Covenant Journal of Language Studies (CJLS) Vol. 7 No. 1, June, 2019
ISSN: p. 2354-3582 e. 2354-3523 DOI: 10.20370/6742-4583

An Open Access Journal Available Online

New Names, New Identities: Globalization 'Affects' on Black Females in NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*

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Received: 28.11.2018 Accepted: 31.05.2019 Date of Publication: June, 2019

Abstract: The study examines the roles of globalization and technology on identity construction and alteration of black immigrants in the United States. Through the depictions of women and female characters in her novel, *We Need New Names*, Bulawayo offers a problematic of the role of technology in the lives of African characters and espouses some of the contradictions that they engender in identity alteration. The study argues that the big world has actually been made small and this has been reflected in the way everything happens, especially also with literary works. This study offers the theoretical basis for identity change by relying on the phenomenon of globalization, the concept of subaltern and the postcolonial term, "otherness" to evaluate the critical ways by which the identity of the protagonist and other black female migrants have changed in the Western diaspora.

Keywords: globalization, identities, subaltern, cultures, "affects."

Introduction

Although globalization remains to be venerated as a theory in itself, its influence across disciplines has been so far-reaching that Sengupta (2001) concludes it has led to formulations of "several antithetical and mixed concepts such as homogenization, differentiation, hybridization, plurality, localism, and relativism and also the mixed concept like "glocalisation" (3137). Giddens (1990) further argues that the phenomenon presents "the intensification of world-wide social relation, which links distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa" (64); an assertion which reflects the reality of some young girls in Bulawayo's debut novel. While the emergence of far-right politicians as leaders of some countries may appear to

have thrown spanner in the works of globalization, its impact will continue to be with us for as long as nations are linked via technology and share contacts and connections.

Aside giving a glimpse of the time setting of a literary work, the technology depiction by writers also presents "affects" on characters even though in an unintended broad sense. To scholars like Ofitserova-Smith (2003), homogenizing and other inimical tendencies of globalization always come to the forefront. Although there is the recognition of positive economic and global growth impacts of the phenomenon, there is genuine concern by many on its deleterious moral and cultural influences. Globalization's universalizing tendencies plays out on culture and values in these three different ways as enunciated by Nederveen (2004) and Tomlinson (1999): homogenization as a result of global cultural convergence; heterogeneity due to cultural resistance to homogenization; and hybridization which points to new and constantly evolving cultural forms and identities produced by transnational processes or fusion of cultures. The prevalent outcome of the impact of globalization on many cultures is hybridization.

Bulawayo's debut novel *We Need New Names* published in 2013, although relatively recent, has touched on contemporary history of the novelist's native Zimbabwe, chronicling Mugabe's misrule, rigged elections, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) pandemic, the culture of foreign Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) going to "third world" and of course, migrant experience from the perspective of a child and later as an adolescent. Writing mainly from a child's perspective, the stage which is deprived of voice, might have been a deliberate choice by the novelist as the affective is expected to be more intense then in character formation and identity negotiation. The writer's depictions and focus on how change of environment and exposure to new technologies have affected the lives of those caught in migrant flow is one with both moral and cultural implications.

NoViolet Bulawayo (born Elizabeth Zandile Tshele) is a female African writer in the diaspora who has adopted a pseudonym to mask her identity. The pseudonym adopted is one paying tribute to her late mother and her homeland. "NoViolet," which literally means "with Violet" is one picked to honour her mother whose name was Violet and who passed away when the novelist was only eighteen months old. Bulawayo is Zimbabwe's second largest city, where the novelist grew up before leaving for college in the United States at the age of eighteen. The assumption is that Bulawayo is the imaginary setting where Paradise, Budapest and Shanghai are located. Bulawayo and many other new African diaspora writers, especially those who have won awards for their writings have often been charged for pandering to the West by writing "sob" stories about Africa. Frassinelli (2015) while praising her for making her book accessible to non-African readers also observes that she "contorts the continent's past and present" (5). Habila, a fellow African diaspora writer also views Bulawayo's novel as

"performing Africa" for the global audience and the Western publishing houses. This charge is denied by Bulawayo whose commitment is "writing and honoring the damn story," as she exhibited the courage and boldness in engaging with postcolonial discourse of laying bare the experiences of the colonized in her native Zimbabwe and the dilemma of the migrant's "otherness" at the centre.

