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## **Recreating the African City in Zakes Mda's *Ways of Dying***

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### **A turn to ways of living**

In his 1995 novel, *Ways of Dying*, Zakes Mda's central concern seems to be the question: how does one best go on living in a world consumed by dying? Mda depicts life in the slums of an unnamed South African city that is characterised by poverty and violence, and yet he is adamant that such life is not devoid of value. The bleak surroundings are punctured with moments of profound vitality. While death is inevitably a factor in shaping how characters live under the circumstances, Mda refuses an immobilised victimisation; he refuses to concede that life in shantytowns of the sprawling African city is determined solely by violence and scarcity, suggesting instead that even among the harshly dispossessed, there is life-shaping agency. The phrase "he knows how to live" or "she knows how to live" becomes a steady refrain throughout the narrative that is applied to both Toloki and Noria who, though they are each held up as models, are at the same time seeking out new ways of living which they find in each other. For both Mda and his characters then, there is a great deal of hope invested in ordinary urban life. Toloki and Noria seek out ways of living that are about more than survival—daily practices like imaginative rebuilding that allow them to live richly and defiantly, resisting negative circumstances without succumbing to the rules that generate such conditions.

While I will be dealing with the specifics of the text, I will place it in a larger philosophical conversation with the work of Achille Mbembe in *African Modes of Self-Writing*. In resonance with Mda's focus on ways of living within the context of dying, Mbembe encourages theorisation of Africa to consider the following: "How can life be redeemed, that is, rescued, from this incessant operation of the negative?"<sup>1</sup> What Mbembe refers to here are not only the negatives of slavery, colonialism, apartheid and civil war, but also the theories of resistance that continue to frame Africans as perpetual victims, subject to the throes of history against which they are helpless to determine their own lives. I suggest that this is the kind of logic—what Mbembe calls the cult of victimisation—that Mda is trying to escape. While the approaches of these writers—one theoretical, the other literary—are quite different, I would like to bring their texts into a shared space to consider a theoretical turn that embraces ways of living.

Mbembe's critique of Afro-radicalism and nationalism for their subscription to an "imprisoning model of history"<sup>2</sup> can help us understand the critical tradition Mda is coming up against in his turn away from what he sees as worn out models of political activism. He traces the irony of militant resistance similar to that which Mbembe will later describe, considering how an ends-justify-the-means approach can frequently result in further victimisation even as it pushes against

it. In *Ways of Dying* this is the case for the activist political group, the Young Tigers, who end up necklacing the five-year-old Vutha for leaking information, and it is the case for the residents of a nearby village who unsuccessfully resist violence with violence. The narrator explains that the people of that village “had set upon a group of ten men, beat them up, stabbed them with knives, hurled them into a shack, and set it alight. They had danced around the burning shack, singing and chanting about their victory over these thugs who had been terrorizing the community for a long time.”<sup>3</sup> This event may seem to be the clearest act of resistance. And yet the novel certainly doesn’t embrace it in the way it does Toloki and Noria. The people of their village “had become prosecutors, judges and executioners. [...] But every one of them knew that the village would be forever enshrouded by the smell of burning flesh. The community would never be the same again, and for the rest of their lives, its people would walk in a daze.”<sup>4</sup> Ultimately it is the reek of their own violence that defines the town, and in their perpetual dazed state, people are alive without really living. Instead of effectively defying it, they have merely entrenched their own victimisation, and they are indeed stuck in that incessant operation of the negative.

Mda turns toward the “political dimension [of] everyday practices”—“the ingenious ways in which the weak make use of the strong”<sup>5</sup>—as a way to remove his work from the very cycle of victimisation described above. In this way, Mda’s work offers a literary formulation of Mbembe’s later call to “address that which in actual African experiences of the world, has escaped such determination,” looking to “contemporary everyday practices” as a part of that project.<sup>6</sup> While Mbembe stops with the suggestion, Mda explores the possibilities of putting such a suggestion into practice through the imaginative space of the novel. Mda zeroes in on a site of rebuilding which he invests with a great deal of dignity, possibility, and hope. Rebuilding is an act which at once contains the devastating reality of violence—evidenced by the very need to rebuild—but also moves beyond it in important ways, which I will explore below.

