

Nostalgia as a Coping Mechanism in NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*^(*)

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Abstract

This paper explores how NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* shows nostalgia as a means of coping with acculturative stress. It draws on the studies of social and cross-cultural psychology within the framework of migration, acculturation, acculturative stress and nostalgia to examine what happens to the protagonist who was raised in one cultural setting, *i.e.* Zimbabwe, when she tries to re-establish her life in another setting, *i.e.* U.S.A. In her efforts to integrate in the dominant society, Darling encounters alienation, racism, stereotyping and identity crisis. A subsequent psychological effect of these harsh conditions is acculturative stress, which has negative consequences on her psychological well-being. Through a close reading of the novel, I argue that nostalgia serves as a coping mechanism in the face of the acculturative stress of the protagonist by stimulating positive influence. Moreover, I observe that nostalgia not only helps the protagonist in maintaining self-esteem and developing social awareness of the world, but also contributes in developing her integrated identity that will assist her in the process of adaptation.

Keywords: Migration, Acculturation, Acculturative Stress, Nostalgia, Coping Mechanism

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الحنين الي الماضي كآلية للتكيف في
رواية نحن نحتاج الي اسماء جديدة لنوفيلت بولايو

الملخص

تساعد هذه الدراسة فى سد فجوة ملحوظة فى أدب الهجرة التي لم يتم البحث فيها بشكل كاف. من خلال دراسة رواية نحن نحتاج الي اسماء جديدة للأديبة الامريكية نوفيلت بولايو ذات الأصول الزيمبابوية، نجد أن هذه الدراسة تلقي الضوء على الكيفية التي يمكن أن يكون بها شعور الحنين إلى الماضي لدى بطلنة الرواية بمثابة عاطفة إيجابية تعمل على التأقلم مع الضغوط الناتجة عن الهجرة و التغيير الثقافي. علاوة على ذلك، فإن هذه الدراسة قد إستخدمت مشاعر الحنين إلى الماضي لتقييم وعي بطلنة الرواية في إستجابتها للتغيير الثقافي والتكيف فى أمريكا. و فى حين أن العديد من الباحثين قاموا بعمل بحوث مختلفة عن شعور الحنين إلى الماضي إلا أن قلة منهم فقط قد لاحظت وظيفتها الإيجابية فى عمليات الهجرة والتغيير الثقافي والتكيف.

من خلال تطبيق نظريات التغيير الثقافي و الضغوط الناتجة عن التغيير الثقافي والحنين والتكيف من منظور علم النفس الإجتماعي و الثقافي، فإن هذه الدراسة تحاول إثبات أن شعور الحنين إلى الماضي الذي تشعر به بطلنة الرواية ما هو إلا نوع من أنواع المشاعر الإيجابية التي تنتج عن حالتها النفسية السلبية. تلك الحالة النفسية تحدث نتيجة الهجرة و التغيير الثقافي و السعى للتكيف مع أساليب الحياة الأمريكية. فعندما يجتمع الماضي و الحاضر معاً فى عقل بطلنة الرواية، فإن الحنين يلعب دوراً مهماً فى الحفاظ على هويتها ليعطيها إحساساً بقيمة الحياة ويزيد من تقديرها و وعيها لذاتها. كذلك يساعدها على تشكيل هويتها المتكاملة من خلال تبنى بعض العادات و التقاليد من كلتا ثقافتي أمريكا و زيمبابواي.

Introduction

Immigrants usually run away from their homelands to escape from harsh circumstances such as economic instability, political disorder, social injustice, or natural disasters. Moreover, they are motivated by the pull factors of migration such as financial prosperity, social justice, democracy or safe environment in the new surroundings. Migration is, in fact, a very stressful process; it includes not only discarding the social background, but also the initial feeling of alienation, isolation, or even exclusion due to the feeling of change. This change is referred to as acculturation. The term “acculturation” was first coined by anthropologists in 1936 to denote the cultural changes that happen in consequence of the contact of both the dominant and non-dominant cultures. Nevertheless, John W. Berry has modified this definition in the field of cross-cultural psychology. In his 2005 essay, he defines acculturation as “the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members” (“Acculturation” 698). In the same essay, Berry reveals that the experiences of acculturation have almost a great impact on the immigrants’ well-being. During the experience of acculturation, most immigrants suffer from stress and confusion over identity, language, employment, schooling, religious conviction and social interaction. Owing to the immigrants’ efforts to cope with such acculturation conflicts, adaptation may be achieved. In the adaptation phase, Berry distinguishes between four strategies of acculturation. The first strategy is called “assimilation” in which individuals choose to abandon their native culture and identity and search for more chances for interaction with the dominant culture. During this stage, immigrants relinquish their ethnic identity and melt within the host country. Conversely, if immigrants prefer to preserve their national identity and keenly stay away from any involvement with the dominant culture, this process is called “separation.” In Berry’s