We Need New Names is a novel whose narrative styles are quite unique: the capturing of socio-political history of Zimbabwe through the lens of a ten-year old narrator; the sense of urgency and immediacy in the unravelling of the plot; and of course the humorous language, which made light the grave discourse of developmental challenges of post-colonial Zimbabwe and the attendant effect on the citizenry. The critical reading of this novel is one done from the ambit of the phenomenon of globalization and Spivak's concept of the subaltern with a view to highlighting the impact of globalization on the lives of the female characters in the text.

Interpretation of the text based on the phenomenon of globalization exposes technology "affectiveness" on the characters in the novel. The real spaces, aided by the advancement in technology expressed in Computer-Mediated Communications (CMC) and free movement of people and services in contemporary time come with attendant effects on identity. Tesfamichael (2010), recognizes the importance of technology as the driving force of economic, social and political shrinkage of the world ensuring ease of communication and travel. Beyond facilitating ease of communication and travel, technology is deemed to play greater roles in "affects" and identity alteration of many migrants and those who are in homeland. CMC has proven to be major tool of globalization and has enabled the deterritorialization of people even when they have not left the home space.

The collapse of the diverse geographical and cultural spheres and spaces into what is today known as a global village, where individuals operate and where new identities may be forged as a result of new experiences and exposure to things happening in faraway places has been largely the effect of globalization. Indeed, this effort posits that the globalized world is a "small world," where we experience an apparent collapse of geographical spaces and spheres and where individuals experience changes that may affect their identities. This study avers that the big world has actually been made small and this has been reflected in the way everything happens, especially also with our literature. In this instance, the effort has been about inquiring into how the craft of Bulawayo has reflected the morphing of the world in African literary life as portrayed in her novel, *We Need New Names*. Having experienced globalization elements both from the core and periphery spaces, the depiction of new affects has been through CMC that the characters have been exposed to even in the homeland long before translocation.

Given that the novel was written within proximate years after the phenomenon of globalization has been examined from several disciplinary perspectives, it becomes important to examine works

like Bulawayo's to see how female African fiction writers have created and inadvertently modeled the transformation of individuals when they relocate to new environments. Bulawayo's novel, which came within the proximate years of the dialectics of the globalization phenomenon, straddles two continents: her African home state of Zimbabwe and the Unites States of America, her "hostland," With Bulawayo's migration to the US and that of her protagonist who goes by the name "Darling," we are presented with a character who travels distances in seconds and faces the reality of life as a poor subaltern in her homeland and as a powerless and illegal migrant living through "unbelonging" in a hostland and struggling to carve a new identity while living or existing on the fringe in her adopted place of residence.

While Bulawayo's novel can be seen from the perspective of migrant literature through its thematic preoccupation, this work can be viewed also as querying the extent to which characters can travel and transcend disparate places and be involved in identity changing realities in somewhat virtual spaces and large geographical distances of Zimbabwe and the United States. This study does not seek to structure its outcome within a confined location and culture, but rather, it explores the problems of identity change foisted on the female characters in the novel through technology as an affective represented by its liminal characters, the illegal migrants.

Identity Change: Biological or Social?

The process of change of identity in the individual can be conceived of from either a biological or social sense or even both. How does change occur in the individual? Is it more biological or social? The changes that occur can both be biological and social and the predominance of one over the other depends on the physiological and psychological states of the individual at the time of the consideration. However, the change in Darling, the protagonist of *We Need New Names (WNNN),* is both biological and social considering her transitioning from a child in one environment to the adolescent experience in another. The writer portrays a young protagonist from childhood through adolescence transiting between the biological and the social identities. Harris (2014) in "Awkward Form and Writing the African Present" sees *WNNN* as a novel "that problematizes constructions of identity defined in geographically bonded terms by exploring the heterogeneity, porosity and mobility of the many borders that crisscross our globalized world" (7). This observation sums up the precariousness of fixed identities in a global world, where even before physical movement; there is already importation of cultures and ways of life via CMC. In fact, Harris is of the opinion that before Darling's migration, there is already polysemy and multiplicity of borders marked by the crisscrossing between Paradise through Budapest and then Shanghai, all fictional locations within the city of Bulawayo representing different class stratifications and living conditions.

