never late, is apolitical, and maintains neatness and order above all else. He makes all attempts to master and control his animality through regimes of culture, and he seeks to avoid encounters with his own non-human life or \textit{zoe} (including his desires), as well as encounters with non-humans and the nonhuman world. In addition, his concerns for the neatness of his lawn and property cause him, rather comically, to forget to vote in the 1994 democratic elections. Almost all of his life is ordered and he attempts to master or control it completely. As Braidotti says of the dominant understanding of consciousness, he lives in fear of \textit{zoe}:

\begin{quote}
Relentlessly vital, \textit{zoe} is endowed with endurance and resilience … \textit{Zoe} carries on regardless: it is radically immanent. Consciousness attempts to contain it, but actually lives in fear of it. Such a life force is experienced as threatening by a mind that fears the loss of control. (\textit{Nomadic Subjects} 110)
\end{quote}

He also lives a rather sedentary lifestyle alone in a large house in a gated community, and he seems to have little life or connection to the world outside of working, with the exception of meeting his one friend, Gerhard, an openly homosexual fellow lawyer who embraces \textit{zoe} by, for example, discussing his sexual encounters and desires openly, engaging in sexual acts in public, and often being late for meetings and work for love-related and other reasons.

The novel centers on a case Morris takes up when a kind of hippie wild-man character, who turns out to be the wealthy Luc Tomlinson, comes into his office asking him to take his case to protect the baboons and the private reserve where he lives with them. In \textit{Animal Rights in South Africa}, Michèlè Pickover begins with a striking story about a
baboon who worked for the railroad, and as a service animal for a disabled railway man, to counter the negative view of baboons and their limited protections in the law:

In most provinces in South Africa baboons are classified as vermin or ‘problem animals’. Taking advantage of this status, in 1999 several businessmen devised a plan to build a slaughterhouse in Limpopo province to kill wild-caught baboons by electric shock and then process them into salami, polony, and tinned meat for consumption in Central Africa and Eastern Europe. Baboon body parts, such as hands, teeth, and tails, would be exported to Asia as aphrodisiacs. (2)

The baboons in Heyns’ novel are classified in a similar violent, disposable status and therefore Luc and Nick’s initial attempts to protect them through legal means are fruitless. Luc’s father threatens to build a resort at the reserve partly because it is a business venture and he is a capitalist, and partly because of a long family feud. Where Nick Morris initially wants nothing to do with the case, his friend Gerhard encourages him to be less reserved and to experience more of the uncertain, unpredictable, and non-normative aspects of life, like the dirty, unkempt Luc and the baboons. As the novel unfolds, the protagonist learns about himself as he learns more about baboons, appraising them as a worthy case, suggesting the interconnectivity of a positive appraisal of the non-humanness of subjectivity and of the non-human world. As he embraces \textit{zoe} as a positive passion, instead of a negative one which disrupts his orderly world of progress as he had before, he comes to value the complexities of the world in its open-ended becoming. He moves from being someone who fails to ever examine his own sexual feelings for the sake of order and not wanting to be inconvenienced by them, and who detests the disorder and dirt that animals bring into his life, like his neighbors’ dog, to a person who finds himself having sex with his client, Luc, in his home while the troop of baboons they’ve saved from a vivisection lab tear apart his furniture and cause havoc to the upstairs of his house.

The novel’s title and image on the cover, explained in the first pages, offers a suggestive description of \textit{zoe}. Morris describes:

I once saw a man transporting his Rottweiler in a shopping trolley through a No Dogs Allowed area: the beast was clearly well trained, and stayed put, but you could see that all it really wanted to do was chew the wheels off all the trolleys in the universe. (11)
This image emphasizes the *zoe* of the animal and how it is maintained in consumerist culture or oedipalized for the benefits of human shoppers—the dog is thus a reluctant passenger. As Braidotti writes, challenging the idea that dogs are only dirty, “[d]ogs are not only messy, but also openly sexual. They unleash a reservoir of images for sexual explicitness and even aggression, as well as unbridled freedom: they are a vehicle for *zoe*” (104). Like the dog in Morris’ story, he himself is also reluctant as he somewhat hesitantly moves in the other direction from a *bios*-centred life to embrace *zoe*: at first, he is discomforted and bothered by the presence of Luc and the thought of taking on the case for the baboons. As Morris ends up exploring his sexual desires with Luc Tomlinson, he recognizes that the messiness of life which is part of his own subjectivity, or the *zoe* which flows through him, is connected to this non-human force of life in animals. He adopts a view of life and of the subject that correlates with ecofeminism “which asserts the fundamental interconnectedness of all life … [and which] offers an … ecological ethical theory for women and men who do not operate on the basis of a self-other disjunction” (2–3). He begins to care for the baboons, Luc, and his neighbors’ dog, which he formerly detested, when they plan to euthanize the dog because they are leaving for Australia and no longer have a use for it, like the guard dogs in *Disgrace*, to protect their property.

*The Reluctant Passenger* reveals throughout the legal case for the baboons and through the behavior of various judges, lawyers, and government officials that the workings of the law are really the workings of desire. For example, we learn that Luc desires protection of the baboons, and the protagonist, Morris, begins to care for the case at first because he desires Luc as the narrative later confirms. And it is Gerhard’s embracing of *zoe* and his encouraging of the protagonist to take pleasure in the world in its becoming that leads him to take on the legal case for the baboons. In other words, Morris doesn’t take on the case at first because he legally has to—the law doesn’t require that he accept the case or that the baboons be protected, and indeed he appraises it as not much of a case at first. Yet his desire, which is before thought, compels him to venture out to the preserve to meet Luc and the baboons.

Further evidence of the law actually being desire is the revelation toward the novel’s end that the authoritative figure Judge Conroy has been controlling most of the plot through underhanded deals, bribes, and so on—many of the same tactics that he and other judges used during the apartheid regime. Having lost the woman he loved, Joyce
Tomlinson, to the wealthy Brick Tomlinson, Luc’s father, while living a modest life to complete his law degree, Conroy spends the rest of his life seeking revenge for the lack of consummation of his desire for Joyce. We learn that he manipulates Brick to propose the business development of the baboon’s land, persuades Luc to seek out legal recourse to protect the reserve, and controls many of the other events of the plot. As he tells the protagonist of his manipulations, Nick queries: “So even in the capacity of puppet I was not indispensible?” (403). As Conroy’s actions reveal, he disposes of others consistently through his authority as judge for his own profit and to exact his private revenge.

As these behaviors bear out, what appear to be the workings of the law are actually the workings of desire. Another example of this occurs in the resignation of the Director of Nature Conservation and Development as he does so because he’s blackmailed with the threat that his affair with his secretary will be revealed to his wife if he doesn’t resign. Thus the regulation of desire that pertains to the family is exploited here as capitalist desire attempts to reterritorialize the director’s desire to protect the animals and environment. Deleuze and Guattari explain that

> [t]hese two coexistent states of desire are the two states of the law. On the one hand, there is the paranoiac transcendental law that never stops agitating a finite segment and making it into a completed object, crystallizing all over the place. On the other hand, there is the immanent schizo-law that functions like justice, an antilaw, a ‘procedure’ that will dismantle all the assemblages of the paranoiac law … To dismantle a machinic assemblage is to create and effectively take a line of escape that the becoming-animal could neither take nor create. (Kafka 59–60)

Thus the attempt to control or limit desires, to force people into dominant subjectivities and fit the world nicely into concepts or categories, becomes a paranoiac attempt to limit schizo-law. This desire to master the world is also something Jane Bennet challenges via Adorno’s critique in his “negative dialectics,” where he theorizes that violent behavior results from the frustration that humans experience when the world does not fit their concepts (14). Conroy’s behavior and description of his motivations confirm his paranoid and narcissistic attempts to reterritorialize desire via his position as authority and arbiter of the law. Especially interesting here also is that like her son Luc, Joyce Tomlinson is closer
to zoe in her embracing of desires as she often promotes Luc’s free-spiritedness. In contrast, Conroy is colonized by Oedipus, which defines his desire as lack in that his life is devoted to filling the lack created by Joyce’s marriage to Brick, and to a lesser extent his desire to acquire wealth for the manipulation of others. Conroy acquires wealth mostly for the purpose of attempting to separate Joyce and Brick. Joyce, however, largely disregards capitalism’s lure as it seems she loves Brick for himself, not for his finances. Of course, Brick’s extreme adoption of capitalist logic leads him to view the baboons and their land as an opportunity for profit, and, anticipating this behavior, Conroy manipulates him into the business venture. The novel thus points to the precarious biopolitical situation for those seeking protection from the law when its arbiters are colonized by capitalist desire. In other words, Conroy’s lack of Joyce in his life and his use of his position to accumulate wealth jeopardizes the protection and futures of South African communities, making “disposable” those his position was created to protect. The desires of Luc, Morris, and the other characters who assemble to save the baboons, however, work to challenge these capitalist and narcissistic desires outside of the limitations of the law.

As the novel reveals towards the end, Conroy occupies a god-like position in his manipulation of the plot. His desire for mastery suggests an extreme form of the kind of control and disgust for vagueness and untidiness that the protagonist exhibited earlier in the novel. As the protagonist and Conroy approach a relationship of mentor and mentee, Heyns positions the development of the protagonist’s character as dependent on his relationship to desire or zoe. At one end of the spectrum, the side of transcendental law, sits Conroy, whereas Nick’s best friend and fellow lawyer, Gerhard, embodies “immanent schizo-law” or desire and zoe as positive. Conroy describes his frustration with the failure of his plan, that even after rendering Brick to a state of poverty he still has not separated Joyce from Brick, blaming this on the incalculable nature of humans: “[A]gain I failed to take into account the inconsistency of human beings. Joyce … was moved by his destitution to side with him” (404). Joyce’s exceeding the mastery of Conroy’s control suggests the ungovernability of Foucault’s Homo oeconomicus from The Birth of Biopolitics, as Cary Wolfe describes:

In opposition to what Foucault calls homo juridicus (or homo legalis)—the subject of law, rights, and sovereignty—we find in this new subject,
homo oeconomicus, “an essentially and unconditionally irreducible element against any possible government,” a “zone that is definitively inaccessible to any government action,” “an atom of freedom in the face of all the conditions, undertakings, legislation, and prohibitions of a possible government.” “The subject of interest,” Foucault writes, thus “constantly overflows the subject of right. He is therefore irreducible to the subject of right. He is not absorbed by him.” (Before the Law 23)

Conroy thought he could control her, assuming that she loved her husband for his money, that she was colonized by capitalist desire, but she desires her husband for himself. Even from his position of authority in the law, Conroy cannot master Joyce’s desire or tame it to direct it toward himself. The protagonist, Morris, also presents challenges to power and government that pertain to Foucault’s Homo oeconomicus as he has broken numerous laws and no longer attempts to master his own desires.

