

The Writer as a Public Intellectual: El Saadawi and Bulawayo's Caveats for Social Growth

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Abstract

The critical nature of African writings has maintained a large part of its steam since the pioneer works appeared. This is in part due to the plethora of social, political and economic problems besetting the continent and the fact that African literature maintains as its concern, the relevance of literature to society. This paper seeks to explore the various manifestations of commitment in Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero* and NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*. It dwells on the dual perspectives of female subjugation and the present postcolonial migrant (emigration) crisis bedeviling the continent. The first explores the woman's lack of agency in Islamic and other societies. The second is critical of the continuous emigration of Africans to the West and other countries within the African continent and the attendant crises, which results from this in both the source community and the receiving one. These are interrogated within the framings of the Postcolonial Subaltern and Carl Jung's Individuation. Attempts to proffer solutions are also made by Saadawi and Bulawayo, like other African writers who have striven to not only reflect, but also suggest ways of resolving the problems society faces. This paper, therefore, explores as part of the relevance of Saadawi and Bulawayo's works, their caveats for societal growth. For Bulawayo, these include new ways of thinking, leading, acting and being while Saadawi hesitates to portray growth outside of a certain measure of control wielded by patriarchy in society.

Key Terms: public intellectual, relevance, postcolonial, subaltern, Saadawi, Bulawayo.

Introduction

Several interpretations have emerged over the years for the term "intellectual." A person considered to be an intellectual is generally viewed as having the mental capacity to engage in high forms of knowledge or thought. Alan Montefiore explores the concept thusly: "by 'an intellectual' I mean here to refer to anyone who takes a committed interest in the validity and truth of ideas for their own sake" (10). Intellectual, also refers to an "occupational category, people whose occupations deal

primarily with ideas-writers, academics, and the like" (Sowell Thomas 4). Further discussing the role the intellectual plays in society which gives him his public status, Sowell Thomas says: "At the heart of the social vision prevalent among contemporary intellectuals is the belief that there are "problems" created by existing institutions and that "solutions" to these problems can be excogitated by intellectuals" (19).

The influence which the intellectual wields in society cannot be overemphasized or overlooked as he does not work for his benefit alone. Accordingly, Friedrich August Hayek in "The Intellectuals and Socialism," reiterates this idea while highlighting the public role played by the intellectual. Here, the intellectual's capacity to affect politics and decision making, policies and the populace, is discussed at length. In light of this, Edward Said says of the public intellectual figure: he is, "a... courageous and angry individual for whom no worldly power is too big and imposing to be criticized and pointedly taken to task. He or she speaks to, as well as for, a public, necessarily in public, and is properly on the side of the dispossessed, the unrepresented and the forgotten" (Jennings, Jeremy and Kemp-Welch, Anthony, 1- 2).

In spite of the several characterizations given of the term "intellectual," some elements recur in these provided meanings. These elements are those of "service" hinged on the positive role which the intellectual plays in enlightening the public and the practice of "critical thought." Consequently, the public intellectual has the following roles to perform. First, he or she has to transcend professional boundaries in order to communicate ideas, both old and new, to people within and outside his or her scope of discipline. In doing this, he or she acts in the capacity required (as a priest, teacher, artist or scholar, amongst others) in order to enrich the society. He or she is thus a dissenter, revealer of truth, thinker and an expert (John Issitt and Duncan Jackson 5, 6). Hence, a public intellectual is someone who takes time to intensely and explicitly discuss and proffer solutions to societal problems, demonstrating a certain degree of relevance to society. From a reading of the writings of Nawal El Saadawi and NoViolet Bulawayo, this title can be conferred on them as they represent, criticize and seek to transform society for the better.

The Writer as a Public Intellectual

Relevance occurs repeatedly and is translated in African literature as "commitment." This commitment is to society as the writer conveys relevant issues of the day in his or her works. Writings by African writers and thinkers assert the role of the writer in the tasks of re-educating and regenerating society (Agbasiere 2000; Achebe 2007;

Breytenbach 2007). Thus, in *Homecoming*, the idea finds extended exposition as Ngugi wa Thiong'o says of the writer:

He (she) must be committed on the side of the majority whose silent and violent clamour for change is rocking the continent. By diving into himself, deep into the collective unconscious of his people, he can seek the root, the trend, in the revolutionary struggle. Whatever his ideological persuasion, this is the African writer's task. (46)

Consequently, the African writer's relevance lies in his socio-political and cultural commitment which translates as his contribution to making Africans build a comfortable and homely community, which they can call their own. Therefore, relevance in writing cannot be overemphasized.