This study lays the theoretical basis for identity change by relying on the phenomenon of globalization, the

concept of subaltern and the postcolonial term, "otherness" to evaluate the critical ways by which the identity of the protagonist and other black female migrants have changed in the Western diaspora. Bhabha (1994) famously articulates identity formation to a similar kind of liminal condition engendered by cultural difference, and conceiving of interstitial subjective space as the territory between competing identity structures that are often imagined in the binary of the mother country and its former colony.

This view suggests that the characters of interest here namely Darling, Aunty Fostalina and Marina to some extent are subjective outcomes of the environment they relocated to. Their identities can no longer be normal because they are indeed no longer "wholesome Africans," because their identities have certainly been altered. In the section titled "How They Left" in the text, the narrator stepping out of Darling's voice states: "They will never be the same again because you just cannot be the same once you leave behind who and what you are, you just cannot be the same" (*WNNN* 148). Of course, this quote points to the reality of all migrants: male or female; white or black. The novelist herself lays bare this view of translocation challenges to Hartselle in an interview:

> "Everyone who leaves their homeland to live in another has to deal with all sorts of adjustments and of course one of the easy ones, as in Darling's case, is food. But beyond that she has a hard time with the harsh Michigan winters (when we first meet her, she is indoors and not by choice, but because the cold and the snow have taken over the outside, making it unliveable for someone who's otherwise spent most of her life outdoors). There's also alienation from the homeland itself, the geographic space, and from family. There is the language barrier that may be dealt with but not totally done away with. And that specific melancholy that may occasionally seize an immigrant because the body and soul remembers another space and will crave for it."

All of the key issues identified by the novelist in the quote such as translocation, food, environmental factor, alienation from family and friends, language barrier and the issue of melancholy all express the vulnerability of migrants and are deemed partly responsible for the efforts to assimilate and with subsequent identity alteration or change. And as rightly observed by Isaacs (2016), as the female migrants navigate their emerging selfhood, they are forced to forge an identity among several competing subjectivities. Like iron in fire, that does not come out the same way it enters the furnace, and as humans, these characters cannot be expected to reflect a pristine African identity anymore, because they have been through the "fire of diasporic confusions and ambivalences." Not only would they struggle to maintain a duality of existence, they would be expected to satisfy the two environments, which do play out in the tendency to acculturate, assimilate or even resist the new norms and always resulting in hybridity at various levels.

The identities of the black female migrants can no longer be internally

coherent due to gendered migration experiences of the characters. We can even before analyzing them and putting them in perspectives, locate them within established theories of social change. It has been noted that social identity and self-categorization theory, for example, suggests that collective self-representation emerges from basic categorization processes (Turner, 1999). Having established a group-level sense of self, it can then influence goal-directed decision making. For instance, Darling, the protagonist of the novel has been subjected to self-categorization as an immigrant without papers and has inadvertently self-absorbed the status and forged an identity that indeed is temporal. At first, she nurses the hope that very soon Aunty Fostalina will be buying her a ticket to visit home when she says "I'll just go maybe for two weeks and then I'll come back, I say even though Aunt Fostalina is still ignoring me" (*WNNN* 191). And later a permanent identity, which she has to negotiate through what is known in theory as a "group-level sense of self." In Darling's attempt to achieve this, she seeks to go home and then return to assert her complete diaspora self-identity. This has to happen if she is to function properly as an immigrant living under the law. The reality is stated below in the dialogue between the protagonist and Aunty Fostalina:

> "Child, it's not like your father is Obama and he has the Airforce One; home costs money. Besides you came on a visitor's visa, and that's expired; you get out, you kiss this America bye-bye, Aunt Fostalina says…But why can't I come back? I can just renew my visa, I say, I say... Darling leave me alone, do I look like the Immigration to you? She says (191)."