### **The aesthetics of rebuilding**

Noria is subject to the same variety of terror as the people of the aforementioned village, but instead of resisting death by matching it, she and Toloki perform a kind of resistance that allows for fuller life against the killing and building against destruction. The construction of Noria’s shack offers pleasure in the face of pain, dignity as alternative to despair, and fosters the strengthening of community instead of the severance of such ties. This mode of rebuilding resists the logic of violence and perpetual victimhood. The fact that Toloki and Noria do not fight back in the most literal sense does not mean that they are submissive or accepting of their plight. To the contrary, their resistance says not only that they refuse their subjection, but that they also refuse to participate within the system that subjects them.

It is not only the fact of rebuilding, but its aesthetic mode which allows the construction of Noria’s shack to function as a model of rich and resistant life.

Building with care and artistic energy importantly demonstrates pride and a sense of self-worth, but more importantly, the element of futurity—the way that it posits a future and a continuous self against the tenuous circumstances of the present. In his argument for subjectivity as time, Mbembe explains that it is this notion of futurity which threatens to be lost in situations of intense and continual violence:

the spread of terror fragments inhabited spaces, blows apart temporal frames of reference, and diminishes the possibilities available to individuals to fulfill themselves as continuous subjects. [...] In many places, life has taken the form of a continuous journey. One leaves one space and establishes oneself in another only to be dislodged by terror, confronted by unpredictable circumstances, and forced to settle once again where one can.<sup>7</sup>

This is what Noria and Toloki are up against as they build, for they are living within a state of terror like that which Mbembe describes. Neighbours are getting killed every day; shacks are burning down every day—“[t]rauma has become something quasi-permanent.”<sup>8</sup> In other words, there is no guarantee for Toloki or Noria that their lives will last much longer or that their shack will remain standing. They thus demonstrate both the problem we see in Mbembe and the possibility to defy it. They do not allow the state of violence to navigate their lives, and they do not rebuild merely to survive through the next day. They build to claim a future. Mda suggests that such seemingly small steps of the dispossessed—establishing a home, decorating the walls and fostering a peaceful community—are hopefully resistant. As Carolyn Nordstrom has eloquently stated regarding situations of perpetual violence, “Peace begins in the front-line actions of rebuilding the possibility of self (which violence has sought to undermine) and society (which massacres and destruction have sought to undermine). [...] without a sense of a future, peace cannot emerge.”<sup>9</sup> It is the sense of a future that Toloki and Noria bring into being, for themselves and for their neighbours. This is true of rebuilding generally, but is posited all the more forcefully with a project that goes so dramatically beyond the most basic demands of living through aestheticisation.

What is most notable in *Ways of Dying* is not that Toloki and Noria rebuild her shack and do so immediately, not even waiting for the light of morning, but that it becomes such a creative endeavour. They construct what the narrator calls in earnest an “elegant shack,” one that is “beautiful, because the canvas and plastic come in all colours of the rainbow.”<sup>10</sup> It is a dignifying project in which the surrounding community shares and participates. What is most striking here is the fact that it is not a strictly utilitarian or merely functional shack, but an aesthetic creation which “would certainly be at home in any museum of modern art.”<sup>11</sup> This moves it beyond a project of necessity to one that makes a more direct statement; “No one can really say what their message is, except to observe that it is a very profound one.”<sup>12</sup> Rebuilding may be common, but this shack seems to say something more.