In addition, Conroy offers in this scene his desire for an oedipal relation to the protagonist based on their similar orderliness and strict discipline:

As you know, I had been taken with your dissertation some years ago … and now, I thought … you could take the place of the son I never had … You reminded me of myself at your age: ascetic, high-principled, civilised … For the first time my sterile obsession with avenging myself on the world for what I had missed yielded to a vision of what I might yet have. (404)

Here, Conroy’s knowledge of the protagonist’s homosexual act with Luc upsets his oedipal ambitions of fatherhood. More specifically, Morris’ acting on his sexual desires with Luc caused him to miss his appointment with Conroy—the first time the protagonist ever missed or was late for an appointment—frustrating Conroy’s ambitions of mastery. Frida Beckman’s discussion of homosexuality in Deleuze’s thought acknowledges how in addition to non-human sexuality, “[a]nother way of exploding the anthropomorphic, heterosexual, familial, and Oedipal organisations of sexuality is found in homosexuality” (16). She continues explaining that “[h]omosexuality, as Verena Andermatt Conley notes, is seen here not as an identity, but as a becoming” (16). Morris’ now positive appraisal of desire, which also motivates his protection of the baboons (who express sexual desire themselves), therefore enables the freedom from Conroy’s complete mastery of most of the characters in
the novel from his position as an authority of the law. Morris embraces his homosexual desires, instead of repressing or avoiding desire as he does at the beginning of the novel, in a way that enables a becoming away from the fixed identity of the subject of rights or the subject of capitalism that Conroy might have otherwise mastered.

Conroy’s description of his ideal new society built on “wisdom of authority” also includes biopower in the form of “death squads” (404), biopower being that which Foucault argues derives from a desire to govern and control *Homo oeconomicus*. Indeed, Conroy describes his position of mastery here in a way that confirms his paranoid attempts to maintain and control desire. After suggesting that he wasn’t trying to get Joyce back, he comments:

> What I resolved to do was to achieve mastery over myself and others, partly through self-control, partly through control of them. And whereas control of the self is a matter of discipline, control of others is a matter of money. Of this, as I have remarked, I soon had large sums, thanks to my contacts in countries officially hostile to South Africa. (401)

Here, Conroy confirms the manipulation of his position of authority to exact his revenge, and along the way treating others, the land, and indeed the country of South Africa as disposable in service to exercising his personal grievances. In short, he adopts a relation to others of “eating,” as discussed in Chap. 4. While early on in the novel the protagonist, like Conroy, attempts to live an exceedingly controlled and ordered lifestyle (and this is in large part why Conroy views him as an ideal candidate for his mentorship), his embracing of *zoe*, perhaps especially his embracing of his homosexual desire, frustrates the mastery and control of Conroy’s plan. The protagonist’s decision to embrace *zoe* as positive then becomes revolutionary as it creates a line of escape from the mastery and instrumentalization of the humans, animals, and environment of South Africa exhibited in the apartheid regime’s practices.

### Baboons Before the Law

At one point in Heyns’ novel, after the baboons have been stolen from their home, Luc Tomlinson appears at Morris’ office to discuss the legal case for saving the baboons and their land from his father’s business plans to set up a luxury resort there at Cape Point. The conversation that
the characters engage in about the legal status of the baboons reveals the problems that the law has in deciding on the status of animals, an issue Fontenay discusses in her chapter entitled “Between Possessions and Persons.” Luc expresses his desire to get a “court order” (259) for the baboons, to which Morris responds: “Before I can get a court order I need to establish that somebody’s rights are being infringed” (259). Luc argues that it is obvious that the “chacs” (Chacma baboons’) rights aren’t being respected, noting how they’ve been taken away for medical testing and vivisection, an issue I’ll return to later. The protagonist replies: “The rights of animals are a much debated area in law” (259). At this, Luc replies angrily at Morris: “I’m not interested in any fucking debate. Anybody who isn’t unbelievably stupid or dishonest knows what we’re doing to the animals … it just suits us to come up with debates. The law is … .” Morris attempts to finish Luc’s sentence, offering “An ass?”, to which Luc replies: “I was thinking of something more useless, like a … a eunuch” (259). Their conversation about the law continues, describing how the law protects only certain people through their metaphor of eunuchs as Morris remarks, “They guard the Sultan’s harem,” and Luc replies: “Yeah. Great if you’re the Sultan, not so great if you’re not” (259). The discussion of the law in terms of eunuchs and harems continues to develop the theme of sexuality in the novel, and also points to the exclusionary nature of the law, as it only protects those who are considered as belonging to the community. The discussion of the harem and the sultan also perhaps highlights the discriminatory nature of the law’s privileging some and excluding others.

The protagonist attempts to end the conversation about the law and what can be done for the stolen baboons in a way that suggests he’s exhausted all available avenues to help them. He remarks: “Well … for better or for worse, the law, for all its shortcomings, is all we have to help us here” (259). Such a position, that we can only work within legal discourse to improve the state of affairs for animals, greatly limits the political potential for addressing the problems facing them. As Wendy Brown and Janet Halley suggest, “rights cannot be fully saturated with the aims that animate their deployment … they retain a certain formality and emptiness which allow them to be deployed and redeployed by different political contestants” (9). In this sense, the affect and enthusiasm for protecting gets cut short when rights are viewed as the only avenue of intervention. Brown and Halley further explain the potential of critical theory for considering opportunities for politics and justice outside of
legalistic frameworks, which the characters in *Reluctant Passenger* eventually take up in seeking extralegal, creative approaches: “[C]ritique [in contrast to legalism] hazards the opening of new modalities of thought and political possibility” (28). Where the protagonist, who lives most of his life according to society’s normative rules, who lives extremely discursively or “by the book” as it were, seems to be giving up on the case for the baboons when they reach a dead end legally, his friend Gerhard intervenes, responding to Morris’ claim that the law is all we have: “Not necessarily” (259). Gerhard continues critiquing the lack of power that pertains to the law: “But where, as Mr. Tomlinson has pointed out, the law so manifestly lacks balls, we may have to rely on our own … devices for a remedy” (260). The characters’ desires for one another—Gerhard is sexually attracted to Luc, flirting with him, and, as the consummation of Luc and Morris’ relationship bears out later, they desire each other as well—and for the baboons, especially Luc’s, result in their hatching a plan to save the baboons, outside the parameters of the law.

As a lawyer for Luc and the baboons, Morris employs some blackmailing of his own to win the case for the baboons and the preserved land, with the help of a fellow lawyer and her husband, and the rest of the group which have rallied round the cause, including Gerhard, Morris’ former girlfriend, and others. As a result they are able also to reinstate Mr. Haartshorn, the original Director of Nature Conservation and Development, who testified in the case that he was blackmailed with evidence of his extramarital affair and bribed into resigning after writing a report denying Brick Tomlinson’s business proposal for the land under question. Morris and his team also use some compromising pictures of Minister Stanford from what are revealed to be sex parties for ministers during the apartheid regime, which involved their raping of young men in military uniforms at a building in Rocklands, the preserve of the baboons (163). The photos were given to Morris by Joyce Tomlinson, and later we learn, at the recommendation of Judge Conroy, to influence the minister’s testimony so that he confesses that Haartshorn gave him the report denying development prior to resigning. The trial results in Haartshorn unseating the man who, in the old regime’s pocket, replaced him and approved the proposal. For Conroy, this is a victory because it caused a large financial loss for Brick Tomlinson by preventing the development of the land. However, the baboons are still rendered unprotected after the ruling as they are stolen and taken to the vivisection laboratory, and bulldozers appear at the
nature preserve. Thus even the legal ruling that uncovers the corruption and decides in favor of the baboons cannot protect them from the extralegal means of the capitalist desire to dispose of and turn a profit from them and their land. Heyns portrays in Morris a character who transforms his negative feelings about sexuality and animality into positive passions to work for the protection of the baboons, even outside the realm of the law.

How do we think outside of dominant thought and beyond its closures? When faced with the limits of law, the characters’ desires compel them to think differently. Braidotti explains that Deleuze and Irigaray bank on the affective as a force capable of freeing us from hegemonic habits of thinking. Affectivity in this scheme stands for the preconscious and the prediscursive: desire is not only unconscious but remains noughted at the very heart of our thought because it is what sustains the very activity of thinking. Our desires are that which evades us, in the very act of propelling us forth. (Nomadic Subjects 40)

Thus desire and affectivity enable Gerhard, Luc, and Nick to think differently, outside the parameters of the law, to devise a plan to protect the baboons. Woodward argues about Luc’s appeals for the rights of baboons throughout the narrative that “Luc coaxes the reader to accept the concept of baboons as ‘creature[s] … of moral standing’ within modernity, to refer back to Nussbaum’s argument” (78). She further concludes her chapter on baboons by noting that “the moral agency of baboons … has not been acknowledged by the South African constitution, which does not incorporate the subjectivity or even sentience of nonhuman animals” (90).

While Heyns’ novel certainly points to the lack of legal status for baboons, The Reluctant Passenger in my view more strongly argues that it is necessary to think beyond the law, and acknowledges the role that desire can play in this thinking differently. That is, by acting on their desires for the baboons’ protection, and for Nick Morris by embracing zoe as positive instead of attempting to master it in a negative relation, these characters ensure the protection of the baboons that the law cannot always guarantee. As Talal Asad argues in “What Do Human Rights Do? An Anthropological Inquiry,” rights do not always guarantee the protections they describe. He argues:
Human rights discourse may not ... always be the best way (and it is certainly not the only way) to help remove oppression and relieve suffering among human animals, as well as non-human animals, or to preserve the world's natural and cultural inheritance. Working in hospices, providing comfort for the traumatized, the sick, the destitute, helping to rejuvenate depressed neighborhoods, are among the activities that help to relieve human suffering. Such commitments remain outside the imperative of the law. (51)

In light of Heyns' novel, we might add rescuing baboons from vivisection and hiding them in one’s house to Asad’s list of the ways we can protect and prevent the suffering of non-human animals. Although *The Reluctant Passenger* focuses on the life of an environmental lawyer, it emphasizes that we have creative options for responding to animals outside of legal means, options that exist “outside the imperative of the law” (Asad).