Globalization and Identity Change

In Richard Applebaum's 2005 book, *Critical Globalization Studies*, Robinson advances the far reaching effect of globalization emerging across the disciplines and attests to how it is reshaping how we view our world. The phenomenon of globalization in literature is not much different from its variants as expressed in other disciplines. It is the coalescing of disparate cultures, perceived elimination of physical distances and affective consequences of CMC in the relational system of individualized or a grouped world. It is fusing the local and the global through movement of people, goods, capital, technology and services. Not only do all these things move, they also move at such speed that distances have been collapsed and there is now almost a perfect asynchronous harmony even in the way people relate as global communities formed across the globe enabled strongly by new technologies. In a telephone conversation with her friends back home, Darling marvels at the power of technology to transport people over far flung locations in the following quote: "Time dissolves like we are in a movie scene and I have entered the telephone and traveled through the lines to go home. I've never left, and I'm ten again" (*WNNN* 207). Robinson recognizes how "the pace of social change and transformation worldwide seems to have quickened dramatically in the latter decades of the twentieth century, with implications for

many dimensions of social life and human culture" (126-127).

The globalization era has brought about different tools of engagement across the globe (e.g. the Internet) that has enormous potentials to alter and change identities. In *WNNN*, Darling begins to experience identity change right before migration due to her exposure to an American medical drama seen on television. The chapter from where the novel got its title "We Need New Names" is one where the identity alteration of Darling and the other girls begin to manifest even without travelling as a result of the influence of an American medical drama "Emergency Room" with the acronym ER. In their bid to rid Chipo their eleven-year-old friend of her pregnancy, the young girls go to a secluded place to remove her "stomach" once and for all because they don't want her to have the baby and die in the process. In their attempt to remove the unwanted pregnancy, the girls decide to assume the identities of the American doctors in the medical drama: "In order to do this right, we need new names. I am Dr. Bullet, she is beautiful, and you are Dr. Roz, he is tall, Sbho says" while the third identity assumed by the third girl named Forgiveness is "Dr. Cutter" (84). And Chipo whose "stomach" is to be removed asks "Who am I" (84). The influence of a medical drama recorded thousands of miles away is so far reaching that some poor girls in Zimbabwe already have America imaginary fully ingrained in their subconscious.

Depictions of Darling, Chipo, Sbho and Forgiveness as female children in African space who have tried to morph into characters thousands of miles away show how the global can have a great influence on those in a local environment and how flimsy the divide line between environments and cultures have become. The female children with criminal innocence yield to global influence that one can conclude that they exist in dual environments: the first being the materially depraved Paradise located in Zimbabwe; and the other being materially rich American society represented by the medical drama, ER, and one that is transmitted electronically. What can be gleaned from this incident is that the technology/computer/communication mediated environment is causing people to accept the unreal with it assuming a vehicle for identity alteration.

As stated in the introduction, globalization process is one viewed by scholars like Robertson (1992) and Giddens (1991) to have universalizing tendencies and promoting modernity and homogenization of cultures. The assertion of homogenization of cultures may not be absolutely overwhelming because of the cultural pushbacks to imperialism, which postcolonialism attempts to propagate. It may be acceptable to say that there has been a cross-cultural exposure that has led to a better understanding of cultures and customs; and which can be ascribed for hybridization at different levels. The female African characters portrayed both within the local and global spaces in *WNNN* can be located within this perspective and we can assume that they are no longer pure in their "Africaness." Perhaps if this is true, it may then be

extended to mean that they are changed Africans and certainly as the title of the novel suggests, they may indeed need new names to describe their new identities. Just as the narrator states that because many of the migrants are staying illegally, they remain subalterns in a fringe existence: "We hid our real names, gave false ones when asked" (*WNNN* 244). And when the migrants have their own children who are availed of right to American citizenship, they are given names without cultural and national ties leading to total loss of identity. The narrator puts it thus:

> 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. We gave them names that would make them belong in America, names that did not mean anything to us: Aaron, Josh, Dana, Corey, Jack, Kathleen (249).

In the two instances where there are suggestions of needing new names, they connote much more than changing names, but identities as well.

Depictions of New Identities in *We Need New Names*

One of the factors that have been identified as playing a role in identity change or formation has been the protagonist's adoption and exposure to new technology narrated by Darling in her observation of her cousin TK:

> "Once I went up there to see what he was doing and I found him just sitting in his bed with that thing on his lap and *tobedzing* and *tobedzing* and *tobedzing* , bullets and bombs raining on the screen, I said, what are you doing and he said, Can't you see I'm playing a game? And I said, what kind of game do you play by yourself? And he said, Get the fuck out, I will not be friends with TK; he shuts himself up there like he lives in his own country by himself (*WNNN* 155)."