Having explored the concept of the "public intellectual" and the issue of relevance (especially as it relates to the African writer), the inter-connectedness between them becomes apparent. In effect, what the public intellectual does, is to discuss, problematize and resolve issues, which are relevant to members of the society. It is in doing this that his or her service to society is revealed. Hence, the public intellectual plays a significant role in society by projecting a form of "social vision and activism," which seeks to awaken the consciousness of the people from its social, political, moral and intellectual unconsciousness.

Nawal El Saadawi, one of the foremost feminist writers of Egypt published her *Woman at Point Zero* in 1973. Since then, it has opened conversations about the place of the woman in Islam and Islamic culture. It still resonates with relevance in present times, because of the persistence of the subjugation of women in Islamic culture in modern societies, both on and off the African continent, wherever these women are found. NoViolet Bulawayo, on the other hand, presents a somewhat contrary view of the negative aspect of the postcolonial subject's migration experience. This is outside of the commonplace lack of acculturation or unbalanced hybridity, which we find in Chimamanda Adichie's *Americanah*, Teju Cole's *Open City*, Chika Unigwe's *On Black Sisters' Street* and, even the celebrated afropolitanism of Taiye Selasi's *Ghana Must Go*. For Bulawayo, the negatives of migration exceed the alienation of the migrant individual and focuses also, on the abandonment of home and home society.

Although there have been studies on Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* and especially, on El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero*, these have dwelt primarily on feminist readings and, very few on the uniqueness of female subjugation in Arab Islamic societies in the latter text and postcolonial identity issues in *We Need New Names*. This paper, however, seeks to connect the two texts in its exploration of the

issues of women's subjugation as strictly an Islamic phenomenon in all societies, and the negative aspects of postcolonial migration to the West, outside of alienation issues alone. In doing this, the paper will trace the relationship between the commitment of these writers and their task as public intellectuals, highlighting their conclusions and recommendations on the societal issues they portray.

Woman at Point Zero is a novel which captures the life of an Egyptian woman, Firdaus. It chronicles her journey of suffering and maturity from childhood to adulthood, when she breaks free of societal strictures to become a prostitute, as she discovers it is only in this way that she can own herself. However, her realization is dashed, as even in that state she is oppressed by a man, a situation which eventually leads to her imprisonment and condemnation to death. *We Need New Names*, on the other hand, is the story of a young girl, Darling, and her group of impoverished friends who live in a Zimbabwean slum, Paradise. They scout the neighbouring well-to-do estate, (Budapest) for guavas to quell their hunger and to keep themselves entertained. Like other migration literature, the characters in this text have dreams of travelling abroad to more economically stable societies like the United States, South Africa and England. Some of them succeed and it is the consequences of this travel that the second half of the story outlines. *We Need New Names* is also the story of the abuse of a female child by her guardian and how this changes the course of her life. In this, it relates to Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero*.

The reason this paper takes these texts together is that they both, in their relation of commitment to society, portray the subjugation of the subaltern; one in Arab Islamic culture and the other in African and western cultures. Both texts are also written by African women writers and an exploration of the texts together holds the promise of revealing novel nuances and interpretations.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual frameworks guiding this study are: subalternism by Gayatri Spivak, which is embedded in the postcolonial literary theory and, individuation by Carl Gustave Jung. For the purpose of analysis in this paper, the latter rests on the categorizations created by the former. Subalternism builds on Michael Foucault's and Giles Deleuze's ideas of epistemic violence and desire, as they relate to power. It links the ideas to colonialism and projects the notion that epistemic violence occurs in the site of colonialism as "one explanation and narrative of reality (was projected). . . as the normative one" (Spivak 267-268). Additionally, it posits that the relationship between desire and power, as it affects the masses, is more complicated than just revolt and a destruction of hegemony "in the name of desire, they reintroduce the

undivided subject into the discourse of power.... Neither Deleuze nor Foucault seems aware that the intellectual within socialized capital, brandishing concrete experience, can help consolidate the international division of labor " (Spivak 69). With this in mind, Spivak posits the subaltern as an individual, in a subordinate position in society due to social class, economic relativity, gender, race and even age. Hence, the subaltern is irrevocably heterogenous and theorizations about the subaltern should take this heterogeneity into account. It is with regard to this position that the paper will interrogate the characters of Saadawi and Bulawayo, highlighting the Arab woman's position, female subjugation and the situation of the migrant postcolonial subject in relation to individuation.