I submit that that message is one of resistance—it is a defiantly beautiful shack. It sits in the midst of a vast squatter camp, or informal settlement as residents prefer it to be called, which is not supposed to be colourful or beautiful or noteworthy. It is not supposed to have a future. We have seen similar settlements in the novel bulldozed repeatedly, and residents are continually defiant: “they do not like to be called squatters. ‘How can we be squatters on our own land, in our own country?’ they often ask. ‘Squatters are those who came from across the seas and stole our land.’”<sup>13</sup> The aestheticisation of the shack tangibly enacts this kind of gesture. It defies claims of non-belonging, undeserving and impermanence. It makes a settlement out of a squatter camp, and carves out a place for the likes of Toloki and Noria in the elite museum of modern art, the locus of modernity’s high culture from which they are excluded. Instead of fulfilling its reputation as a crux of depravity, the landscape of urban poverty becomes a space of elegant vitality, a space of bitter circumstance met with creative survival.

One might warn that this move aestheticises loss, poverty and injustice and that in doing so it mitigates the urge to change—that in pointing out its beauty, Mda neglects the more urgent ugliness or reinforces the status quo. But the move Mda makes here is in fact quite a different one. He is not aestheticising violence but the communal rejection of it. He is not aestheticising poverty but the refusal to be ruined by it and the resistant will to rebuild in the face of it. As hopeful a stance as the novel takes, it is also brimming with anger and sadness. Much of the novel is not a cry of joy but of injustice. But Mda suggests that in resisting the status quo—both for characters within novels and for the writers of them—one must not flatly demonise the site for which one demands change. We must remember that while it is deeply troubled, the shantytown is also home to valuable practices of resistance and richly creative modes of survival.

### **Rewriting resistance**

The idea of resistance becomes more troubling, though, when we move to the interior of the shack. Toloki pastes a collage of images from catalogues on all the walls—pictures of “ideal” kitchens, bedrooms, living rooms, and gardens to create what the narrator calls “a wallpaper of sheer luxury.”<sup>14</sup> Together, Toloki and Noria gaze at the walls, imagining themselves eating in a beautiful kitchen, strolling through lush gardens, and laughing “at idiotic American situation comedies on their wide-screen television set.”<sup>15</sup> This scene is not a mere pastime, but represents a way of living. Noria responds to Toloki’s collage and imaginative activity as if it offers great possibility as daily practice: “We must be together because we can teach each other how to live. I like you [Toloki] because you know how to live. I can teach you other ways of living. Today you taught me how to walk in the garden. I want to walk in that garden with you every day.”<sup>16</sup> We might take this to be delusional—a dangerous kind of wishing, a slavish lust for the gleam of Western materialism. Or perhaps it is just escapist—not a way of being but of forgetting. But this isn’t where Mda leads us. We would be too quick to condemn it flatly without considering its nuances and the agency of the people who choose to engage with it. Mda’s treatment

encourages us to reconsider our assumption that, to borrow Appadurai's own adapted phrase, "media are the opium of the masses."<sup>17</sup>

Mda seems to see that this catalogue collage can best be understood if we place it alongside other instances of creativity and commodity in the novel which, because they are the subject of critique, form a clarifying contrast with the collage. First we have Jwara, Toloki's father who sculpts figurines with the aid of Noria's singing. While creativity is so often positive in the novel, this case is certainly not. Jwara is immobilised and alienated by the creative act, receding into his blacksmith shop and literally never coming out to the total neglect of his family. Then there is Nefolovhodwe who moves to the city in pursuit of wealth and saturates his life with material luxury—a literalisation of the collage—which saps his memory of the people from his village and destroys any concern he has for the family he left there. The problem comes down to the fact that these are self-serving pursuits which induce an immobilising daze—a trance, a forgetting of the world around oneself—not unlike that of the village people who took violent revenge.