As I’ve discussed in previous chapters, desire works across species boundaries, and again in *The Reluctant Passenger* an animal’s desire and a human’s desire for animals leads to the protection of the animals and their habitat. After Nick and the Adonis-like Luc Tomlinson walk naked with no deodorant on to meet the baboons (so as not to scare them off), Petrus, the alpha male Chacma baboon, takes a sexual interest in the protagonist: “‘Bloody amazing,’ said Luc, almost admiringly. ‘You must have really potent pheromones.’ He added with an unconvincing affectation of concern, ‘I’m afraid he wants to fuck you.’” (84). As his attentions turn to another baboon, Petrus does not consummate the sexual exchange in what would surely be his domination of Morris, who fears Petrus’ great strength and doesn’t want to engage in sex with a non-human animal, but the sexual arousal that the protagonist and his pheromones caused in Petrus turns out to be the reason that Luc, the self-proclaimed friend of the baboons, initially finds the protagonist attractive sexually as well. The passage in Heyns’ novel suggests the transversal nature of desire as it works across species and indicates the role that pheromones might play in sexual attraction. Like the desires that involve Lahnee O, Minke, and Corsicana in *Tanuki Ichiban*, and the Whale Caller and Sharisha in *The Whale Caller*, here again animals’ desire and humans’ desire for animals ensures the protection of the animals. The desire that arises out of assemblages (and not transcendental law) enables justice: “Transcendent and reified, seized by symbolical or
allegorical exegeses, it [the abstract machine] opposes the real assemblages that are worth nothing except in themselves and that operate in an unlimited field of immanence—a field of justice as against the construction of the law” (Deleuze and Guattari 87). Thus the law is not the house of justice; instead, justice dwells in the potential of desire that results from the immanence of our bodies and relations to others in assemblage. Of importance here is that this assemblage includes “black” South Africans as well in the figure of Nick’s colleague and her husband Mhlobo, who works at the Mail & Guardian and who supports the case for the baboons as he helps to discover the underhanded deals of the government officials. This environmentalism of the novel is therefore not a “white” or colonial conservationism but a postcolonial ecocriticism that benefits the larger community of South Africa. Heyns’ novel portrays how the desires of an assemblage of human and non-human actors works against the mastery and control of dominant logics—a postcolonial desire that presents lines of flight out of the paranoid and narcissistic managements of the law and against the “eating” or instrumentalization of the community.

Gerhard’s plan to retrieve the baboons from the vivisection ward demonstrates the creative potential of desire to work for the protection of others beyond the realm of the law. The group learns that the evil former apartheid government scientist now turned scientist for a corporate interest, colonel and doctor Johanna van der Merwe, performs vivisection on the baboons and also has a project of “rehabilitating” homosexuals to heterosexuality. Pickover also highlights the horrifying fact that this testing on animals was done often to develop drugs and chemical weapons to dispose of and control those humans who opposed the apartheid government, and Woodward notes this from Pickover’s work as well. Pickover explains that this information came out in the TRC hearings as she quotes Dumisa Ntsebesa who chaired them:

When animals are being used by scientists for experiments to manufacture chemical and biological weapons, then society should condemn such experimentation in the strongest terms … Even more alarming is the fact that the people who were using their research skills and knowledge to manufacture murder weapons, were people in white coats with stethoscopes hanging out of their pockets. These people are normally associated with preservation of life. That is the most repulsive feature of the evidence that has come before us. (133)
Ntsebeza’s response to learning of the vivisection and the creation of weapons to destroy humans speaks to the biopolitics involved in this case as he notes that those who are supposed to aid in maintaining life end up being the administrators of death.

In response to van der Merwe’s two projects, which render animals and non-dominant sexual desires (which upset her normative visions of the human and white nationalism) disposable to the control and mastery of science for the profit or benefit of the corporation and a particular vision of the nation-state, Gerhard devises a plan to distract her by offering himself up as a victim for her experiments so that the other members of the assemblage might sneak into steal the baboons away. In offering his body, Gerhard renders himself vulnerable and lets himself be “eaten” by the state, sacrificing his body in exchange for the protection of the baboons. Gerhard explains that van der Merwe “was a Medical Officer in the South African Defence Force” and during that time she “was in charge of some highly controversial experiments” (268). After Mhlobo informs Nick about van der Merwe’s horrifying science experiments, and creation of drugs and weapons to harm the black community, Nick meets van der Merwe, dubbed “The Black Widow,” in a gay bar to set up the appointment where Gerhard will be “rehabilitated.” Van der Merwe expresses her views on sexuality here in a way that confirms her attempts to limit desire and to exercise biopolitical control over the South African population: “[I]n terms of all three of these paradigms [science, her womanhood, and Christianity] the function of the human species is to procreate itself responsibly” (288). She continues offering here a speciesist perspective: “I believe, of course, that as the Bible tells us, we have been instructed and empowered to rule over creation. The human being is the crown of creation, and as such is entitled to use the rest of creation for his benefit—within certain limits, of course” (289). Such a view of animals confirms religion’s role in attempting to separate humans and animals, something I’ve also discussed as it is portrayed in *The Whale Caller*.

Van der Merwe continues to explain her convoluted arguments, at times insisting on the “naturality” of her positions while at other points explaining the need for science to correct nature after the Fall of Man. Immediately prior to Nick’s meeting with the Black Widow, Mhlobo informed him that one of the scientist’s projects was to sneak birth control into foods that black South Africans commonly eat as a way to
control their populations. Here van der Merwe explains her position after Nick queries: “Isn’t breeding natural?” (290). She replies:

It’s natural only in the sense that the procreation of rabbits and chickens is natural. Nature in that sense is an accident, without plan or purpose. That is the creation over which the Lord gave us dominion. The higher nature is guided by divine wisdom as manifested through science and technology, and informed by a sense of individual and national identity.

Here van der Merwe clearly dehumanizes black South Africans given that her eugenic project to control the population’s sexual reproduction is discussed in terms of rabbits and chickens in this case, and she thereby establishes a hierarchy where whites are superior to black South Africans. As the conversation turns to her project of making gay men straight, she explains that she takes it as her calling “To tell them what they should be, and to help them assume their rightful identities” (291). Such a perspective demonstrates an attempt to control desire and subjectivity, limiting sexuality to only normative and procreative practices that might benefit the state in a fantasy of white nationalism. Thus human and animal sexualities—these desires—threaten her biopolitical ambitions and ideal vision of the nation. As it turns out, van der Merwe, in a sense, rapes Gerhard “in the interests of science and the nation” by using a probe on him that was used to give baboons erections to extract their semen for use in experiments to develop birth control for the black population.

Gerhard’s risking of his life, body, and perhaps sexual orientation for the baboons demonstrates a personal sacrifice that results from his desire for their protection. We learn later that the “reorientation” is unsuccessful as he admits having sex with his lover, Clive, directly after the experiment, and perhaps Gerhard is not as distressed from the experience with the Black Widow as one might assume as he seems to view it as a challenge. As the assemblage of people risk their lives and well-being for the baboons, it’s clear that they’ve gone well beyond the law to ensure the animals’ protection. In addition, Nick’s development of character emphasizes the novel’s perspective that embracing zoe and desire as positive is a necessary intervention toward the protection of communities. No longer the solitary, sedentary, order-loving, manageable subject of complicit consumerism and model capitalist laborer, Morris becomes political. He deals with the complexities and un governable aspects of life,
including his sexuality, and multiplies his attachments around a common goal of a sustainable future, not just for the environment and baboons, but also toward social reforms of the legal system through removing those “eaters” of the country from their positions of authority in the government—sustainable futures for the social conditions of South Africa.

**Development in *The Heart of Redness***

Like Morris and the assemblage of characters who work against the business proposal to “develop” the land and remove the baboons from their home in *The Reluctant Passenger*, Camagu, the outsider to the village of Qolorha-by-Sea and protagonist of Zakes Mda’s *The Heart of Redness* (2000), works to protect the community and environment of the village. Mda also won the *Sunday Times* Fiction Prize for this novel, which describes how Camagu and many of the other villagers, especially Qukezwa, argue against the gambling city that is proposed to develop the small village he has recently made his home and come to love. Offering a more sustainable alternative to the tourist town, Camagu expresses his opinion, which he learns from Qukezwa, that the town developed by outside businesses will offer little work or profit for the townspeople and be detrimental to their environment. As in *The Reluctant Passenger*, the association of big business with the law is revealed as the developers’ attempt to intimidate the villagers’ opposition with claims of their connections to the government: “How will you stop us? The government has already approved this project. I belong to the ruling party. Many important people in the ruling party are directors of this company” (201). Here we see another instance of the political systems that might check the instrumentalization of a community failing as a result of their compromised positions and colonization by a capitalist logic of desire. The audacity with which the developers assert their power demonstrates their impunity as they abuse their positions of authority and elite status in administrating the law: they do not seek to protect the people and animals of the village as the law might happen to prescribe. Instead, the developers use their position of power to secure their personal wealth at the expense of the well-being of the community, continuing a practice of “eating” of the community in viewing it as disposable for their personal gains.
Somewhat similar to *The Reluctant Passenger*, where the character development of the protagonist is situated on a scale of *zoe*—between his embracing its uncertainties in the example of Gerhard and controlling or mastering it in the example of Conroy—Camagu’s character in *The Heart of Redness* also develops in relation to desire. In this case, how he apprehends it as oedipal, capitalist and as a lack or as positive, productive, and ethical is manifested through his thinking about his relationships with women and the environment: whether he sees the casino development’s potential violence to the environment as totally beneficial to the community and views women as existing for his sexual pleasure, or by contrast, taking a more critical position, considers other more positive ways of relating to women and the environment. His interest in relationships with two women of the village indicate his growth as a character as he is at first interested in Bhonco’s daughter, Xoliswa Ximiya: a teacher who no longer lives in the village, fetishizes the US, deplores local traditions, such as the practice of dyeing the face with ochre (“the redness” of the novel’s title), and sees the advancement of the community toward a greater likeness of Western civilization as worth the sacrifice of the environment and animals of the village. As the novel progresses, Camagu finds that he more strongly desires Qukezwa, daughter of Zim, who demonstrates an exceptional knowledge of and intimacy with the environment, the flora and fauna of the village, and local history and traditions. Particularly important here as well is the Believers’ expanded notion of community beyond the “human” that is evidenced in particular characters’ devotions to their horses, Camagu’s refusal to kill the snake of his totem that appears in his bedroom, and especially Zim’s love of and communication with weaverbirds.