Principium individuationis; (principles of individuation), defines the essence of the human. Carl Jung first uses the term individuation in his 1916 piece "*Septem Sermones ad Mortuos*." In *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, he posits that for the individual human being (*creatura*), it is a matter of life and death to become separate and distinct; to undergo the individuation process which results in self-realization (380). For Jung, "all dreams are relevant in varying degrees to the life of the dreamer, but that they are all parts of one great web of psychological factors,... on the whole, they seem to follow an arrangement or pattern. This pattern (is) 'the process of individuation'" (Von Franz 160). "It is absolutely fundamental to human beings to distinguish themselves from their surroundings. This is the essential nature of individual consciousness: to be itself, it must create distinctions and separateness" (Murray Stein 3). Individuation is therefore the process, by which every living organism becomes what it is capable of becoming or what it was destined to become from the time of its creation. It involves the integration of both conscious and unconscious forces and motivations underlying human behavior (Jolan Jacobi 10). It entails a shift from the general or conventional consciousness to a state of self-awareness of one's conscious and unconscious aspects, a state of self-acceptance and then ultimately, self-realization where the individual makes the attempt to balance self-acceptance and the drive or impetus to improve the self. Consequently, the paper will explore the various characters presented, with a view to interrogate their subaltern status and their individuation journey.

Commitment in Saadawi and Bulawayo: Expression of Identity

Although *Woman at Point Zero* was initially published in a one-party state, the Egyptian society was tethering in a back and forth manner, between allowing women more rights and subjugating them. With formal education, a number of women worked in the public sector, had some degree of personal freedom and could

participate in political criticism. However, the society became more restrictive with the rise of political Islam and the novel is now viewed as radically feminist. Regardless of the nature of its reception in its immediate society, is the fact that even at the height of its popularity following its publication, *Woman at Point Zero* has been a relevant text speaking to the issue of the day; the place of the woman in Arabic culture. Arabic culture is one dominated by Islam and Islamic religious practices. However, for the purpose of this writing I will use the term Arab Islamic culture rather than Arabic culture, because Judaism and Christianity are also religions practiced by individuals of Arabic descent and the cultures associated with these religions are markedly different from those associated with Islam, especially as it concerns the place of the woman in society. It can be posited that the Islamic culture allows, to a large extent, or even perpetrates the subjugation of women and the placing of the woman as a second class citizen in society. *Woman at Point Zero* does not explicitly foreground the role Islam plays in the misfortunes which befall Firdaus. Rather, it provides allusions and remarks which make an assertion as that of the preceding sentences possible.

The subjugation of women expressed in various forms, ranging from female "circumcision" in order to physically prevent sexual intercourse, the withholding of education, sexual and physical abuse, to the enforcement of financial and social dependence on men, among others, have been used in patriarchal societies to repress the female individual. Although there are arguments that some of these practices are not Islamic, when carried out by Muslim individuals, they are justified in the name of Islam. Ayaan HirsiAli says as much in the following passage.

In Somalia, like many countries across Africa and the Middle East, little girls are made 'pure' by having their genitals cut out. There is no other way to describe this procedure, which typically occurs around the age of five. After the child's clitoris and labia are carved out, scraped off, or, in more compassionate areas, merely cut or pricked, the whole area is often sewn up, so that a thick band of tissue forms a chastity belt made of the girl's own scarred flesh. A small hole is carefully situated to permit a thin flow of pee. Only great force can tear the scar tissue wider, for sex.... The practice is always justified in the name of Islam. (Ali 98, 99).

The reason for this form of strict control over the female body, is the placement of the family honour on the female's comportment. Arab Islamic culture views the honour of the male members of the family and clan as hinged on the female individual's social comportment. Thus, the act of genital mutilation enforces a form of sexual purity, by creating a human chastity belt as it were, since the female is physically

incapable of engaging in sexual intercourse. Other forms of control are financial and social dependence on the man, enforced through property law and social laws. The keeping of the female individual indoors is another form of control, as it not only prevents the female from attaining education, but keeps such a female under close monitoring by other family members, for a larger part of the day. These are the sort of things we find in *Woman at Point Zero*.