This is what we fear will happen when commodity and creativity come together in the collage, but the effect is in fact something quite different. First, it does not cut Noria and Toloki off from each other, nor from community participation. While the building of the shack becomes a neighbourhood project, the collage on the interior facilitates a productive intimacy between Toloki and Noria through creating what Appadurai has called a "community of sentiment."<sup>18</sup> It is after their shared experience of the collage that Noria asks Toloki to come live with her "as homeboy and homegirl" initiating what will become a socially committed partnership. A second and related point is that their imaginative transport into the world of the collage does not inflict a drug-like state of delusion. A "walk through the gardens" doesn't make them forget the violence that surrounds them; it doesn't turn out to be escapist at all. In fact, when Noria is most angry, she is unable to enter the world of the collage, and it is after the shared creative endeavours of building the shack and imagining themselves within the world of the collage that she and Toloki have their most important conversations about their pasts and the troubling present. It seems that the pleasure and laughter brought about by communal imagination actually prevents them from receding into the blasé, dazed state of existence that we have seen in other characters. Moments of shared pleasure open up the most authentic discussions of sadness. The community of sentiment formed in building and imagining together is truly productive—"Noria's laughter [begins] regaining its old potency"<sup>19</sup> and she is able to shed the "first real tears" since her son's death,<sup>20</sup> breaking her out of a worrisome daze. For Toloki it facilitates his reengagement with the community from which he has receded in his years of monk-like purification.

Noria and Toloki form a community that, following Appadurai's model, begins in sentiment and moves to action. What is most essential to making Toloki and Noria models for ways of living, demonstrated poignantly through the collage, is that they are radically un-self-centred. The logic of the catalogue whose pages are plastered all over the walls is that it should not suffice in and of itself. The

catalogue, as a sales tool, is specifically intended to pique desire, to initiate the pursuit of ownership. This stimulation of the imagination breaks out of that logic of ownership and dependence on the objects themselves. Mbembe's description of the "other regimes of subjectivity" which come into being within an "economy of scarcity" speaks to the significance of the collage and Toloki and Noria's use of it:

This is a phenomenon, in all its manifold aspects, of an economy of desired goods that are known, that are sometimes to be seen, that one wants to enjoy, but to which one will never have material access. There is an element of fictiveness to these coveted goods.[...]

Where shortage and scarcity prevail, the appropriation of desired goods may take place through pillage and violent seizure. If not, it can be realised only through shadow interventions in the phantasmatic realm.[...]The powers of imagination are stimulated, intensified by the very unavailability of the objects of desire.<sup>21</sup>

We can look to Toloki and Noria as a test case for such shadow interventions. The question Mbembe leaves open is whether this new imaginative subjectivity is a healthy one. This ambiguity overlaps with questions we see in *Mda*: is interaction with the collage delusional imagining, and does it idolise the very realm from which the imaginer is excluded? The fact that Mbembe frames imagination as an alternative to the antisocial behaviours of pillage and violent seizure does allow a sense of possibility if not straightforward positivity. The question then is whether imaginative intervention remains subject to the logic of pillage: is it merely another expression of the same impulse, or is its basis somewhat different? *Mda*'s characters move beyond the hypothetical, pushing this shared idea toward a possible outcome and showing that imagination can indeed be constructive mode of survival and resistance. With Toloki and Noria the event of imagination transforms an economy of deprivation in terms of "ideal" kitchens and television sets into an economy of abundance in which the things themselves are no longer defined by their unavailability because they are no longer necessary. The imagination is able to step in and provide, granting Toloki and Noria inclusion in a world that was previously inaccessible and at the same time rendering the real version of that world obsolete. Imagination clarifies the emptiness of the real objects; if one can enjoy them without actually possessing them, then possession is no longer the goal. Desire shifts from the objects themselves to the pleasure that can be enjoyed with or without them. The impulse to pillage or purchase (when possible) is overridden by the work of the imagination.