And in another instance, she presents Uncle Kojo's opinion of her aunty thus:

> And he says, Fostalina, ever since you started this weight thing you never cook. When was the last time we actually had a real dinner in this house, heh? You know in my country, wives actually cook hot meals every day for their husbands and children. And not only that, they actually also do laundry and iron and keep the house clean and everything (157).

The new technologies mentioned in the novel are those that fall under the general terminology referred to as communication technology, and those referred or alluded to are: cameras, phones and devices such as IPOD and the GPS navigators; smart online technologies like Google; direct online applications such as Netflix, XTube, RedTube; and Social Media applications such as *Facebook* and *Instagram*.

The importance of the new technology to identity alteration and eventual change can be considered and viewed from the perspective of globalization. The narrow niche that affects our work here has to do with CMC driven by a slew of hardware and online applications with all enabling the real time communications between

individuals, people and groups. These new technologies have been adopted and used in the literary field in a way that they drive characters and depict affects in different ways by authors writing in contemporary times. Affects which imply influence or to have an impact on something are important when we critique literary works because they are important in transmitting messages and intentions and are also outcomes in the characters that are portrayed. The use of CMC definitely suggests that characters may be virtually construed as being so and when they do; it means that they communicate across electronic spaces that collapse distance and synchronize time. It therefore means there is an "in-betweeness" that exists. It is this that certainly mediates the communication that takes place between characters. With CMC, writers employ products of technology as harbingers of cultural equalization or domination. For example, the use of computers to watch pornography can be considered as an act of sexual mediation. In *WNNN*, the protagonist's identity has been greatly shaped by the exposure in her new environment to new technology.

> I have decided the best way to deal with it all is to sound American, and the TV has taught me just how to do it. It's pretty easy; all you have to do is watch *Dora the Explorer, The Simpsons, SpongeBob, Scooby-Doo* and then you move on to *That's So Raven, Glee,* Friends, Golden Girls and so on, just listening and imitating the accents…..The TV has also taught me that if I'm talking to someone, I have to look him in the eye, even if is an adult, even if it is rude (196).

The inference that can be drawn from Bulawayo's novel is that technology in a significant way mediates the transition from childhood to adolescence of the protagonist, Darling and her friend Marina, both adolescent female African migrants. No mention is made of when Marina made it to the United States other than her being the grand-daughter of a chief from Nigeria and the daughter of a mother who does only night shift in an American hospital. Darling and Marina with their African American friend, Kristal have their sexual education being facilitated by their exposure to XTube and RedTube both online applications, which are technologically driven and meant for consumption of adults, while the female adults around are totally oblivious of the young girls' experiments.

The sex education of young adolescents in an African space is handled by mothers and older female family members who act as guide to prevent embarrassment with unwanted pregnancies. In Adichie's *Americanah*, a novel written same year as Bulawayo's *WNNN*, Aunty Uju is Ifemelu's guide on issues bothering on relationship with the opposite sex. When Ifemelu has unprotected sex with her boyfriend Obinze while in a Nigerian University, in a manner typical of adult females around, Obinze's mum, a college professor condemns it and advises privately that the two people wait until when they are able to assume responsibility for its consequences. For Darling and Marina, their location has exposed them to flicks on all manner of sexual indulgencies that exist in the West. Darling narrates their escapade thus: "When we come from school, we fling our book bags by the door and

head straight to the downstairs computer. Before, we used to watch XTube, but now we have discovered RedTube, which is way classier and doesn't have many viruses" (202). The young girls, unknown to female adults around them already have sexual awareness and are already indulging in sexual gratification through CMC without their knowledge and the unexpected outcome being identity alteration.

Bulawayo through the protagonist and her friends depicts the role that the new free socio-electronic space can play in identity alteration. For growing female children, it is expected that they learn how to transit from adolescence into adulthood from those who know and share cultural affinities with them. Among Africans, the experiential development of the female child is brokered by female adults in their societies who take them through the rituals and cultural norms of the society. In the absence of this cultural society in the protagonist's hostland, she joins the other young females to fill the gap by learning in free spaces of online communities represented by YouTube, XTube and the likes. Aunty Fostalina who is her primary host appears to have also failed in guiding the young protagonist. Nowhere in the novel is there a mention of Darling receiving any lesson on African cultural expectations of the female child. Darling, and the other adolescent female African migrant, Marina do not seem to have imbibed any lesson from their culturally aware female adults. This means that the identities of these characters have been altered by the absence of the informal cultural education that could have helped to shape their "Africaness".