theory, “integration” occurs when there is an understanding of the adoption of some elements of the native culture while interacting positively with the dominant culture. Berry defines “marginalization” that takes place when immigrants are not only able to preserve their native culture in the new surroundings, but are also entirely expelled from any involvement with the dominant culture. In this phase, immigrants lose both psychological and cultural interaction with either their cultural groups or the dominant society (Berry 705).

Since the process of acculturation and adaptation involve cultural, political, social, physical and psychological changes, it, predictably, causes numerous challenges. To deal with these challenging features of acculturation, Berry proposes the term “acculturative stress.” In an essay entitled “Stress Perspectives on Acculturation,” Berry defines acculturative stress as the immigrant’s response to every-day life problems that arise as a result of intercultural relations (43). Though the term “culture shock” is commonly used to refer to this state of challenge, Berry prefers the term “acculturative stress” for many reasons. The word shock implies the appearance of only negative experiences indicating that only difficulties will rise from cultural interaction. However, in the acculturation process, people are usually exposed to manageable difficulties. Moreover, the core of the immigrants’ dilemma is not cultural, but intercultural. Additionally, Berry believes that acculturative stress is strongly associated with the psychological theory of stress and coping. It emerges because of acculturation-related stress; therefore it has a theoretical ground. Within this theoretical ground, people are believed to be capable of coping with the life-event stressors to attain some long-term adaptations (43). In the same way, there are some coping strategies immigrants employ to manage the acculturative stress and achieve the final adaptation. In their 1984 book, *Stress, Appraisal and Coping*, Lazarus and Folkman define coping as the psychological and behavioral efforts which a

person makes to manage, lessen, or accept conditions that are considered stressful (141). In the same book, they classify coping into problem-focused and emotion-focused coping (44). The first tries to control or manage the problem, whereas the second tries to adjust the emotions related to the problem.

In this paper, I argue that nostalgia is one of the emotion-focused coping mechanisms that is used in managing acculturative stress. Nostalgia is a multifaceted concept whose definition has witnessed numerous modifications over the years. The word nostalgia originates from the Greek word *nostos* (homecoming) and *algia* (pain or wound); accordingly, it means painful longing to homecoming. The word was first coined by Swiss physician Johannes Hofer in the seventeenth century to explain the physical effect of chronic homesickness among Swiss band of soldiers being away from their homeland. In his 1688 “Medical Dissertation on Nostalgia,” Hofer defined nostalgia as “a cerebral disease” caused by demonic forces (387). During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, various studies of nostalgia as a disease were made, and finally two approaches were approved: “a psychological influence on the physical, and an influence of the body on the soul” (Starobinski 88). During the 20th century, psychodynamic theorists considered nostalgia as “immigrant psychosis” (Frost 801), a “monomaniacal obsessive mental state causing intense unhappiness and leading to a complete uprooting of a settled existence” (Fodor 25). Moreover, Castelnuovo-Tedesco described it as symptom strongly associated with the feeling of failure, sorrow, grief, and melancholy (110). It is worth mentioning that all the above-mentioned viewpoints confirm that nostalgia is a negative concept that often has the same meaning of homesickness.

Only within recent decades has nostalgia come to be tackled differently. It is viewed as a multifarious phenomenon that has a positive influence in forming identity, providing a sense of meaning, and being reconciled to both the past and present. Kaplan views

nostalgia as a sweet-tempered emotion about the past which is full of sweet memories, satisfaction, and fulfillment (465). Furthermore, most scholars consider nostalgia as different from homesickness. Unlike homesickness, which is primarily a negative emotion, nostalgia is a principally positive emotion. In an early study of this attitude in 1979, Davis says that the words “warm, old times, childhood and yearning” are associated more frequently with the term “nostalgia” than with the term “homesickness” (4). More Generally, Sedikides *et al.* note, in their 2009 essay “Buffering Acculturative Stress” that nostalgia refers to the sentimental longing for close family and friends, important events, scenic places, tangible stuffs, and domestic animals. Nevertheless, homesickness stands only for a person’s place of birth. Furthermore, homesickness is connected with psychological problems that result from the acculturation in the new setting rather than over-romantic yearning to features in the past. Finally homesickness is ephemeral, whereas nostalgia occurs repeatedly and is continual across the natural life (354). Other theorists, however, still draw attention to the negative part of nostalgia.