That possibility to purchase does in fact arise when Nefolovhodwe drops off a mountainous pile of valuable figurines, which Toloki has inherited from his father; imagination has the chance to become reality. After having them inspected by an art dealer and a museum chairman, Nefolovhodwe recommends Toloki sell the figurines, which would give him and Noria the opportunity to improve their lives materially—to obtain what might be assumed to be a better

way of living. But even with the opportunity of logical self-service, they prove that assumption wrong:

Toloki and Noria have still not worked out what to do with the figurines. They decide that they will keep one of the figurines in their shack, next to Toloki's roses, to remind themselves where they came from. 'With the rest, Noria, perhaps we should sell them as Nefolovhodwe suggested, and take the money to Madimbhaza's dumping ground.'<sup>22</sup> 'Or we could let them stay here with us, and bring happiness and laughter to the children. We could build a big shack around them, and the children could come and laugh whenever they felt like it.'<sup>23</sup>

Toloki has embraced Noria's practice of contribution to the community and Noria has taken up Toloki's belief in the enriching power of pleasure. Mda leaves it undecided, uplifting with either option a selfless, community-centred way of living. Toloki says a number of times throughout the novel "your need is greater than mine" as rationale for his own giving despite the fact that he has so little. This turns out to be Noria's philosophy too, and they play it out together in their ideas for the figurines. This "your need is greater than mine" mentality is fostered by imaginative intervention into the world of material wealth which nullifies desire for the objects themselves, thus freeing Noria and Toloki from the limits of a self-centred agenda and opening them up to a socially-based way of living.

Noria and Toloki thus demonstrate the possibilities for "*imagination as a social practice*."<sup>24</sup> Distinct from fantasy, this mode of imagination is communal instead of individual, projective instead of inhibiting, and active instead of passive.<sup>25</sup> It is the imagination that allows Noria and Toloki to project a future to build for, and when the opportunity comes they build for the community instead of for themselves. Our fears about the collage then come up empty. It ends up being a practice of detachment from commodity desire instead of a dependence on it. This detachment restructures the economy of scarcity and redefines its players, allowing Noria and Toloki to become figures of generosity instead of lack and social agents instead of passive victims. Mda's hopefulness lies not only in the act of rebuilding itself but in a mindfulness of what Toloki and Noria are building toward—not the Western ideal, not the hoarding of wealth, but a turn away from individualistic greed toward life practices based on that "your need is greater than mine" perspective—a turn away from the idealised dream of urban life toward more communal ways of living—something like what René Devisch has called the "villagisation of the city".<sup>26</sup>

### **Reimagining the urban dream**

It is important to remember that this all takes place within the frame of a country-to-city narrative. The collage is like the phantasmagoria of the city dream, a whirlwind of material success, which Noria and Toloki come to pursue and which Nefolovhodwe lives out. The narration of Toloki's move to the city begins as an "odyssey to a wondrous world of freedom and riches"<sup>27</sup> and

becomes a life of drinking, carousing and “free spending” until he runs out of money and his friends desert him.<sup>28</sup> Noria too came with the thought that,

she was going to live a cosy life. People in the village, and in the small town where she lived in a brickmaking yard, had painted a glowing picture of life in the city. She believed that it would be possible to immerse herself in the city’s glamour and allurements, and would therefore be able to forget the pain that was gnawing her as a result of losing her son. [...] In any case, there wouldn’t be any need—the streets of the city were paved with gold and diamonds, after all.<sup>29</sup>

From a distance the city seems enchanted, but the migrant is met with disillusionment and disappointment. Noria “had a rude awakening when she arrived. There were no diamonds in the streets, nor was there gold. Only mud and open sewers.”<sup>30</sup> There is a sense that this is the standard experience of the city and its disappointing dream. Social anthropologist, René Devisch, has written on the problem of this scenario in Africa’s urban centres explaining that “[t]he economic crisis and the harsh struggle to survive force upon the individual a disenchantment with one’s circumstances, the loss of one’s militant or entrepreneurial spirit, and ultimately the sense of any ethical responsibility for the public good.”<sup>31</sup> This articulation of the dangerous horizon of the urban dream signals the danger that Toloki and Noria avoid through self-refashioning. As we have seen the Toloki and Noria who first come to the city are substantially different than the ones who later turn down the possibility of financial abundance for the sake of others with greater need. Toloki originally created his role as a professional mourner “solely for its material rewards, to profit from death”<sup>32</sup> and Noria arrived with prostitution as a back-up plan if she were not to quickly meet the success she hoped for. By the time they reunite many years after their shared childhood in the village, they have recreated themselves in a way that has neglected the values of the city that they came for and reincorporated their rural past into their urban present, as signalled by the figurine they keep in the house “to remind themselves where they came from.”<sup>33</sup>