Woman at Point Zero has, as its central character Firdaus, who tells her story to the psychiatric doctor on the day of her execution. Identity expression and assertion of the self, as definitive, unique and separate from pleroma for Firdaus, was a struggle from the beginning of her life. In a bid to capture this, Saadawi shows to us, female subjugation at its typical form in Arab Islamic society, which ends with the woman as nothing, seeped of all essence, hence "at point zero." At a young age, Firdaus is subjected to female genital mutilation. Prior to this time, she has mimed the act of sex with Mohammedian, a young boy in the neighbourhood. Perhaps this play is given to reveal the inevitable slope towards sexual impurity which Firdaus is fated to take; hence, the necessity for the procedure. Perhaps again, it is given to showcase the sexual impurity of all females, which necessitates the procedure in order to make them sexually pure. Nevertheless, we see the brutality of how the procedure is carried out. Firdaus is not informed of it, neither is she told why it is carried out. She even thinks it is a punishment for asking her step mother why she has no father, as she finds him indistinguishable from the other men in their rural settlement. All of these happen when she is just beginning to be conscious of her self as separate from her mother and family by way of self-awareness. In light of this, the story reads: "one day I asked How was it that she had given birth to me without a father? First she beat me. Then she brought a woman who was carrying a small knife or maybe a razor blade. They cut off a piece of flesh from between my thighs" (Saadawi 41).

In all of these, the hypocrisy of the men of Firdaus' childhood is seen, as well as Saadawi's subtle criticism of them. For even though they steadfastly attended Friday mosque and listened to the Imam's sermon, they discussed amongst themselves: "it was not verily true that stealing was a sin, and killing was a sin, and defaming the honour of a woman was sin, and injustice was a sin, and beating another human being was a sin ?" (Saadawi 38) They question this aspect of the teaching, because they carry out such acts and would not want to cease. Indeed, it is in violation of one of these that her uncle begins to assault her sexually, right inside the family hut when he visits. The abuse is not only sexual, but also physical as he makes her carry his heavy load to the train station while he himself rides unburdened on a mule and performs a

routine where he holds her hand in farewell and then releases his grip on her hand with a force which always leaves her falling face first on the ground.

From an early age, therefore, Firdaus' life is characterized by all kinds of abuse: physical, emotional and sexual from the people closest to her, who are supposed to protect her, as she is naught but a child. This is a start to a lifetime of abuse and a suppression of identity. At this stage, therefore, the social and financial status of her parents, which she describes as low class, determine the nature of her subalternism. Firdaus is poor, female, and a child, therefore, vulnerable in the worst way possible. Her parents' deaths, which leave her in the care of her uncle, reinforce this helplessness. In addition to this, is the fact of her innocence. At a time when she becomes aware of herself, the sexual and physical abuse which she suffers are already a part of her life which results in her viewing them as normative. She is ignorant of the abuse she goes through at the hands of her uncle and knows only that he treats her better than her father did, because he listens to her and spends time teaching her. This innocence stays with her until she graduates from the primary school in Cairo, after a night at the cinema, when her uncle tells her that dancing and kissing a man are sins. Thus, Firdaus becomes certain that what he has been doing to her was wrong and bad. It is at this juncture that the uncle stops molesting her and prepares to take a bride. Because Firdaus has no proper socialization, all she knows at this stage is that she loves her uncle, but cannot say it, she also loves attending school. The respite from her uncle's abuse is short lived and she soon falls into a different type of unease.

While attending secondary school, Firdaus's uncle marries and his wife loathes Firdaus. Because of this, alienation becomes her state in the house, until she is "banished" to the boarding house. While there, she enjoys the companionship and friendship of her age mates. She also develops a love for books and does well, graduating the second best in the school. It is here that she becomes completely aware of herself, her likes and dislikes, what she would like to be when she grows up and what she doesn't want for herself. With this self-awareness comes the beginning stirrings of self-assertion. However, her uncle's family has no place for her when she returns, neither is the uncle prepared to further her education because a university is "a place where she will be sitting side by side with men" and a respected Sheikh like himself, cannot send "his niece off to mix in the company of men!" (Saadawi 100) In this, we see the uncle's failure, his heavy hand of judgment on Firdaus' life, even more than her parents. For her parents had simply given birth to her, deprived her of food and learning, circumcised her and died. But he, was the one who has abused her sexually for years, given her hope in becoming someone through education and then,

systematically taken away this hope for the flimsy reason of her studying among men in the classroom, while he had slept with her on the same bed in the same room for years, every single day. Again, it is he who marries her off to the diseased retiree Sheikh Mahmoud, as it costs him nothing having no need to provide a dowry. Indeed, he makes money off Firdaus. Thus it is that she becomes mere chattel.