More recently, contemporary nostalgia theory has emerged in the field of sociology and social psychology to concentrate on three topics: the nature of nostalgic experience, what triggers nostalgia and nostalgia’s psychological function (Wildschut *et al.* 976). Using the contemporary theory of nostalgia, as a vehicle for examining the experiences of migration and acculturation, the main argument of this paper is that the nostalgia that is awakened in the immigrant protagonist in *We Need New Names* is neither a “defeatist attitude to the present and future”(Pickering and Keightley 920) nor a “ failure to adjust to change” (Ritivoi 20); rather it is a positive emotion with bittersweet essence that acts as a coping mechanism against the acculturative stress that arises during her process of acculturation in the host country.

We Need New Names

We Need New Names is written by a Zimbabwean migrant, NoViolet Bulawayo, who was born in 1981. Bulawayo migrated to the United States of America when she was 18 years old. She has recently earned her MFA from Cornell University where she has received Truman Capote Fellowship. She is now a Lecturer in English at Stanford University. *We Need New Names* is Bulawayo's first novel. Before writing this novel, she published two short stories entitled "Hitting Budapest," which won the 2011 Caine Prize for African Writing, and "Snapshots" in 2009 which was shortlisted in the same year for the South African PEN/Studzinski Literary Award. As an award-winning writer, Bulawayo has won many awards such as the 2014 Hemingway Foundation/ PEN Award and the Etisalat Prize for Literature. In addition, Bulawayo is considered the first Zimbabwean and first black African woman to win the Man Booker Prize ("No Violet Bulawayo").

We Need New Names was published in 2013. In the same year, it was shortlisted for many prizes such as Barnes & Noble Discover Award, Los Angeles Times Book Prize, the Guardian First Book Award and the Man Booker Prize. Though several studies have been conducted on this novel, little of them have tackled the issue of nostalgia. For example, Tembi Charles's "The Zimbabwean Crisis: Locations of Writing and the Literary Representation of Zimbabwe's 'Lost Decade'" depicts nostalgia as a heartbreaking emotion that makes it difficult for the protagonist to fit in the new society. The study, thereby, ignores the constructive function of nostalgia. Likewise, Kimméra Sherrilyn Naidoo's "'Name Rhymes with Shame': Representations of Migrant Women Protagonists in Selected African Texts" touches on the negative consequences of nostalgia. Therefore, nostalgia is thoroughly discussed in this paper in regards to its beneficial role on the protagonist's wellbeing.

Bulawayo's plot in *We Need New Names* is based on her own experience and the experiences of those she knows well in both Zimbabwe and America. In her narrative, she focuses on the protagonist Darling's point of view, first as a young girl and later as a teenager. Darling is a ten-year-old Zimbabwean child who lives in an imaginary small bush city ironically called Paradise along with her companions Chipu, Bastard, Sbho, Godknows and Stina. In the first half of her narrative, Bulawayo gives a picture of the malfunction of post-colonial African countries by showing Zimbabwe as a country afflicted by deficiency, food shortage, job loss, political repression, economic disorder, high inflation and fanatic religious rituals. Darling is exposed to numerous challenges in her every-day life. Some of these challenges include an eleven-year-old friend abducted and impregnated by her grandfather; pilfering guavas from a nearby city to satisfy her hunger; dropping out of school because of the migration of teachers to higher-income countries; finding out a woman committing suicide due to fatal disease, stealing the dead woman's shoes to exchange it for food; the collapsing of the health system leading her people to be exploited by devious prophets; and the homecoming of her father from South Africa with his body destroyed by AIDS.

Such harsh conditions constitute the push factors of migration. Almost all the characters in the novel aspire to run away from Zimbabwe to a more promising country with more chances, employment and prosperity. Godknows announces that she is "blazing out of this kaka country" and planning to accumulate a lot of money abroad (Bulawayo 15). Sbho wishes to run away from her residence imagining that she will marry a gentleman who will take her "away from Paradise, away from the shacks and ... everything else" (Bulawayo 12). Darling wishes to flee to America referring to it as the "big baboon of the world" (Bulawayo 49). Conversely, Bastard wishes to move from Zimbabwe to Johannesburg indicating that "America is too far" (Bulawayo 14). Bulawayo further speaks of the massive

number of people who are leaving Zimbabwe; her narrator reflects that everyone aspires to leave this country:

Look at them leaving in droves, the children of the land, just look at them leaving in droves. Those with nothing are crossing borders. Those with strength are crossing borders. Those with ambitions are crossing borders. Those with hopes are crossing borders. Those with loss are crossing borders. Those in pain are crossing borders. (145)

The author here invites the reader to “look at them” (147) twice not to just have a look at how these people depart but to actually understand how Zimbabwe is pushing its own citizens to other countries because it is urgent to migrate.