The city in *Ways of Dying* is a reception point for people running away from their pasts, who want to put a distance between themselves and the rural villages of their upbringing, but part of Noria and Toloki’s model status has to do with the connection they maintain to their homeland. This kind of preservation is exemplified in the way they sleep in contrast to the satirised ways of the city. Toloki:

curls up on the bench and sleeps in the foetal position that is customary of his village. Although he has been in the city for all these years, he has not changed his sleeping position, unlike people like Nefolovhodwe who have taken so much to the ways of the city that they sleep in all sorts of city positions. In all fairness, he has not seen Nefolovhodwe in his sleep, but a man like him who pretends not to know people from his village anymore now that he is one of the wealthiest men in the land is bound to sleep with his legs straight or in some such absurd position.<sup>34</sup>

Toloki will later notice that Noria too, “sleeps in a foetal position, like all the true sons and daughters of her village. In spite of the fact that she has been in the city for so many years, she has not taken to the grotesque sleeping positions of city people.”<sup>35</sup> Though each leaves the village with aspirations for a new life, their identity and success in the novel’s terms seems to stem largely from the ways they bring the village into the city. Their way of sleeping is a signal of larger ways of living that reject the city’s brutal materialist individualism for more communal modes associated with village life. The city is a locus of enormous creativity, but creativity that at its best, finds ways of reinventing city life, of turning away from a normalised view of what the urban space has to offer, and of how it fails. The stereotyped alignment of the village with communalism and backwardness and the city with individualism and progress breaks down and is reconfigured. The communal ways associated with the village are not characterised here by backwardness, but by progressive possibility. In this view, the village is no longer opposed to modernity and the communal is no longer opposed to promise of the urban space. What we have then is a new imagining of the modern African city—one that is not paved with diamonds and gold nor overwhelmed by mud and open sewers—a city whose vitality is not dependent on either.

### **Toward a new city**

For Mda, this vision contains enormous possibility. In the closing scene, night has fallen, New Year’s celebrations are dwindling, and in the darkness the boxes of figurines appear to be “shimmering like fool’s gold.” The heap of statues, which has come to stand in for Toloki and Noria’s ways of living, seems to glimmer with potential, as does the shack next to it—that site of rebuilding and imagination:

Somehow the shack seems to glow in the light of the moon, as if the plastic colours are fluorescent. Crickets and other insects of the night are attracted by the glow. They contribute their chirps to the general din of the settlement. Tyres are still burning. Tyres can burn for a very long time. The smell of burning rubber fills the air. But this time it is not mingled with the sickly stench of roasting human flesh. Just pure wholesome rubber.<sup>36</sup>

These final sentences of the novel remain mindful of the violence of the previous pages which contrasts with the current scene, alluding to Vutha’s burning body, a kerosene-filled tire around his neck, and to the village, which after its violent revenge, “would forever be enshrouded by the smell of burning flesh.”<sup>37</sup> We are left with a sense that Toloki and Noria’s resistance has yielded greater success than the models that result in that awful kind of burning—the smell of “pure wholesome rubber” represents a triumph.

Perhaps what is most important is that Toloki and Noria’s peaceful, community-centred way of living seems to spread. As partiers stumble past Noria’s shack on their way home from the night’s revelries, “[w]e look at the mountain of boxes that dwarfs the shack. We do not touch. We just look and marvel. [...] Not even

the most habitual thieves among us lift a finger toward the boxes.”<sup>38</sup> Violence may be contagious, but so are peace and social responsibility. Mda’s almost puzzling optimism then, resides in this moment as a new beginning which is at once mindful of the wrongs of the past and confident in the potential of disempowered people to shape their own futures.