In contrast to the developers’ plan, and based on the insight into “development” he learns from Qukezwa, Camagu proposes a smaller measure of a resort built with local materials by the villagers appealing to a different type of tourist who appreciates nature, but not for trophy-hunting purposes. Camagu’s alternative proposal, importantly, does not disregard the fact that the villagers’ lives would benefit from some increase in funds. That is, as I discussed in Chap. 3 by quoting Huggan and Tiffin (20), he is not against “development” in and of itself. Instead, he is against those forms of development that position the developers in a parasitic relation to the environments and communities they develop, where they can better control and manipulate the community through their inclusion into the global capital system. His proposal is certainly
one of development as well. The important difference is that the proposal is developed so as to benefit the community as it values local flora and fauna, knowledge, and labor, rather than devastating it as the capitalist casino and theme park certainly would. The villagers of Qolororha are largely divided into two groups: Believers and Unbelievers. The believers are descendants of the followers of the prophetess Nongqawuse back in the times of the Cattle-Killing Movement in the 1850s. As the novel jumps back and forth from the colonial past to the present, at times seamlessly, colonial and neocolonial themes are developed in relation to the environment and sustainability. The Believers are more traditional in their return to and appraisal of customs of the past and, as espoused by Zim, a prominent Believer, they are against the development of the tourist casino. However to be sure, Mda does not portray these two groups as totally at odds or pure in their difference: the groups are more complex because some of the Unbelievers value the traditions of others and have a mode of believing in unbelief, for example. These divisions along lines of belief, which were exploited by the British colonizers in a divide-and-conquer strategy, offer a critique of the present political divisiveness that becomes a distraction and more about self-interest and pride than working toward a sustainable future and protections for the community.

*The Heart of Redness* emphasizes the variety of temporalities and historical influences experienced in the present of South Africa. As Mbembe explains, “everything happening today is [not] simply a rerun of a scenario …. [T]oday’s shift … is … toward the underground channels” (73). Indeed, we’ve seen this underground market of animal trafficking in *Tanuki Ichiban* in Chap. 4. In this sense, while I’ve gestured throughout the project to how the “new” South Africa continues to be similar to the past violent organizations of society, Mbembe makes clear that the new negative modes of relation and extraction are somewhat different in adopting this underground fashion. Mbembe continues to explain how,

[i]n this intermeshing of temporalities, several processes co-exist; there are processes tending to make peoples view the world in increasingly like ways, and at the same time, processes producing differences and diversities. In short, contradictory dynamics are at work …; it is too easy to reduce these dynamics to simple antagonism between internal and external forces. (73)
This suggestion to avoid oversimplifying the more complex and nuanced interactions of the present organization of society is particularly useful for assessing the dynamics and influences at work in Mda’s novel: his observation that different, diverse perspectives are occurring, as well suggesting ways out of the culture of sameness and the status quo. As I’ve been describing how characters seek extralegal means to protect their communities, The Heart of Redness aligns with Mbembe’s conclusion about the dynamics of the current moment where the state is no longer viewed as “the best instrument “for ensuring the protection and safety of individuals, for creating the legal conditions for the extension of political rights” (73).

The leading Unbeliever, Bhonco, and his daughter view all signs of “development” and “progress” imposed by corporations as beneficial for the future of the village. As evidence of this, Bhonco discontinues some of the adornments of his traditional clothing and begins wearing business-style suits. As Braidotti describes, late capitalism endangers not only biodiversity but also human and cultural diversity:

[Disregard for biodiversity] also threatens cultural diversity by depleting the capital of human knowledge through the devalorization of local knowledge systems and world-views. On top of legitimating theft, these practices also devalue indigenous forms of knowledge, cultural and legal systems. Eurocentric models of scientific rationality and technological development damage human diversity. (53–4)

The plans to make the village of Qolorha by the Sea into a casino would not only render the environment unsustainable but also dominate the culture and non-dominant, indigenous knowledge, such as the ways of fishing and other environmental lessons that the American-educated Camagu is continually learning from the villagers throughout the novel. Alongside this are the high esteem that Bhonco’s daughter holds for the US, the country where Camagu got a degree, only to return for the elections of 1994. Camagu attempts to correct this view of the US as a land of progress by describing the prevalent racism and imperialist practices that he experienced in everyday American life and foreign policy.

In his essay on The Heart of Redness, Byron Caminero-Santangelo argues that the novel positions “cosmopolitan bioregionalism” as a mode of resistance to Western development:
If capitalism in its various phases has made space out of place, stripping away prior signification (deterritorializing) and reshaping in order to facilitate control and exploitation, then the process of imagining or reimagining a “place” entailed by bioregionalism can be one means of countering threats of exploitation, environmental degradation, and disempowerment. (292)

Such a concept perhaps resonates with the idea of “smooth space” discussed earlier as a resistance to striated or mapped-out and managed space of the state. Yet bioregionalism seems to offer a more specific, intimate knowledge of place and may therefore be a concept better suited to resisting the neocolonial power enacted against particular people, flora, and fauna. Its cosmopolitanism challenges the isolationism or “ecoparochialism,” to use Nixon’s term, of some bioregionalisms that adopt a view of place as separate from a broader world, or that ignore the historical and other conditions that are involved in the composition of place as a “process” (296). This cosmopolitanism is especially important in a South African context as it takes note of larger world processes, upsetting particular nationalist imaginaries and their rhetorics of purity that might attempt to deny or elide past violences, histories, occupations of land, and so forth, such as Afrikaner white nationalism in South Africa. As Caminero-Santangelo argues, “[n]otions of purity are debunked in The Heart of Redness not only in respect to identity and culture, but also in terms of the category of nature” (297). A cosmopolitan bioregionalist perspective makes clear how particular rhetorics of purity deployed to claim a place as home or to determine the limits of community are undermined by a broader view of international movements, material processes, relations, and so on.

Marisol de la Cadena’s concept of “indigenous cosmopolitics” presents perhaps an even more apt concept for considering the notions of politics at play in The Heart of Redness, given the emphasis on indigenous knowledge throughout the novel. Much of her writing in her essay about differing worlds and worldviews concerning the prospect of a mining development and its potential devastation of a mountain called Ausangate in the Andes parallels the varied logics and arguments about development in Qolorha in Mda’s novel. For example, Bhonco shows disdain for many traditional practices and knowledges privileging Western development, while Qukezwa and her father Zim have intimate relationships with non-human animals, and great respect for
the environment and the indigenous knowledge of the Xhosa. Like Caminero-Santangelo’s reading, which emphasizes the open-endedness of the novel, its privileging of continued dialogue and its refusal to uphold any one character’s or group’s—believers and unbelievers—perspective as the truth or right view, de la Cadena emphasizes plural perspectives on nature and politics rather than the one universalizing understanding that often elides other ways of knowing. She argues that despite indigenous knowledge that conceives of the “earth-being” (or mountain in non-indigenous parlance) called Ausangate as significantly agentive, there are no guarantees that this knowledge will determine the decision people arrive at regarding the question of development:

Pluriversal politics add a dimension of conflict and they do not have guarantees—ideological or ethnic (cf. Hall 1996). People—indigenous or not, and perhaps ethnically unlabeled—could side with the mine, choosing jobs and money over Ausangate, either because they doubt or even publicly deny its being a willful mountain, or because they are willing to risk its ire for a different living. Ausangate’s willfulness could be defeated in the political process—some would embrace it, others would not—but its being other than a mountain would not be silently denied anymore for a pluriversal politics would be able to recognize the conflict as emerging among partially connected worlds. And although I would not be able to translate myself into Nazario’s ontology, nor know with him that Ausangate’s ire is dangerous, I would side with him because I want what he wants, to be considered on a par with the rest, to denounce the abandonment the state has relegated people like him … to denounce the mining ventures that do not care about local life. (362)

De la Cadena, while situated outside of the world of indigenous knowledge, nonetheless promotes respect for it as she recognizes its potential—in the threat of agency from Ausangate’s ire—to challenge the instrumentalist views of nature offered by Western biopolitics and development rhetoric.

*The Heart of Redness* offers a similar perspective on “earth-being’s” agency through indigenous knowledge that Bhonco and other developers often elide or dismiss as backwards. For example, the Qukezwa who married Twin in the past explains that “we never kill the snake of the spring. If we did, the spring would dry out” (22). Later, in the present of the novel, her namesake tells Camagu about the agency of a specific snake, Gqoloma, who lives in the prophet Nongqawuse’s pool: “When it
pays a visit ... moving from the pool at the Gxarha River to another pool
at the Qolorha River ... it causes havoc in its wake, like a tornado. It
destroyes houses. It uproots trees” (152). Camagu also respects his peo-
ple’s customs when he prevents hotel workers from killing the snake that
appears in his room because it is his totem. In contrast, Xoliswa, who
adopts Western knowledge as universal, dismisses indigenous knowledge
as nonsense: “What can we say about a man who believes in a snake?”
(161). Earlier her father Bhonco and others too dismiss the Believer’s
respect for indigenous trees and animals as “foolish” and “madness,” and
takes a homogenous view of nature in suggesting that native trees could
easily be replaced with “civilized trees” (146–7). The Heart of Redness’s
indigenous cosmopolitics positions indigenous knowledge as frustrating
Bhonco’s attempt to deploy as a universal a Western definition of politics
as reserved exclusively for humans and his attempts to uphold a human/
nature binary. The “animist materialism,” Harry Garuba’s phrase,
expressed in characters’ spiritual views of these flora and fauna suggests
a mode of resisting their instrumentalization. Where Bhonco reads them
as lacking in use value—“these plants are of no use at all to the people.
They are good neither as wood nor as food” (93)—Qukezwa and other
characters’ animism values the animals and plants on their own accord.
As Garuba argues of animism, “objects thus acquire a social and spiritual
meaning within the culture far in excess of their natural properties and
their use value” (267). The reading of desire in the novel offered here
aligns with cosmopolitan bioregionalism, animism, and indigenous cos-
mopolitics. Where cosmopolitan bioregionalism offers a notion of place
as process rather than defined space, this project focuses on challenging
the defining or limiting views of subjectivity, desire, and other concepts
that are also more processual. Indigenous cosmopolitics emphasizes
“non-representational affect” as key to its expanded notion of politics;
thorizing desire, as one mode of affect, as a political potential to resist
such exploitation coincides with these other concepts’ emphasis on place
and indigenous knowledge as modes of resistance.

