

Abstract. The relationship between faith and politics, between faith and democracy, between faith and resistance, and between faith and doubt has always been complicated. In “A Politics of Doubt: The Dissensual in *The Heart of Redness*,” Grant Farred demonstrates how South African author Zakes Mda grapples with these issues in his novel about the nineteenth century “cattle-killing episode,” an event that divided the amaXhosa people. *The Heart of Redness*, however, uses the historic “cattle-killing episode” to reflect on the politics, both in a narrowly economic but also in an environmental sense, of post-apartheid South Africa. It is to the historical, political and ideological differences that the novel addresses itself, attempting to find a ‘solution’ to the differences within the contemporary black community in the resonant past.

Using the work of Jacques Rancière to critique the notion of a consensual democracy, this essay demonstrates the range of philosophical issues that are raised, often, only implicitly, by Mda’s novel. Following Rancière, “A Politics of Doubt” explains why a dissensual politics – a politics grounded in fundamental, sometimes irresolvable difference – might be more ‘true’ to ‘democracy’ than the politics of perpetual compromise. The conflict between the “Believers” and the “Unbelievers,” located as it is in a deeply antagonistic history, speaks of a tension that will not allow for easy reconciliation. Recognizing the historical value of these differences, and how they continue to impact black life in post-apartheid society, creates the possibility for a dissensual politics that is potentially democratic.