Firdaus's uncle encapsulates all that is wrong with the Arab Islamic culture. A pervert who abuses a child relative for years, he suddenly becomes a Sheikh introducing political Islam and its more restrictive practices into everyday life. No one challenges him or his past actions. Hence, he is against his wife's suggestion that Firdaus be sent to the university, a university which, he himself attended, paid for by his poor aunt. He settles Firdaus into a loveless, undesirable marriage, where the groom is not only diseased and old, but starves and abuses his wife physically, sexually and emotionally. The Uncle justifies these too and washes his hands off Firdaus as does his wife, who asks Firdaus to endure the marriage and abuse, because she and her husband have been paid by the old abusive husband, Sheikh Mahmoud. In the same way Firdaus' uncle goes unchallenged with his vile and vicious practices, as her husband does.

The society's acceptance of violence against and mistreatment of women as demonstrated by the uncle's wife's speech which says Muslim men especially sheiks, beat their wives which goes uncontested by her husband, bespeaks normative behavior. Indeed, when Firdaus eventually falls into the hands of Sharifa Salah el Dine, the prostitute, she asks which man is responsible for Firdaus' sad state and lists a number of names, one of which Firdaus identifies with. That women should suffer at the hands of men, that men should be excused for seeking out and sleeping with prostitutes and raping women are commonplace. At the scene of her arrest, when Firdaus defies the prince and despises his money, the police come to get her because she tells him how she can kill him, the police say of him, regardless of the situation in which they find him: "he is a prince and a hero. He's not a criminal" (Saadawi 262). Before Firdaus begins to assert herself in a bid to achieve self-realization, she comes to the realization that "marriage was the system built on the most cruel suffering for women" (Saadawi 229). She learns the value of money and decides to own her body and become a prostitute as that will fetch her money and comfort. However, her satisfaction is short lived as a customer/friend remarks that her profession is ignoble. Because of this, she decides to take up respectable work as a lowly paid clerk in a firm, where she works for a few years. The poverty and injustice she encounters in the course of this, by way of heartbreak, scorn and constant sexual advances, put her off this path and she returns to prostitution. For she had developed a jaded view:

all women were prostitutes of one kind or another. Because I was intelligent I preferred to be a free prostitute, rather than an enslaved wife, every time I gave my body I charged the highest price... whenever I needed a dose of honour or fame, I had only to draw some money from the bank *and make a public donation*. (Saadawi, 241- 242)

In all of these, not only does she remember her mother's tending of her father during the winter months and favouring his wellbeing and feeding over that of her children, Firdaus also recalls the injustices meted out by her father who is so emotionally distant that for her, he is indistinguishable from the other men. Men like her uncle, her husband, his rapes and insults, Bayoumi, who repeatedly rapes and pimps her out to other men, while keeping her locked in a room and Ibrahim, her colleague from work who deceives her, sleeps with her and then marries the boss's daughter. There is also the policeman who threatens to arrest her unless she lets him have intercourse with her, and does so without paying and, Marzouk, the pimp, who hijacks her hard acquired independence, takes over her business and body and is protected by the law. She, therefore, concludes that in order to free herself completely from the manipulation of men, hers will be a journey from "*thanatos to eras*;" for she must die in order to achieve total freedom. In a bid to become self-realized, Firdaus' goal becomes transcendent and she tears the money paid her in her last sexual encounter. She says to the psychologist at the end: "I have triumphed over both life and death because I no longer desire to live, nor do I any longer fear to die, I want nothing, I hope for nothing, I fear nothing, therefore I am free" (Saadawi 264). At the end of the day, therefore, Firdaus attains self-realization by not only transcending societal needs, wants and dictates, but also by taking herself out of the sphere of the physical world and its concerns.

Saadawi's caveat in this text seems to be that, total freedom for the woman, especially the woman in Arab Islamic society, can only be achieved through transcendence. This is because, even in the abandonment of society's strictures, there is the lure to return, to become again, shackled as Firdaus is advised to appeal her death sentence so it could be commuted to life imprisonment.