**Camagu’s Desire and Qukezwa’s Ecofeminism**

The ethics of sustainability that informs Camagu’s development of a
cooperative calls into question the capitalist notions of Western develop-
ment. He discusses his cooperative with Dalton, the trade store owner:
His description confirms that his motive is “not for profit” but for creating more positive passions, more joyful lives for the villagers than the current work some of the villagers perform as workers in the mines, service workers at hotels, and the potential jobs that would come from the casino. The narrator describes these workers as receiving racist treatment at the hands of white tourists and also receiving poor wages. Camagu makes his opinion of the casino proposal as an unsustainable option clear at one of the meetings the villagers have with the developers. “It is of national importance only to your company and shareholders, not to these people!” he yells. “Jobs? Bah! They will lose more than they will gain from jobs. I tell you, people of Qolorha, these visitors are interested only in profits for their company. This sea will no longer belong to you. You will have to pay to use it” (200). Part of the loss from these new jobs will include the devaluing of local customs, knowledge, and labor, and the inclusion of the work done by villagers into the economy of exchange in capitalism that translates into profit for the Western developers. Camagu’s desire is clearly for the people, and this desire for the community stems from his initial desire for Qukezwa and his knowledge of its importance to her. His anti-oedipal desire therefore counters the capitalist desire of the developers.

As mentioned earlier, Camagu arrives at his position on the proposal for the casino resort after his discussions with Qukezwa. Indeed, the arguments he voices at the village meeting with the developers are those she expressed to him earlier. Having a Ph.D. in “communication and economic development” (29) from the US, Camagu at first finds the casino proposal unproblematic. In fact, early in the novel he adopts more of a capitalist logic of desire as lack and it is Qukezwa’s teachings that change his views about desire and his relation to others. At the novel’s outset, Camagu is about to leave South Africa to return to the US for a job in economic development, and yet it is his desire that derails his trip, it is desire that brings him to Qolorha. As in The Whale Caller, Mda here distinguishes the protagonist’s desire from narcissistic desire. After hearing the song of a funeral singer, a “makoti” (28), he cannot get her out of his mind:
He becomes breathless when he thinks of her. He is ashamed that the pangs of his famous lust are attacking him on such a solemn occasion. But he quickly decides it is not lust. Otherwise parts of his body would be running amok. No, he does not think of her in those terms. She is more like a spirit that can comfort him and heal his pain. A mothering spirit. And this alarms him, for he has never thought of any woman like that before. (28)

While all of his relations to women previously are of a selfish nature and about accumulating sexual pleasure for himself, and he is ethically deficient in this regard as he pays his servant to have sex with him in a way that the narrator compares to the rape of a slave by her master (28), his desire for this woman is not of a self-serving kind; it is this desire for her that motivates him to seek her out again in Qolorha. Thus, while he is self-interested and narcissistic in his use of others for sexual pleasure at the novel’s beginning, he comes to approach desire differently after this experience with the makoti and after learning from Qukezwa.

In contrast to the earlier one-sided affairs of Camagu’s lust and use of women, both he and Qukezwa have sexual dreams about each other: “Mutual Dreams. Messy dreams” (171). This transformation of his relation with women from a position of dominance to a mutual relationship brought about by Qukezwa suggests that she is a feminist character. Indeed, Harry Sewlall dubs her “the quintessential ecofeminist” (113), for her thorough knowledge of the plants and animals of her habitat, her challenges to the patriarchal traditions of the villagers, her dressing in traditional garb, and her educating others in the village about the environment and living in a sustainable way. Yet, as Caminero-Santangelo convincingly argues, the novel’s characterization of Qukezwa is not an idealization of the indigenous as some critics hold, since she is more complex, transformed by history and cultural contact: “Such characterizations [of Qukezwa as the idealized ecofeminist] suggest that Mda reinforces the notion of an unchanged indigenous ecosystem that existed before the impact of colonialism and advocates for a return to an indigenous, properly ecological relationship between human and nonhuman nature.” In other words, Qukezwa sees the similar logics of oppression at work that seek to disenfranchise animals, women, and others from a position of full standing and as deserving of the protections of the community. Her ecofeminism becomes clear, especially in the scene where she seeks to defend her environmentalist practices of killing some foreign water-depleting trees before the council of elders, challenging the lower
legal status afforded to women in traditional Xhosa laws by gesturing to the laws of the “new” South Africa that prevent gender discrimination. Qukezwa’s role as a mother to Heitsi and her teaching him to swim in the sea at the novel’s end demonstrate a particularly South African feminism that embraces motherhood as a political act, a mode of feminism in the country that as Zoë Wicomb explains differs greatly from the largely negative view of family roles in Western feminisms. Her teaching her child to swim in the sea, in relation to which she has played perhaps the most significant role in protecting it from being stolen from the community by the developers, confirms her feminism as a robust ecofeminism.

Qukezwa also plays a role in deterritorializing Camagu’s once capitalist desire as he no longer narcissistically spends his time seeking his own pleasures and profits at the expense of others. Animals seem to play a role in this transformation of sexual desire as he, rather like the Whale Caller, achieves orgasm seemingly incidentally in the presence of an animal and in response to song, in this case while he and Qukezwa both ride on the horse Gxagxa: “[H]is pants are wet … . It is not from sweat” (152). At this point in the novel, Camagu becomes enthralled with Qukezwa, especially her singing rather than with her looks. In fact, the more “civilized” and Western potential love interest Xoliswa is known for her beauty which rivals that of models. After their ride on Gxagxa, “[h]e remembers … when she sang him to an orgasm” (174). Like Nick Morris in The Reluctant Passenger, at first he fears this different kind of non-human desire and seeks to maintain control over this zoë: “He must get away from these surroundings that are haunted by Qukezwa’s aura. He must fight the demons … He must try to be in control” (149). As he is “spellbound” and not in a dominant position of control as in his previous sexual experiences where he used women, the scene indicates a more positive experience of desire.

This horseback ride, apparently, results in Qukezwa’s pregnancy—a strange, non-normative chance pregnancy that occurs incidentally during a fully clothed ride. Conceived at this moment of non-human desire and intensity, without sexual intercourse, while atop a horse, their child Heitsi figures as a future for the community where desire will continue to offer new ways of thought and creativity to resist neocolonial threats. While dominant culture might view such an act as dirty, weird, or something to be prevented, or even as a sort of violence to the horse, Mda’s novel indicates that the relationship between Qukezwa and Gxagxa is positive and ethical: “They love each other, Gxagxa and Qukezwa … .
Her father lives in this horse. She wouldn’t dare do anything shameful in its presence … . She gives it the same kind of respect” (275). Her sensual encounter with Camagu while riding GxaGxa in this regard is not “shameful” or pejorative but perhaps a moment of shared intensity and love between humans and animals.

Earlier, Qukezwa draws attention to the colonization of Camagu’s thought that results from his American PhD in economic development and highlights how this colonization informs his initial reaction to the proposal for the casino resort:

Vathiswa says they made you a doctor in the land of the white man after you finished all the knowledge in the world. But you are so dumb. White man’s education has made you stupid. This whole sea will belong to tourists and their boats and their water sports. Those women will no longer harvest the sea for their own food and to sell at the Blue Flamingo. Water sports will take over our sea! (103)

Like Nongqawuse, Qukezwa desires to protect her community, a community which includes animals, plants, and the people of Qolorha. After Camagu argues that the village will be paid for this, and that the development will create jobs, she further challenges his thinking:

What do villagers know about working in casinos? … . I heard one foolish Unbeliever say men will get jobs working in the garden. How many men? And what do they know about keeping those kinds of gardens? What do women know about using machines that clean? Well, maybe three or four women from the village will be taught to use them. Three or four women will get jobs. As for the rest of the workers, the owners of the gambling city will come with their own people who are experienced in that kind of work. (103)

Thus it is Qukezwa who is responsible for protecting the community, alongside the changed Camagu, who decides to stay in Qolorha instead of leaving for the US for his own financial gains, a decision to stay in South Africa that Nick Morris makes as well in *The Reluctant Passenger*. Therefore Anthony Vital’s claim that “the United States is represented also as providing the central character with the economic understanding that protects the local from outside exploitation” (306) seems to fail to recognize Qukezwa’s knowledge and influence on Camagu’s thought and desire. Qukezwa’s assessment of the proposal is accurate, and the
way in which the proposal is framed to benefit the community works just like traditional colonial logic of the civilizing mission, where the colonizer’s behavior is presented as a benefit for the people, when really its goal is to further disenfranchise them so that the politicians and developers can “eat.” Mda points to this colonial history as well in portraying George Gray’s taking of the Xhosa’s land in return for “civilizing” them.

**Biopolitics in Qolorha: Indigenous Environmental Law and Indigenous Desire**

This ethics of sustainability in *The Heart of Redness* is not one of moral universalism but instead one that acknowledges the importance of local or indigenous knowledge. Harry Sewlall describes the novel’s representation of this knowledge by pointing to the importance of the local court’s treatment of Qukezwa for cutting down foreign trees:

What emerges at the village trial of Qukezwa is that the indigenous people of this land have always had their own laws to protect the environment. While Qukezwa’s actions are considered criminal because there are no laws proscribing wattle trees, there are traditional laws in place which allow the destruction of noxious weeds and plants, such as the mimosa. (114)

The novel highlights multiplicities of perspectives, times, and values concurrently, as mentioned in the contrasting positions of the Believers and Unbelievers, but also in Dalton and Camagu’s different plans for the village as either a cultural tourism site or a nature tourist site. The administration of the local laws of the amaXhosa reveals that the elders of the village who make rulings do not view the law as static or transcendental. For example, although the “old law” (213) regards any woman not married as a minor, they listen to the unwed twenty-year-old Qukezwa’s arguments against this law: “[I]n the New South Africa where there is no discrimination, it does not work” (213). At this, the chief replies: “Now she wants to teach us about the law” (213). While Bhonco’s daughter Xoliswa Ximiya is officially a teacher, it is Qukezwa who becomes a more active teacher in the community.