The city as the location of such potential turns out to be a space of revised possibility. The potential of the African city in *Ways of Dying* is in its modification of the classic sense of urban modernity that is characterised by loneliness amidst the crowd and the resort to a “blasé outlook” that meets overstimulation with detached disinterest.<sup>39</sup> Toloki and Noria revitalise the modern city of disappointment through a rejection of its individualist ethos. Rebuilding for Toloki and Noria is not only about redefining the “squatter camp” by beautifying that which is supposed to be ugly and projecting a future for that which is supposed to be temporary. It is about recreating the city more broadly by reinventing urban life, revitalising it by incorporating the rural space of the urbanite’s past to which city life is so frequently opposed.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> A. Mbembe, “African Modes of Self-Writing,” Trans. Steven Rendall, *Public Culture*, 14 (1) 2002, p. 258.

<sup>2</sup> A. Mbembe, p. 257.

<sup>3</sup> Z. Mda, *Ways of Dying*. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995), p. 66.

<sup>4</sup> Mda, p. 66.

<sup>5</sup> M. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*,” Trans. Steven Rendall. (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1984), p. xvii. Though I will not use de Certeau in any detail, his work provides a useful vocabulary—a way of talking about everyday practices as politically infused tactics of resistance.

<sup>6</sup> Mbembe, p. 257. He refers here to determination by history understood as sorcery. This is the model of African history that grants the individual no agency for such an escape.

<sup>7</sup> Mbembe, p. 267.

<sup>8</sup> Mbembe, p. 266.

<sup>9</sup> C. Nordstrom, *Shadows of War*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), p. 184.

<sup>10</sup> Mda, p. 58.

<sup>11</sup> Mda, p. 67.

<sup>12</sup> Mda, p. 68.

<sup>13</sup> Mda, p. 48.

<sup>14</sup> Mda, p. 100.

<sup>15</sup> Mda, p. 112.

<sup>16</sup> Mda, p. 115.

<sup>17</sup> A. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*. (U.S.A: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 7. He uses this phrase in the context of his argument that, contrary to a model that views the media as a kind of opiate, the globalized consumption of the mass media “often provokes resistance, irony, selectivity, and, in general, *agency*.”

<sup>18</sup> A. Appadurai, p. 8. Appadurai defines a community of sentiment as group that both feels and *imagines* collectively, arguing that shared imagination enables collective action.

<sup>19</sup> Mda, p. 67.

<sup>20</sup> Mda, p. 177.

<sup>21</sup> Mbembe, p. 271.

<sup>22</sup> Madimbhaza has taken in numerous neglected and orphaned children who are “dumped” at her doorstep.

<sup>23</sup> Mda, p. 211.

<sup>24</sup> Appadurai, p. 31.

<sup>25</sup> Appadurai, p. 7. I am drawing here on Appadurai's description of imagination as opposed to fantasy, the former being an engaged practice, the latter problematically disengaged.

<sup>26</sup> R. Devisch, "Frenzy, Violence and Ethical Renewal in Kinshasa," in *Public Culture* 7, 1995, p. 593. Devisch defines "villagisation" as the "revaluation of [the] neighborhood as a locus for social solidarity and protection in the struggle for survival."

<sup>27</sup> Mda, p. 59.

<sup>28</sup> Mda, p. 123.

<sup>29</sup> Mda, p. 135.

<sup>30</sup> Mda, p. 135.

<sup>31</sup> Devisch, p. 613.

<sup>32</sup> Mda, p. 134.

<sup>33</sup> Mda, p. 211.

<sup>34</sup> Mda, p. 16.

<sup>35</sup> Mda, p. 152.

<sup>36</sup> Mda 212.

<sup>37</sup> Mda 66.

<sup>38</sup> Mda 212.

<sup>39</sup> For further description see Georg Simmel's classic essay, "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1903).