In the novel, Darling, Marina and Kristal always hurry home without adult supervision to watch pornography on socio-media platforms. They are seen to have substituted the lack of a real physical community of adult life coaches with the ubiquitous socio-media with its lack of cultural mediation. So, the new technology becomes their teacher and shapes their identities. For the two young female African characters; Darling and Marina, the identities formed are totally different from what could have been if they were back "home" in Africa. They experience a cultural transition that has been mediated by online applications that really do not belong to anyone and is controlled by unknown forces whose intentions may be shady. With the nature of the access they have to new technology, they forge identities that are totally contradictory to their homeland culture. In this passage we see the protagonist wishing she could talk back to her mum:

> "I start to call her crazy but I hold it and tell myself that it is one of the American things I don't want to do, so I just roll my eyes instead. On TV, on Maury Show and Jerry Springer and stuff, I've seen these kids calling their mothers crazy and bitches and whores. I've practiced the words, but I I'll never say them aloud to my mother or any other adult (206-207)."

Bulawayo portrays the young Darling and Marina receiving first lessons in sex education from technological devices that suffer from lack of real ownership and viable cultural identity. They

eventually graduate to masturbating without the adults knowing. In these depictions they become students and practitioners of sexual acts learnt from "unowned" technological sources. The portrayal here is the author's way of condemning the unsupervised access to the socio-media of the young and the impressionable represented by Darling and her friends. The indictment of the adult females in the diaspora is narrated in the following lines by Darling: "Aunty Fostalina asks if I want to go places with her. She leaves me alone and does not force or beat me up like perhaps Mother or Mother of Bones would if I was not doing what they wanted" (160). The indulgence and nonchalance by Aunty Fostalina coupled with the exposure to technology lead to identity alterations of Darling and Marina. Their new identities certainly have been negotiated more through free "unowned" social spaces.

The television also plays a major role in Aunty Fostalina's effort to be thin like white women as she is constantly following on aerobics and weight loss exercises relayed on it. The novel portrays how the TV creeps into her life with it virtually controlling how she thinks and looks; she is enthralled by the powerful TV culture that influences daily lives in her adopted country: "she has to keep up with the women on TV-four-five-six, and walk, and walk" (151). Uncle Kojo retorts on Aunty Fostalina's attempt to be thin:

> "I actually don't understand why you are doing all this. What are you doing to yourself, Fostalina, really-exactly-what? Kick. And punch. And kick. And punch. Look at you, bones, bones, bones. All bones. And for what? They are not even African, those women you are doing like, shouldn't that actually tell you something? That there is actually nothing African about a woman with no thighs, no hips, no belly, no behind (153)."

Certainly, with this portrayal, her identity has been altered to suit her "hostland" where thinness is revered. Given her obsession with wanting to alter her weight and become thin, the writer simply stops short of changing her name to "Aunty Fostathinner." No doubt Aunty Fostalina's identity has been altered and it is possible her name which holds no cultural identity might have been acquired on her arrival in the United States.

The TV has also been very effective in Darling's quest for assimilation especially in her attempt to sound American all for the purpose of integration and assimilation in the new environment. She presents her efforts this way:

> "I have decided the best way to deal with it all is to sound American, and the TV has taught me just how to do it. It's pretty easy; all you have to do is watch *Dora The Explorer*, *The Simpsons*, *SpongeBob*, *Scooby-Doo*, and then you move on to *That's So Raven*, *Glee*, *Friends*, *Golden Girls*, and so on, just listening and imitating the accents. If you do it well, then before you know it, nobody will ask you to repeat what you said (196)."

But the mimicry attempt, a process in assimilation is always one producing absurd results. Aunty Fostalina sounds so funny such that when "rolling her *r*, the sound of it is like something is

vibrating inside her mouth" (199), a mimicry Darling finds irritating. With time and practice, Darling begins to sound American that when on a phone conversation with her mum she quips: "America has taught you to speak English to your mother and with that accent" (206). But the old accent creeps in anytime she talks fast and gets excited and Darling observes when that happens: "I start to sound like myself, and my American accent goes away" (223). Imitating American accent means assumption of a new identity which is unreal, an absurdity which points toward assimilation.