As mentioned earlier, Bhonco and his daughter Xoliswa Eurocentrically denigrate most traditional customs and practices as “backward” and “uncivilized,” embracing instead many Western and American ideas about lifestyle, the natural world, and development. This
extends to local flora and fauna, as Bhonco asserts: “We want to get rid of this bush which is a sign of our uncivilized state” (92). Zim and his daughter Qukezwa, by contrast, follow traditional Xhosa customs, practice indigenous environmental knowledge, and greatly value local biota, rejecting many of the Western ideas introduced into their community. Qukezwa and Zim’s embracing of tradition challenges Bhonco and Xoliswa’s Eurocentricism, yet it too is not without problems. In her chapter that focuses in part on Heart of Redness from her “Wilderness into Civilized Shapes:” Reading the Postcolonial Environment, Laura Wright reads some characters’ engagement with traditions in Mda’s novel in terms of Bhabha’s notion of “colonial mimicry,” arguing that they “rely on imagined identification with a now inaccessible and uninhabitable past, while simultaneously subverting and parodying that past in an attempt to monetarily benefit from its value as a marketable commodity” (21–2). She explains the problems of this exploitation of tradition in John Dalton’s obviously business-oriented and self-interested plans for a cultural village as she notes Camagu’s view of such a packaging of tradition as “inauthentic” and as “deny[ing] the value of contemporary Xhosa culture” (50). Wright also astutely observes how Dalton’s planned last-minute heroics by withholding the letter he secured declaring the village a protected heritage site is an example of a “colonial mentality that indigenous peoples were not capable of caring of themselves” (53). However, she also has problems with Qukezwa’s drawing from Xhosa traditions.

Wright views Qukezwa’s focus on tradition and removal of invasive plants as taking part in a postcolonial tendency of “ineffective … attempts at establishing various prelapsarian—and imaginary—African Edens, impossible landscapes that are somehow uncompromised by their postcolonial status” (23). While she argues that both the Believers and Unbelievers attempt to borrow and invent traditions in ways that are appropriative, Qukezwa’s attempts to “recreate” (51) tradition seem to occur without such appropriation. Like Bhonco, Zim seems somewhat extreme, but in the other direction, in his embracing of past traditions, selectively deploying them at times in the imaginary fashion that Wright identifies in order to emphasize his difference and purity from Bhonco as when, for example, he shaves off his eyebrows. However, Qukeswa’s drawing from tradition and indigenous knowledge, and perhaps from Nongqawuse’s future-oriented biopolitics, is free from this Edenic imaginary and approaches instead an attempt to serve the best interests
of the community by exercising an ethics of sustainability. In this sense, Qukezwa’s breaking the traditional laws to cut down certain invasive and water-extracting trees might be seen as more in line with the extralegal efforts of the characters in Heyns’ _Reluctant Passenger_ to protect their community and the baboons.

Perhaps the difference in readings comes here from Wright’s attempts to read the plants in Mda’s novel as metaphor: “plants function as metaphors for colonizers and colonized peoples, and the invasive species that characters seek to eradicate generate no hybrid entities” (14). The fact that there are no hybrid plants is surprising and supports Wright’s view nicely. However, there are issues with such a metaphorical reading. After acknowledging that the killing of invasive plants can be read in a literal sense as well, Wright goes on to emphasize the plants as metaphor as she attempts to read Qukezwa’s killing of plants as a “shortsighted solution to white intrusion”: “removing all invasive plant species not only would be impossible, but also such an action can only operate on a metaphoric level” (51). Reading the invasive plants in a literal sense instead of as a metaphor for colonizers, we might appreciate Qukezwa’s environmental conservation efforts to preserve her community’s water further. Reading these scenes of the killing of flora and of community exclusions in terms of biopolitics enables more careful attention to the different kinds of life under consideration and the ethics of hospitality that pertain to them.

Wright’s reading of Qukezwa’s biopolitical management of flora as metaphor also seems to ignore differences between kinds of life and the idea that Qukezwa does not seek to remove all whites from the community in a xenophobic fashion. In fact, it is Bhonco who seeks to remove Dalton and other non-Xhosa people by deploying a purist and prelapsarian rhetoric, as I discuss below, when he attempts to expel those from the community who disagree with his position on the casino development or who otherwise frustrate his ambitions. If Bhonco is extreme in his disdain for local flora and fauna, and in his willingness to sacrifice indigenous plants, animals, and knowledges for English ones, Zim is somewhat extreme in his love of all that is traditional and disdain for the foreign. Yet Qukezwa does not kill some of the foreign trees to restore an Eden or out of a xenophobic impulse but out of concern for the community’s water supply. Bhonco’s concerns seem more self-centered and short sighted. He becomes a kind of nationalist manager when he threatens Camagu’s membership of the community in response to Camagu’s anti-development arguments: “Who are you to talk for the people of
Qolorha? … You talk of our rivers and our ocean. Since when do you belong here? Or do you think that just because you run after daughters of Believers, that gives you the right to think you belong here?” While seeking to win the argument for the development, Bhonco attempts to do so by excluding Camagu from the community and from being a subject of rights in the community, enacting a biopolitics that threatens to remove those who are not pure enough, not Xhosa enough.

Qukezwa doesn’t seek to banish all the plants from the region, just those that greatly diminish the water supply and threaten the ability of other plants to survive. While she initially emphasizes that the trees she cut down are “foreign trees!” she explains that she did so because they are like the inkberry, which “destroys everything before it!” (215). Bhonco attempts to discern and charge Qukezwa with xenophobia by picking up on the “foreign” in her explanation: “Are you going to cut down trees just because they are foreign trees?” asks Bhonco indignantly (216). In her reply, Qukezwa explains that she is not against trees just because they are foreign; instead, she kills the trees that harm the community. Making biopolitical decisions about what must be sacrificed for the future of the community, Qukezwa explains to the elders why she cuts certain trees and doesn’t cut others:

The [foreign] trees in Nogqoloza don’t harm anybody, as long as they stay there … . They are bluegum trees. The trees that I destroyed are harmful as the inkberry. They are the lantana and wattle trees. They come from other countries … from Central America, from Australia … to suffocate our trees. They are dangerous trees that need to be destroyed. (216)

In reply, Bhonco asserts that the traditional law doesn’t allow for the killing of these foreign trees without permission, and Qukezwa argues for the law to be changed because the wattle tree “uses all the water” (216). The law doesn’t allow for the killing of the inkberry without permission either, yet everyone knows its harmful qualities and allows its cutting anyway, without the law’s approval. Qukezwa argues that this is the extralegal precedent for her actions, explaining: “[The wattle] is an enemy since we do not have enough water in this country” (216). In this scene, Qukezwa decides to remove those plants that threaten the community’s future, just as the earlier Believers killed the cattle, effectively stopping the viral spread of the European lung sickness that was decimating their cattle and horses. The opening of the novel also confirms
that the environmentalist efforts of the Xhosa have been successful in securing a sustainable present: “Indeed, Qolorha-by-Sea is a place rich in wonders. The rivers do not cease flowing, even when the rest of the country knells a drought. The cattle are round and fat” (7). Described here as wonders, perhaps alluding to the magical realism of the novel and its prophets, the report on the state of the animals and environment suggests that environmentalist practices have created a sustainable relationship with the land where other parts of the country suffer water shortages. The comment about the healthy cattle follows the positive assessment of waters in Qolorha, suggesting that the Cattle-Killing Movement and the sustained interest in conserving water has in some measure helped to sustain the environment and the future of the community.

Bhonco, conversely, upholds the law at all costs in this case, further proving that it is desire which is actually in the place of law. Although the ruling of the elders is interrupted by a fire that burns a few of the villagers’ homes, the elders mostly disagree with Bhonco as it’s clear that he is just interested in punishing Qukezwa because she is a Believer, and Zim’s daughter at that. Rather like Judge Conroy in The Reluctant Passenger, who seeks to use the law to abuse his rival Brick Tomlinson, Bhonco appeals to the law in hopes of seeing Zim punished for his daughter’s crimes: “Why doesn’t he stand up like a man and take the rap?” (214). Bhonco’s desire is reterritorialized, seeing as he has no problem with the development of the casino city, which would break these laws, a project which the developers reveal involves the killing of many of the village’s trees: “How can we call it a grove when we’re going to cut down all these trees to make way for the rides?” In response, the other developer remarks: “[W]e’ll plant other trees imported from England. We’ll uproot a lot of these native shrubs and wild bushes and plant a beautiful English garden” (202–3). In contrast to the developers and Bhonco, whose desire is self-interested, and who arbitrarily upholds the law when it suits him (and it is perhaps significant in this regard that Bhonco’s frustrations with his inability to secure his old-age pension from the government is a frequent sore spot for him throughout the novel), Qukezwa’s actions are motivated by a desire to protect her community; in this instance, specifically the local plants and water supply of Qolorha.

As the history of the amaXhosa wars with the British colonists and Qukezwa’s killing of colonizing plants make clear, the response to new things and deciding on their belonging to the community or not often
involves a consideration of how these new people and things harm or “eat” the community, or if they further protect it. Bhonco at times wants to expel Dalton, descendent of a British colonial officer, and Camagu, who at times he calls a foreigner. He decides that these “outsiders” do not belong to the village community in relation to how their presence or absence would personally benefit him, not the larger community. He has repeated arguments and later a violent encounter with Dalton, for example.