Escaping from a disappointing future in a country where “things are falling apart” (Bulawayo 91), Darling migrates to America where her Aunt Fostalina lives. America is typically believed as the country of prosperity, chances and independence. However, Darling’s first intercultural contact with the American setting leads her to acculturative stress; the climate, the house, the language, and the new setting are all awfully new to her. Looking out of the window, Darling notices that the snow looks like “a greedy monster [that has] swallowed everything [and it feels like the coldness is] telling you, with its snow, that you should go back to where you come from” (Bulawayo 148). Bulawayo uses snow and coldness to symbolize the acculturation experienced by Darling in the host land. Darling’s new setting is cold. She remarks that snow is found in all places, “snow on the leafless trees, snow on the cars, snow on the roads, snow on the yards, snow on the roofs...snow trees, snow on the cars, snow on the roads, snow on the yards, snow on the roofs...snow covering everything like sand” (148). In his essay “Acculturative Stress,” Berry assures that during the intercultural contact immigrants are exposed to “change events in their lives that challenge their cultural

understanding about how to live. These change events reside in their acculturation experience, hence the term “acculturative” stress” (294). In the same way, Darling’s acculturative stress is triggered by these “change events” that originate from her initial experience of acculturation. Darling’s first reaction of acculturation stimulates nostalgia portraying her homeland as shiny, warm and cozy, whilst the host land is bitter, cold and hostile. In an essay entitled, “Nostalgia: Content, Triggers, Functions,” Wildschut *et al.* investigate the triggers of nostalgia indicating that nostalgia is triggered by negative feeling such as loneliness, stress and coldness (980). Their finding is quite consistent with Darling’s status. Suffering from physical coldness, isolation and acculturative stress, she starts to recall the positive features of her native land and romanticize her mother country through nostalgic memories. She narrates:

If you come here where I am standing and look outside the window, you will not see any men seated under a blooming jacaranda playing draughts. Bastard and Stina and Godknows and Chipo and Sbho will not be calling me off to Budapest. You will not even hear a vendor singing her wares, and you will not see anyone playing country game or chasing after flying ants. Some things happen only in my country. (Bulawayo 147)

These words show Darling’s stress when she first fails to adapt to the new environment. Here, Bulawayo’s use of the second-person narrative perspective is important as it makes the reader more connected with Darling’s experience of acculturative stress. Darling’s acculturative stress and her current disappointment with the new setting trigger nostalgia and allow her to return emotionally to her tranquil homeland in order to improve her mood. Nostalgia, as emotion-focused form of coping, is “more likely to occur when there has been an appraisal that nothing can be done to modify harmful,

threatening, or challenging environmental conditions” (Lazrus and Folkman 150). Correspondingly, Darling uses nostalgia as a coping strategy as she is unable to return to her homeland or change the antagonistic atmosphere in America. In this case, Darling’s nostalgia can be described as “a true bittersweet emotion: pain because of pleasures past, or pleasure because of pleasures that have gone” (Frijda 87-88). Relevant to this point, Darling’s nostalgia can produce what Kohut referred to as “tolerable disappointment” (64) whereby she is able to put up with her emotional stress. This nostalgia allows for just adequate stress that drives her to acculturate, adapt and develop herself. It serves as, in Davis’ words, a coping mechanism that “quiets [her] fears of the abyss” (41). Gradually, she becomes quite ready to accept the change.