The process of identity change is not only restricted to the young ones, even the adults are also affected by migration in many ways than just mere attempt at mimicry. Aunty Fostalina in her relationship with her partner and live-in lover, Uncle Kojo, suggests an identity very alien to Africa. Of the relationship, Darling reveals "Uncle Kojo, TK's father, who is like Aunt Fostalina's husband but not really her husband because I don't think they are married-married" (150). The relationship between Aunty Fostalina and Uncle Kojo appears transactional as he laments the abandonment of African culture where the wife cooks and cares for the husband. As Aunty Fostalina does not cook for Uncle Kojo and they are not married, then they are both considered co-tenants.

Aunty Fostalina's transition to someone new transcends the physical where she is exercising rigorously in order to shed weight and be like a white woman. Her decision to live with a man without being married to him is one that shows total disavowal of African culture or it may have been a deliberate choice due to her legal status in America. The narrator states that Uncle Kojo is also without papers. But while he is not presented as engaging in infidelity, Aunty Fostalina is portrayed as disrespectful of Uncle Kojo because without caring for his feelings and ego, she gets involved in a relationship with her white neighbour, Eliot whom she brings to the same home she shares with Uncle Kojo for sex. Aunty Fostalina's involvement with another man and more harrowing, a white man is probably the reason Uncle Kojo drowns his sorrow and bruised ego in alcohol.

Aunty Fostalina's relationship with a white man, a representative of the imperialist, who probably will be gloating within himself is an affront against Uncle Kojo, a postcolonial subject. And for agreeing to get amorous with Aunty Fostalina in the same space she shares with Uncle Kojo shows this feeling by Eliot that "I can have your woman all I want even within your space." This incident is a carry-over from slavery era where according to Hallam in "The Slave Experience: Men, Women and Gender" white men felt entitled to their black female slaves' bodies. The white masters saw their black female slaves as objects of fantasy and even raped some of the married ones due to their husbands' inability to protect them. Of course, in Africa, women also get involved in infidelity/adultery but it is never flaunted. Darling when in Zimbabwe narrates how her mother becomes involved in adultery in the absence of her husband. The man she is involved in

adulterous relationship with always steals in under the cover of darkness and leaves before daybreak. In actual fact, the infidelity act is likened to the act of stealing and the identity of the man shielded from Darling.

Conclusion

Bulawayo may not have set out to depict the roles of technology in identity alteration deliberately; however, she has portrayed how lives of her characters are entwined with new "thingies." Her depictions of technological devices show how our lives have become tethered and entangled with them. The roles they play in the lives of her characters most especially the females show both their positive and negative impacts. These depictions in her novel indicate the influences and power of the CMC in a postmodern world. She has used technology to portray class difference (the children seeing the phone as a novelty) in her native Zimbabwe; as a tool of dubious humanitarian services (the NGOs, CNN and BBC networks constantly taking their pictures); a symbol of cultural imperialism (Aunty Fostalina trying to get thin) and an imperfect system (Uncle Kojo's navigation system not working right) to which we have tethered our daily lives and have inadvertently lost our identities.

There are no instances where Bulawayo exclusively portrays the other gender as being superior users of the new "thingies". What she has simply done is to give a realistic representation of how new technology engages with the daily lives of the African characters either as migrants in hostland or citizens in homeland. She gives an informed perspective of the state of new technology usage among the people in her society. Through her depictions of women and female characters in her novel, *We Need New Names*, she offers a problematic of the role of technology in the lives of African characters and espouses some of the contradictions that they engender in identity alteration. This may have been occasioned by an identity crisis following her migration to the United States of America where many of the migrants face the process of acculturation and assimilation.

The sudden access to technological resources also appears to have been presented as a steep learning curve. This makes it difficult for the African migrants to experience gradual cultural modulations of self and to be able to adjust to new experiences and form identities that are negotiated and constructed consciously by themselves. The technological adaptation can be daunting as to lead to unintended outcomes as the migrants' identities change with inadvertent mediation. The inference drawn at the end of it all is that the portraiture and depictions of the effects of technology on female characters written from the perspective of a female examined through the lens of globalization is one that is not necessarily gendered. Globalization driven mainly by proven and the new emerging innovations in technology has been shown to have tremendous effects on the identity of the major characters, both male and female, but with the novelist beaming a search light on mainly the female characters.

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