The racial inflections of Dalton’s status in the community highlight the various modes of biopolitical management at work in Qolorha and demonstrate characters’ anxieties about belonging and their relationship to the land as “home.” These concerns about who belongs and who doesn’t, how many, who belongs most, and the desire for a space that makes it feel homely according to a particular imaginary or fantasy recall the discussion of “nationalist managers” and homely space in Disgrace in Chap. 2. Camagu has the most obviously ambiguous relationship with the community of Qolorah as home and, indeed, with South Africa. He doesn’t feel at home in Johannesburg, in part because he can’t dance the toyi-toyi (the freedom dance of the Struggle) because he was exiled for 30 years and never learned it (28), which results in his being excluded from a number of employment opportunities. In Qolorha, he embraces his totem animal, a snake, in a way that impresses the villagers by showing them that he is like them and belongs. Roman Bartosch, through a citation of Harry Garuba’s definition of “animist materialism,” argues that Camagu’s respecting his totem animal is a “deliberate re-traditionalisation as described by Garuba” and suggests that “he is calculating (‘I have gained more respect […] since they saw I respect my customs’)” (Bartosch 170). While this is an interesting reading, it neglects to consider that Camagu respects the snake first, and only later understands the influence it has on others’ perceptions of him. A calculating gesture would suggest more deliberate and perhaps insincere performing of respect. Camagu, by contrast, seems genuinely joyful to have encountered his totem animal: “Camagu is beside himself with excitement. He had never been visited by Majola, the brown mole snake that is the totem of his clan …. He is the chosen one today” (98). Where not knowing how to dance the toyi-toyi prevents Camagu from belonging and imagining himself at home in the city, his ability to respect the customs of his people and his affective response enables a kind of assertion of belonging and imagining of a homeland in Qolorha.
The descendent of a colonial official, Dalton too attempts a certain imagined relation to the community in denying this legacy. He replies “It is not true! It is not true!” to Bhonco’s point that “he is a descendant of headhunters” (168). While he is a “white man of English stock,” he has an “umXhosa heart” (8), and Zim argues that “Dalton is not really white ... it is just an aberration of his skin. He is more of an umXhosa than most of us” (147). Dalton’s particular imagined relationship and belonging to the community, through knowledge of the language and participation in its rituals such as circumcision, performs a rhetoric of belonging that attempts to ignore or elide the colonial past. Yet he still benefits from his position of white privilege in South Africa in belonging to the “white” community, and even continues some racist practices against the villagers, as when he makes Bhonco ride in the back of his truck, a common mode of segregated, racist travel practiced by white men during apartheid: “The old man [Bhonco] struggles to climb into the back of the bakkie. Even though Dalton is alone in the front seat, customs do not die easily. Dalton can see a hint of anger on the elder’s face” (141). In this sense, Dalton imagines a relationship to both communities: the white nationalist community and the Xhosa village. He also seeks to establish a connection to the land through his marriage to an Afrikaner—the Afrikaner “belongs to the soil. He is of Africa”—and asserts to his friends who are leaving South Africa: “This is my land. I belong here” (139). These imagined relationships to land and community through certain kinds of belonging and nationalism often demonstrate the kind of willful cognitive dissonance that characters take on in order to feel at “home” as they navigate their relationships to the past, to the land, and to the community. The imagined relationships also reveal the violence that results from certain rhetorics of “home” as characters often seek to exclude or treat poorly those they deem not “pure enough” or foreign. Foucault observes this violence in the racism of biopolitics:

[R]acism makes it possible to establish a relationship between my life and the death of the other that is ... a biological-type relationship: ‘The more inferior species die out, the more abnormal individuals are eliminated, ... the more I—as species rather than individual—can live, the stronger I will be, the more vigorous I will be. I will be able to proliferate. The fact that the other dies does not mean simply that I live in the sense that his death guarantees my safety; the death of the other, the death of the bad race, of the inferior race (or the degenerate, or the abnormal) is something that will make life in general healthier: healthier and purer. (255)
Foucault explains in this discussion that the death he’s discussing is not just literal but also “indirect murder: the fact of exposing someone to death, increasing the risk of death for some people, or, quite simply, political death, expulsion, rejection, and so on” (256). Bhonco’s seeking to expel certain “impure” characters from the community that thwart his ambitions of wealth and social climbing to an elite status through Westernizing himself, the environment, and the community exhibit this kind of racist bipolitics. His attempt to get Zim and Qukezwa punished legally, weakening their political standing, and indeed his risking of the community’s water and the lives of the animals through attempting to stop the environmentalists, evidences a violent biopolitics that continues in a racist, colonial legacy.

Camagu’s presence in the village is obviously not a problem initially when Bhonco welcomes him energetically as a Westernized South African and because he thinks Camagu might marry his daughter. As it becomes clear that Camagu’s desire is for Qukezwa instead, Bhonco argues that he and Dalton should be expelled from the community for their not being “pure” amaXhosa or their not being born in Qolorha. However, this logic of exclusion based on categories only suits his desire for “development” and what he thinks will be his personal benefit and profit. Indeed, he often disavows the importance of local knowledge, allowing Western notions of “development” and civilization to inform his thinking about biopolitical decisions. In building his case against Qukezwa for destroying the water-depleting trees, he argues that it is unjust to absolve her when “white tourists” were recently arrested for “smuggling cycads” and boys were also punished “for killing the red-winged starling, the isomi bird” (216). The elders reply to Bhonco’s argument by noting the difference of life under consideration here: “Shall we now be required to teach revered elders like Bhonco about our taboos? It is a sin to kill isomi. Yes, boys love its delicious meat that tastes like chicken. But from the time we were young we were taught never to kill isomi … . We only desired them from a distance” (217, emphasis added). The traditional laws and words of the elders here express a desire for animals that respects their lives and membership in the community and results in the community protecting them from being eaten. The passage highlights the differing models of desire at work in Qolorha as the indigenous notion of desire frustrates the view that capitalist desire is a universal or the only way to desire animals. This other way of desiring challenges the tourists and those who seek only a relation to the animals
of eating, thereby showing capitalist desire to be but one way among other, different possibilities. The passage reveals that not only have the Xhosa in *The Heart of Redness* long had their own environmental laws, as Sewlall suggests, but also they’ve long had their own ways of desiring animals. In contrast to Bhonco, Qukezwa, evaluates newcomers to the community in relation to the harm they may cause or, alternatively, their ability to further protect and sustain the community. Indeed, Qukezwa works for the white Dalton and begins a romantic relationship with the non-Xhosa, Camagu, that results in a hybrid child and future.

Bhonco’s attempts to expel Camagu and Dalton from the community, as well as his approval of the sacrifice of the non-human life of Qolorha for the casino city, suggests that his approach to the law relates to what Derrida calls an autoimmunitary problem. Wolfe writes about the need to deconstruct species and race as a way to prevent this problem: “[R]ace and species must, in turn, give way to their own deconstruction in favor of a more highly differentiated thinking of life in relation to biopower, if the immunitary is not to turn more or less automatically into the auto-immunitary” (56). In other words, Bhonco’s use of these categories at times as a way to challenge the membership of these others in the community risks the sustainability of the community in the expelling of its diversity, especially considering that it is Dalton and Camagu who, with the assemblage of other community members, ultimately successfully resist and prevent the development of the casino city. Wolfe discusses the desire for sameness that pertains to the law, and how Derrida’s notion of “hospitality” can challenge this problem in its ethical response to the other:

[T]he reason that this [the ideal of unconditional hospitality] is crucial to biopolitical thought is that it keeps that zone of immunological protection from automatically turning to, as Derrida puts it, an autoimmune disorder. The idea is that once you start drawing lines between humans and animals, Aryans and Jews, Muslims and Christians, that is always going to lead to the runaway train process of an autoimmune disorder. So eventually, you know, how Aryan is Aryan enough? How Christian is Christian enough? How human is human enough? How “proper,” to go back to Heidegger, is proper enough? The horizon of unconditional hospitality as something to strive for is precisely calculated to remind you that whatever those lines are that you are drawing have to be always taken under erasure, even as, pragmatically those lines have to be drawn and are drawn all the time. (“After Animality” 184)
Bhonco’s desire to expel particular members out of the community then evidences this kind of autoimmune disorder as he accuses people of not being Xhosa enough at times when it suits him and, at others, of not being civilized enough. In essence, Bhonco seeks to improve himself, and to that end approves of the casino city, not recognizing its neocolonial nature, and thus advocating the sacrifice of the local land, animals, and other members of his community for the building of the casino. In contrast, the other characters consider sacrifice in terms of the protection of their community, including its human and non-human members.

Qukezwa responds differently to the biopolitical problems of protecting her community—with hospitality. Wolfe quotes Derrida’s description of hospitality: “‘pure and unconditional hospitality, hospitality itself, opens or is in advance open to someone who is neither expected nor invited, to whomever arrives as an absolutely foreign visitor, as a new arrival, nonidentifiable and unforeseeable, in short, wholly other’” (Before the Law 92). Rather than write off or automatically exclude foreigners from the community, Qukezwa responds ethically to Camagu and the other new arrivals to Qolorha, including flora and fauna. To be sure, she does not welcome everything in an unconditional hospitality because to do so, as Wolfe observes, would be to become apolitical and unethical: “[D]iscrimination, selection, self-reference, and exclusion cannot be avoided, and it is also why the refusal to take seriously the differences between different forms of life—bonobos versus sunflowers, let’s say—as subjects of immunitary protection is, as they used to say in the 1970s, a ‘cop out’” (103–4). Qukezwa clearly exercises discrimination in deciding which plants, animals, and people are welcome to be part of her community and which aren’t, often on the basis of their colonizing or harming the life and futures of the other members of the community.

Toward the novel’s end, the community stops the casino development when Dalton gets a court order declaring Qolorha a “national heritage site” (269), something Camagu had suggested earlier in response to the developers’ “How will you stop us?” The location’s history of Nongqawuse’s prophecies that led to the Cattle-Killing Movement renders it worthy as a potential site deserving protection. As Dalton protects the community in a roundabout legal way, Mda’s novel provides another example of how desire exists where we think there is law to protect communities. Camagu and Dalton, in their desire to protect the community, think that this alternative way to ensure the casino development will not go through. Thus, in addition to Qukezwa’s ethical response to
protecting her community, Nongqawuse’s prophecies, her desire to pro-
tect the community in thinking toward the future that led to the Cattle-
Killing Movement in the 1850s in response to colonization that brought
with it lung disease for the cattle, disease for the amaXhosa’s crops, and
the starvation of many of the amaXhosa, while tragic, continues to pro-
tect her people via the national heritage site enabling further sustainable
futures. Laura Wright observes this as well:

If there is any hope to be had, the polyphonic and temporally simultane-
ous structure of the text seems to suggest, it is in the cyclical and nonlinear
nature of history wherein Nongqawuse can be read at once as the cause of
a people’s destruction in the past and, through her cultural cachet as such
a figure, their salvation in the present and as the girl whose failed prophecy
in 1856 is fulfilled late in the twentieth century. (54)³

Although following the prophecy of Nongqawuse was devastating for
the amaXhosa, Mda offers it as an ethical attempt to bolster the immu-
nity of the community.