While romanticizing the memory of her land of birth, Darling’s nostalgia also has a realistic feature. She inserts critical evaluation in recalling and imagining her motherland. In this way, she engages in acts that are apparently paradoxical with each other; she critically evaluates her memory while she goes on idealizing it. This conflict of idealization and critical evaluation of her valued past lets her be fully aware that the reality of life in Zimbabwe is unlike the one in her reminiscence. Thus, her nostalgia “entails self-awareness and self-evaluation” (Wildschut and Sedikides 743). Darling evaluates her own romanticizing past of her motherland and changes her future plans rather than only projecting the overvalued reminiscences of motherland on to the future. She expresses her awareness that if she returns to her homeland, she may retune to steal guavas as there “wouldn’t be ... enough food, which is why [she] will stand being in America dealing with the snow; there is food to eat here, all types and types of food” (Bulawayo 153). She chooses to combat her nostalgia for home with thoughts of how her life in the host land distances her from the food shortage she experiences in her homeland. This nostalgia can be referred to as reflective nostalgia in Svetlana Boym’s

viewpoint. Boym differentiates between two distinct types of nostalgia: restorative and reflective nostalgia. The first tries to recreate the past, whereas the latter focuses on the remembrance of the past. Boym asserts, “restorative nostalgia puts emphasis on *nostos* and proposes to rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gaps. Reflective nostalgia dwells in *algia*, in longing and loss, the imperfect process of remembrance” (49 -50). Accordingly, these two kinds of nostalgia embody basically different outlook toward the past, and it is this difference that mainly decides whether Darling’s reminiscences of those joyful days will stimulate critical evaluation or not. She is conscious that her suffering in America is more manageable than that in Zimbabwe. This adaptation, which is derived from her critical evaluation of her memory of homeland, is found in her choice of staying in America, while feeling nostalgic to Zimbabwe. Her reflective nostalgic feeling forms her future desire, and encourages her to accept and adapt to the change that is necessary to survive in the host land.

Although food is the first and foremost reason behind her choice of staying in America, she experiences acculturative stress over food since in America it is not as tasty as that in Zimbabwe. She often compares African food to the American one, lamenting that the latter is not real at all. However, guava is the only food that lessens her negative psychological state. This fruit that one day in Zimbabwe symbolized poverty are now the fruit she yearns for. Whenever she eats it, she is engulfed by nostalgia. She spends more time in explaining how much she feels happy when eating guava. Closing her eyes, she recalls in vivid details, “I look at it like I’ve never seen a guava before, then hold it under my nose. The smell hits me where it matters, and I feel like my heart and insides are being gently pried open. I shake my head, rub the guava in both hands, take a bite, and laugh” (Bulawayo 186). Moreover, when guavas are sent to her from Zimbabwe as a birthday present, her nostalgia is strongly triggered.

She happily remembers her childhood days and hurries to write to her friends. As a matter of fact, guava symbolizes Darling's past life in Zimbabwe. It becomes a cause of pleasure for her as it satisfies her heart with reminiscences of acquaintances, family and homeland. Being in high spirits when calling the past to her mind, Darling again articulates reflective nostalgia. She knows well that she may never be capable of homecoming and eating her homeland guavas. She is fully aware that if she manages to return to Zimbabwe, she will find that it is not the way she was recalling it. She ironically exclaims, "Will Paradise be there when I return? Will Mother of Bones be there when I return? Will Bastard and Godknows and Sbho and Stina and Chipo and all my friends be there when I return? Will the guava trees be there when I return? Will everything, be the same when I return?" (Bulawayo 160). Darling is certain that the physical return to home will not give her the sense of comfort and satisfaction. Thus, her reflective nostalgia to guavas makes an aesthetic space that lets her take pleasure in remembering her past life to sustain her soul and cope with stressful situations.

Restorative nostalgia, on the other hand, provides Darling with a sense of belonging and unity and, for a while, stops the process of migration. Sedikides *et al.* highlight this therapeutic function of nostalgia assuring that nostalgia alleviates acculturative stress by "reinforcing the value of cultural traditions and rituals of which one was once a part. [...] Through such practices, one increases his or her sense of cultural belongingness, while restoring direction and the belief that one is living a purposeful life in a meaningful cultural context" ("Nostalgia: Conceptual Issues" 207). Darling and other Zimbabwean migrants recreate their motherland by engaging in practices and rituals brought from their native soil. They regularly organize social gatherings in which they find their true selves. They speak their native language, eat conventional Zimbabwean foodstuff with bare hands and dance to African melody. Such nostalgic

practices help Darling in bringing Zimbabwean culture into her new surrounding to make herself feel at home and that “the country [of America] has become a real family” (Bulawayo 160). Restorative nostalgia, thereby, serves as a remedy from loss, identity crisis and acculturative stress.