Unlike *Woman at Point Zero*, *We Need New Names* focuses on both females and males as subaltern. When the story begins, we are presented with Darling and her group of friends, male and female who are living in a slum-Paradise, because they have been displaced from their homes by a government demolition exercise. They are poor, black children without the benefit of education. Darling, Bastard, Chipso, Godknows, Sbho and Stina, roam around a rich suburb, Budapest to steal guavas

which they eat to curb their hunger. Being children in their middle childhood, they are self-aware. Self-aware to the extent that it is one of them, Darling, who tells their story. In the voice of a child, she covers subjects of police brutality and government failure, child rape and gender based violence, Chinese conglomerate take-over, globalization, HIV aids, poverty and western aid politics, migration and the break down of family structure, commercialization of religion, disillusionment and a range of other issues. It is as though in their childish wanderings and speculation, they have encountered almost all the problems bedeviling the African continent.

This self-awareness by Darling and her friends results in their wishing they were not in their country. Because of material lack, they aspire to migrate to better places, as evident in the Country-game which they play.

First we have to fight over names because everybody wants to be the U.S.A. and Britain and Canada and Australia and Switzerland and France...These are country-countries. If you lose the fight, then you just have to settle for countries like Dubai and South Africa... They are not country-countries, but at least life is better than here. Nobody wants to be rags of countries like Congo, like Somalia, like Iraq... and not even the one we live in-who wants to be a place of hunger and things falling apart? (Bulawayo, 49).

Thus, even outside of games, they each have dreams of redemption. Sbho, the prettiest one, states: "I'm going to marry a rich man from Budapest. He'll take me away from Paradise" (Bulawayo 12). Bastard dreams of Johannesburg; "I'm blazing out of this kaka country myself. Then I'll make lots of money, come back and buy a house in this very Budapest" (Bulawayo 13). Of all the children, Darling has a real possibility of escape, as her aunt Fostalina lives in America, she declares: "I'm going to America to live with my aunt Fostalina, it won't be long, you'll see" (13). This depiction of migration as a potentially liberatory displacement is presented through the children's fantasies, but destabilized by the reality of adult lives.

It is the undermining of the fantasies associated with migration which characterizes the other parts of Darling's individuation journey, as well as that of her friends. Concurrently, this is done with a presentation of the negatives of migration on both the migrant and the home community or country. This is the crux of the argument as it relates to *We Need New Names* in this essay. While other literature have dwelt on the semantics and nuances of naming in the text, this essay interrogates the place and experiences of the postcolonial migrant in the text. Amongst her group of friends, Darling, Godknows and Bastard, are the fortunate ones who migrate outside of the 'broken' country. While Darling makes it to the United States on a visitor's visa, Bastard goes to South Africa and Godknows, to the United Arab

Emirates.

After Darling migrates, she captures for us, the experiences and conflict of post colonial migrants, especially when this migration is to the West. From the idolised view of African countries and cultures, which is fostered by the colonial discourse due to its epistemic construction of the colonised, as frozen at a particular point in time of its history, it does not give room for multiple pictures and facets of the colonised. Thus, Darling is confronted in the toilet by a white woman who is so eager to show her appreciation for beautiful African culture, her concern for the atrocities going on in the continent and her generosity towards helping out, that she corners a teenager in the toilet and rambles on like a molester without thought of how her actions come across to the young girl. The alienation associated with the initial confrontation of the new, majority culture and the subsequent struggle to adopt and adapt (basically the act of hybridization), is another facet of the postcolonial migrant's struggle which Darling exposes. She says: "When I first arrived at Washington I just wanted to die. The other kids teased me about my name, my accent, my hair, the way I talked or said things, the way I dressed, the way I laughed in the end I just felt wrong in my skin, in my body, in my clothes, in my language, in my head, everything" (Bulawayo, 311- 312).

Darling is shocked by snow, the deceptiveness of its fall and the unrelenting harshness of it. When she eventually begins to settle down under the care of her aunt, she makes friends and begins to categorize the postcolonial migrant experience in a universal manner.