J.B. Peires explains the biological conditions that resulted from the
colonial contact and led to the cattle killing:

An important cause of the Cattle-Killing was the lungsickness epidemic
which reached Xhosaland in 1855. Cattle mortality was as high as one
half to two thirds in some places, and many Xhosa lost all their cattle. The
great believer Chief Phatho, for example, lost 96 percent of his 2500 cat-
tle … The Xhosa began to believe that their cattle were rotten and impure,
and that they might as well kill them since they were probably going to die
anyway. (312)

In this light, part of the logic that informs the movement is the attempt
to limit the spread of the disease, to prevent it from attacking all the cat-
tle. Another aspect of the logic of sacrificing the cattle involved the hope
that it would remove the British colonists:

Cattle-Killing was born partly out of Xhosa frustration at colonial domina-
tion and partly out of the hope awakened by the news that the Russians
had beaten the English … . Among the many predictions that circulated
at the time was one to the effect that the English, like all other evil things,
would be swept away in the great storm which would precede the resurrec-
tion of the dead. (Peires 316)
Peires also explains that, alternatively, many also believed the sacrifice would amend the conflicts and bring peace between the British and the amaXhosa nation. Perhaps the greatest reason for the British “success” in colonizing the amaXhosa, then, is this cattle disease that “was brought to South Africa in September 1853 by a Dutch ship carrying Friesland bulls” (Peires 70) as it functioned essentially as a kind of biological weapon in the war between the British and the amaXhosa. The slaughtering of the cattle in an attempt to prevent the spread of this disease is an exercise in biopolitics. As Wolfe notes in critiquing affirmative biopolitics that fail to consider the difference of life—those approaches that view all life as equal—such an approach isn’t practical (or perhaps desirable) given the destructive nature of some life forms: “[D]o we extend ‘unconditional hospitality’ to anthrax and ebola virus, to SARS?” (Before the Law 93). In The Heart of Redness, environmentalist characters often perform a biopolitics and hospitality that is not always affirmative but discriminate and seeks to eliminate the lung sickness, water-depleting plants, and neocolonial developments that would decimate the community.

In the face of such an attack on the immune system of the community, King Sarhili’s decision to follow the words of the prophetess exercises an ethical attempt to protect and sustain the community. Of course, as history bears out, the situation and decision were devastating: one of the figures offered for the drop in the human population of the Xhosa people from the cattle killing is an estimated loss of 40,000 over a two-year period. Also, 400,000 cattle were slaughtered and the Xhosa lost 600,000 acres of land to the British (Peires 319). These tragic figures highlight the vulnerability of bodies that humans and animals share. They also point to the great dependence of the community on these non-human others for survival. Emphasizing our limited knowledge, and that to act at all we can only respond with a conditional hospitality, Wolfe writes of biopolitics:

We must choose, and by definition we cannot choose everyone and everything at once. But this is precisely what ensures that, in the future, we will have been wrong. Our ‘determinate’ act of justice now will have been shown to be too determinate, revealed to have left someone or something out. (104)

While the cattle killing may appear to have been “wrong” from the perspective of today as it can be seen as being responsible in part for the
devastation of the amaXhosa community—Peires notes that some view it as a mass suicide, although he clearly disagrees with this view—in light of the biopolitical decisions exercised by Qukezwa in the present of *The Heart of Redness*, Mda situates the movement as an attempt to act politically and ethically to protect the community. Mda’s novel emphasizes, as Peires also argues, that the tragic deaths of the amaXhosa community were caused by the colonizing disease of lung sickness as well as the colonizing British, both of which established a relationship of “eating” these communities. Just like the development project of the casino city, which attempts to colonize and devastate the community, the British colonization during the Cattle-Killing Movement was geared towards ruining the AmaXhosa nation:

The Cattle-Killing cannot be divorced from the colonial situation which was imposed on the Xhosa in 1847 by Sir Harry Smith … it should be remembered that the essential objectives of Grey [Sir George Grey] were identical to those of Smith and of colonial rule generally: to destroy the political and economic independence of the Xhosa, to bring them under British law and administration, to make their land and their labor available to white settlers, and to reshape their religious and cultural institutions on European and Christian models. (Peires 313)

Peires’ passage describes an organization of labor and the community that would be replicated in a slightly new form by the international development company’s proposal. Yet by deterritorializing desire away from the narcissism of colonization and global capitalism toward a postcolonial desire, one for the benefit of the members of the community, Qukezwa and the others of the assemblage, including Camagu and Dalton, work to fend off the disposal of the community by an international development corporation, exercising an ethical biopolitics that continues in the tradition of the prophetess, and, for the time being, she temporarily secures her community’s protection and its potential for a future.

**Conclusion: Toward Sustainable Futures**

In addition to the government officials who support the casino in *The Heart of Redness*, Chief Xikixa, who is charged with protecting the land where it “is illegal to build within a kilometer of the coast,” also puts
his own profits and pleasure ahead of the community. He gives the land away to wealthy white people and “some well-to-do blacks,” some of whom build “right on the seashore,” for bribes such as a “bottle of brandy” and later on “cellphones and satellite dishes” (68). These products of globalized capitalism bring the village of Qolorha into the global economy, threatening the life and future of the community as it is rendered exchangeable for a cheap price, and for the pleasure and profit of a few. In both Heyns and Mda’s novels, the commodification of the lands of local communities and the disposing or harming of the interests of their residents, human and non-human, are thwarted through what I’m describing as the *postcolonial desire* of an assemblage of characters, a desire for the community in a broad sense that disrupts and resists the colonizing ambitions of capitalism and its adherents. As Braidotti argues, in the context of biotechnology, *zoe* exceeds capitalist control: “Nature is more than the sum of its marketable appropriations: it is also an agent that remains beyond the reach of domestication and commodification” (*Transpositions* 47). If capitalism seeks to commodify all of life and proliferate its logic of desire of lack through colonizing the unconscious, *postcolonial desire* describes a potential of desiring machines that escapes, resists, or undoes this colonization in a line of flight away from capitalism’s reterritorialization of desire, reassembling communities around an ethics of sustainability instead of an accumulation of personal profit.

Where some global capitalists see an opportunity in the “under-developed” lands or villages to secure a profit at the expense of destroying and devastating its inhabitants, the resistances offered by these human and non-human assemblages disrupt the capitalist machine and, for the time being, protect the futures of their homes. In both *The Reluctant Passenger* and *The Heart of Redness*, the laws passed to protect these communities repeatedly fail to do so, often as a result of the compromised position of those tasked with upholding the law. While these authorities, judges, and politicians seek their own profit at the expense of the community, they reveal their colonization by capitalist logic. Through weaving the history of the Cattle-Killing Movement into the narrative about the present-day proposed casino city, Zakes Mda emphasizes the colonial legacy in which global capitalism operates and continues in the practices of capitalists and government officials from developed countries and their counterparts in “developing nations.” Heyns’ novel focuses more specifically on protecting a troop of baboons instead of protecting a larger community of human and non-humans, as
in Mda’s novel. Nonetheless, the critique of the capitalist development of the baboon’s home in the nature preserve also undermines the workings of the apartheid regime more broadly, in this case the animal testing and other exercises in biopower of the apartheid state on South African bodies. For both novelists, then, the explicit violence exerted on communities, on bodies, and on the land in the pasts of colonialism and apartheid reappears in a subtler and more nuanced fashion in the present of late capitalism through the weakened and compromised administration of the law which fails to fully protect communities from the threats of disposal and violence. Mda and Heyns represent desire as a resistance to this neocolonial threat that might better protect these communities and their futures from being consumed by the capitalist machine.

Notes

1. See Jacques Derrida, “Before the Law,” in Acts of Literature, ed. Derek Attridge (New York, NY: Routledge, 1992), 181–220. Derrida also emphasizes this emptiness in noting the lack of an origin for the law in “Before the Law:” “What is deferred forever till death is entry into the law itself, which is nothing other than that which dictates the delay … What must not and cannot be approached is the origin of difference: it must not be presented or represented and above all not penetrated. That is the law of the law, the process of a law whose subject we can never say, ‘There it is,’ it is here or there” (205).

2. See Jeffrey B. Peires, The Dead Will Arise: Nongqawuse and the Great Xhosa Cattle-Killing Movement of 1856–1857 (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1989). Mda draws significantly from J.B. Peires’ The Dead Will Arise, a historical account of the Cattle-Killing Movement, for the historical information he includes in his book. Indeed, he dedicates the book in part to Peires. In The Dead Will Arise, Peires details how although extremely tragic for the amaXhosa, Nongqawuse’s prophecies and the decision to slaughter cattle resulted from extreme circumstances of British colonization and disease. The slaughter of most of the amaXhosa cattle, then, offers an example of a biopolitical issue. For example, Peires writes “that the Cattle-Killing was a logical and rational response, perhaps even an inevitable response, by a nation driven to desperation by pressures that people today can barely imagine. I further believe, and I trust that the book will demonstrate this too, that the Cattle-Killing would not have been so fatal an error had it not been for the measures of Governor Grey, which first encouraged and then capitalized on the movement” (x). The unfortunate coincidence of increased pressure from British colonization and the lung
sickness that devastated their cattle therefore led to the amaXhosa’s decision to slaughter their cattle as a way to preserve their remaining community. As Peires and Mda’s novel bears out, the decision to slaughter the cattle after the telling of Nongqawuse’s prophecies therefore figured as an attempt to secure the futurity of the amaXhosa people, even while it ultimately caused so many of them to die.

3. Wright also critiques the alternative proposals that Dalton and Camagu offer when she says that there is “an uncomfortable verisimilitude between Camagu’s ecotourist business venture and Dalton’s invented capitalistic model in terms of the cultural village; the only difference is the product being marketed: culture or nature” (54–5). Wright’s critique of the project is warranted, and yet not all capitalist “development” is the same and, as Huggan and Tiffin suggest, part of a postcolonial ecocriticism is to challenge parasitic development, not all kinds of development (20). Their alternative proposals prevent the immediate “development” of the casino, which would surely spell the ruin of the community, rendering it unsustainable. Mda seems to acknowledge that this approach of ecotourism is not exactly the most radical approach either, as his later novel, The Whale Caller, offers a much more revolutionary politics, as I argued in Chap. 3.

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