First, the postcolonials are faced with a fall into deceitfulness, not necessarily by choice, but by reason of their environment and financial state. When Darling attends Dumi's wedding with her aunt's family, she is struck by how white Americans smile at nothing and learns to "show her teeth," even when addressing complete strangers like the woman who accosts her in the bathroom. That same day, she makes the faux pas of spanking the child Mandla when he goes around the wedding reception, hitting adults with his ball. The Americans at the reception are appalled and it is Shaka Zulu who comes to her rescue by declaring that all is well and that is how Africans discipline naughty children. Even though Aunt Fostalina agrees that Mandia deserved the spanking, she still has to save face by reprimanding Darling, displaying the double facedness of postcolonial migrants. The deceit which postcolonials engage in for financial reasons are numerous. From the beginning of their journey, they lie: for the visas, to get their passports and to travel to the countries of their various dreams. When they eventually get there, they take on jobs which their visas do not support, they stay back in America because their visas are expired and

they have been unable to renew them. For these reasons, they are apprehensive when they hear sirens or encounter law enforcement officers. Even Uncle Kojo, who has stayed for a long time and even fathers a son, T.K in the United States cannot visit Ghana because, if he does, he cannot return. The chapter titled "How They Lived," describes this in detail:

When they asked us where we were from, we exchanged glances and smiled with the shyness of child brides. They said, Africa? We nodded yes. What part of Africa? We smiled. Is it that part where vultures wait for famished children to die? We smiled. Where life expectancy is thirty-five years? We smiled. Is it there where dissidents shove AK-47s between women's legs? We smiled when these words tumbled from their lips like crushed bricks, we exchanged glances again and the water in our eyes broke. Our smiles melted like dying shadows and we wept; wept for our blessed, wretched country. (Bulawayo 450 - 451)

This is what Carmen Concilio calls payment for a new life. Citing actual falls from the text as part of the price paid for integration, we are told of a worker in the building industry: "Ecuador fell from forty stories working on a roof and shattered his spine, screaming, ¡Mis hijos! ¡Mis hijos! On his way down!" (Bulawayo 244). There is also the fall into invisibility that affects all migrants and seems to be a universal experience consequent upon the fall into lies (Concilio 43). Darling and her Nigerian friend Marina, soon learn to be afraid of the police like Uncle Kojo because they work without permission and are constantly breaking the law and because even their very presence in the America of their reality, is illegitimate. Therefore, in order to attract as little attention as possible to themselves, they become invisible, not asking for too many details from their migrant friends who, like themselves, are also breaking the law. They are known by the names of their countries and if they are close friends, they do not pry too much into each other's affairs.

Not only do the postcolonial migrants have to live with the pity of white people, they also have to deal with the lack of understanding of those who they leave behind in the home countries, who mount pressure on them to send money and material items, and demand for visits. Darling notes this when she speaks with her mother, who demands for a satellite dish to mount in the house which aunt Fostalina has bought for her. Far away as she is, she does not appreciate the effort that goes into meeting her demands and it is Darling who sees the tiredness etched on her aunt's face from working two jobs, who refrains from putting forward the ridiculous request. Even she herself is expected to send things down as Sbho asks her for a lady Gaga shirt and an iPod and she can no longer relate to her friends' situation and finds

their questions and conversation bizarre.

The negative effects of migration do not only stretch from physical discomfort to psychological unease for the postcolonial migrants, but also encroach into family life and spiritual essence. Again, "How They Lived" chronicles these effects. While first generation migrants like Aunt Fostalina and Uncle Kojo keep postponing their day of return, either permanently or for the purpose of a visit, due to their financial incapacity, the children they bear in the new world are lost to their culture.

And then our own children were born. We held their American birth certificates tight. We did not name our children after our parents, after ourselves; we feared if we did they would not be able to say their own names, that their friends and teachers would not know how to call them and when our parents reminded us over the phone that it had been a long, long time, and that they were getting old and needed to see us, needed to meet their grandchildren, we said, we are coming, our parents waited and they saw, saw that we did not come. They died waiting, clutching in their dried hands pictures of us. (Bulawayo 471- 472)

The entire system of family and values is overturned, as money takes precedence over family; and the first generation migrants end up disillusioned and alone, not understood by their children and unable to return to their homeland, having cut ties with it. Therefore, when they die, their spirits hover in the world beyond, lost and alienated, the way they were while alive, because they did not pave the way for their entrance into the spirit world. "We will leave for the land of the dead naked, without the things we need to enter our castle of our ancestors. Because we will not be proper, the spirits will not come running to meet us, and we will wait and wait and wait-forever waiting in the air like flags of unsung countries" (Bulawayo 476,477). This paints a dismal picture of the fate of the postcolonial migrant as in a bid to redeem himself, he loses himself forever, physically and spiritually-indicating that individuation for such individuals is unachievable and forever out of reach.

A return to Darling's personal experiences in this essay coincides with the return to Darling's personal experiences in the penultimate chapter of the story. Having failed to progress to a state of self-realization, she moves from self-awareness to self-acceptance after a period of her stay in America. After the bullying experiences on the way to Dumi's wedding, Darling becomes delighted with her own face. She, who had thought herself unremarkable, is happy with her appearance that she decides to have that face when she resumes school. Her decision is based on the fact that even though she might not be as beautiful as Sbho and might not have drawn the attention of Angelina Jolie if the latter had gone to Zimbabwe to adopt a daughter,

she is still pleasing to the eye. The closest which Darling gets to self-actualization, is the realization which she makes while leaving the mall where she works in an effort to save for college. She realizes that if she is not careful and diligent in pursuing her goals, she would end up an old lady, still working in the mall, on a job that is disgusting, tiring and without much room for growth. Additionally in the psychosis of Uncle Kojo, Shaka Zulu and the failing marriage of Aunt Fostalina, Darling learns to be different, to fight for a brighter future than the people she had come to meet in America.

Returning to the collective experience of the postcolonial migrant, Darling attempts to navigate her individuation process in a bid to achieve self-realization. From the time she turns fourteen, she wants to return to Zimbabwe for a visit, as she feels empty no matter the amount of food she eats. When this doesn't work because her visa has expired and she doesn't have a new one, she gives up. As a way of coping with her inability to travel home, she attempts to discuss the problems of Zimbabwe with Chipso over the phone. However, Chipso reprimands her: "What are you doing not in your country right now? Why did you run off to America, Darling Nonkululeko Nkala, huh? Why did you just leave? If it's your country, you have to love it. You have to fight for it no matter what, to make it right, You left it (Bulawayo 547 - 548).

The quote which closes the previous paragraph is the essence of the difference which Bulawayo's narrative has with other postcolonial Migrant Narratives. It denounces the act of migration as an act of cowardice and selfishness. It seems to be putting forward the argument that for postcolonial nations which are inundated with problems to be mended and have a semblance of wholeness, its people need to stay and fight for its restoration. This reprimand by Chipso upsets Darling's attempt at contentment and fulfilment. Her dismissal of Darling's concern and hurt about the state of the nation upsets Darling to the extent that she breaks her laptop by throwing it against her bedroom wall in anger. In her search for peace as she contemplates Chipso's words, Darling goes into TK's empty room and engages with the familiar, a little figurine of Shaka Zulu, which reminds her of home; yet, she is not at home. It is where she remains until Uncle Kojo comes in to inform her of the death of Osama bin Laden, the man who orchestrated a terrorist attack on America's World Trade Center in 2001. This incident happens in the closing chapter of the text which underlies the importance of Bulawayo's message. To remould or remake the society requires a return to that society. Thus, for the homeland to be remoulded, migrants have to return, pick up its broken pieces and stick them together, as exemplified in the metaphor of the broken coke bottle used in the text.

Conclusion

That Nawal El Saadawi and NoViolet Bulawayo have depicted social concerns of the day in their works is evident in the tracing of the individuation processes of their heroines. Not only have they shown these, but they have also gone further to proffer solutions to societal ills. Bulawayo more than Saadawi does this even in her title; "*We Need New Names*," suggesting the need for an overhauling of the existing system of leadership, thinking, being etc. (Obioha np) as the old ways have failed. While Saadawi's hesitation to proffer practical and workable solutions might be a result of the strict nature of the Arab Islamic society which is averse to criticism, and does not give way to new ways of thinking and being without violence, it might also be a desire of wanting to reveal only the tenable. Thus, Saadawi closes on the note that the system in Arab Islamic society does not allow for dissent by the woman which places her far outside of the control of the man, as such attempts at individuation are thwarted at every turn and eventually, squashed under patriarchal hegemony.

Bulawayo on the other hand, in the tradition of commitment, touches on numerous issues of note on the African continent. In fact, there seems to be nothing missing from the list of contemporary African issues, other than homosexuality and bisexual issues. While this may be a good thing, the story almost reads like an attempt to engage all the relevant contemporary issues, and the reader is put in a state of expectation. It is only when Darling relocates to America that we relax, knowing that identity issues bordering on migration crises will take precedence over any other issues brought up. In spite of this, the negative impacts of migration are interrogated and given precedence in a refreshing manner. Bulawayo also closes her story on the note that new ways of thinking, leading, acting and being, are what will redeem the African postcolonial character as well as African countries from their state of failure and collapse.

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