Darling’s acculturative stress arises again when she realizes that her traditional African life and culture are totally different from American ways. American children are raised up in a more different way than those in Africa. Darling, for instance, laments that Mandla is not trained to read eyes that is an ordinary African skill. What is more, when she hits Mandla she is underestimated, disregarded and abhorred. Darling’s misleading behavior is justified by announcing that this is how African people treat trouble-maker children in their society. In this situation, Darling feels difference and low self-esteem. Nostalgia’s role here is to lift up her feeling of self-esteem. According to Kaplan, it serves as a strategy of coping with the loss of self-worth (465). Being proud of her African tradition gives her the feeling confidence, and at the same time, nostalgia to such African traditions gives her a sense of meaning that facilitates her coping with this situation. She learns gradually how to embrace the American way of life while preserving the African traditions.

A wave of nostalgia sweeps over Darling even at her menial job. Finding her manager’s daughter, Kate, is “wearing Bastard’s Cornell shirt,” (Bulawayo 269) Darling, in a positively-toned sense, recalls, “I start thinking of the things we would do in this neighborhood whose name I keep forgetting. I open my mouth, maybe to tell Kate about Bastard and the others and Paradise, but then I close it; there is nothing to say” (Bulawayo 269). Kaplan refers to such state of ecstasy as a “remembrance with elation” (466). Although nostalgia is a bittersweet phenomenon, it also produces a strong feeling of gratification, a feeling “of being joined with something wonderful and captivating” (467). Darling is rather happy to remember Bastard’s

shirt to the extent that she wants to tell Kate about her nostalgia. Such moment of elation provides her with a sense of comfort during her exhausting job.

The major source of Darling's acculturative stress is when she is exposed to racism, stereotyping, humiliation and repression. When she attends school for the first time, she confesses, "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 so that in the end I just felt wrong in my skin, in my body, in my clothes, in my language, in my head, everything" (Bulawayo 16^v). Darling is rejected because she is different; her body, her clothes, her language, her thought are all under attack. Thus, Darling has to suffer identity crisis which leads to her acculturative stress. The more she experiences acculturative stress, the more she finds happiness in the past to control her feeling. She remembers, "When I was growing up back home we only got new clothes on Christmas and we turned out just fine; back home you wouldn't ever dream of talking to your elders in that tone" (Bulawayo 168). Finding happiness in the past recalls Freud's remark in his 1908 essay "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming" that "hardly anything is harder for a man than to give up a pleasure which he has once experienced. Actually, we can never give anything up; we can only exchange one thing for another" (37). In the same way, Darling is not willing to forget her idealistic past in her homeland. In times of loss, Darling takes refuge in nostalgia by which the satisfaction of her desire may have effect. Moreover, by visualizing positive past situations in Zimbabwe, Darling can find strength and significance in her new life in America, and "putting together pieces of past lives through nostalgia" (Sedikides *et al.*, "Nostalgia: Conceptual Issues" 206) can help her in forming self-confidence. Carrying her past positive experiences into the present actually helps Darling get over racism and stereotyping through integration. She latter announces, "I

have decided the best way to deal with it all is to sound American.” (Bulawayo 194). Consequently, she succeeds in mastering the English language and achieving her educational objectives.

Deciding to integrate into the American society, Darling changes her dress and accent. However, part of her is still connected with Zimbabwe. This is obvious when she calls home and talks to her friends. She starts to imagine what she might do if she were in Zimbabwe:

I have maybe entered the telephone traveled through the lines to go home. I’ve never left, and I’m ten again and we are playing country-game and Find bin Laden and Andy-over. We’re teasing Godknows for his peeking buttocks, we’re watching a fight, we’re imitating the church people, we’re watching somebody get buried. We’re hungry but we’re together and we’re at home and everything is sweeter than dessert. (Bulawayo 205-06)

To clarify how nostalgia can be constructive in this situation, Wildschut *et al.* distinguish nostalgia from depression, showing that a nostalgic person gets some level of satisfaction through “positive relational knowledge structures” (986). In Darling’s case, she has such structures that arise from her childhood experiences of positive connections with friends. This status fulfills her desire for relational belongingness by recalling these warm and pleasant moments with friends. It also gives her a feeling of security and safe connection by allowing her psyche to be peopled by her childhood friends. Moreover, it can help in “strengthening relational bonds and perceptions of social support” (Sedikides *et al.*, “Buffering Acculturative Stress” 355) through the reminiscences of an enjoyable past which can provide hope for an enjoyable time to come. Darling is now confident to approach others and establish a close circle of

American friends with whom she enjoys moments like those she experiences with her friends in Zimbabwe.

Darling's nostalgia represents the strategy of integration in which she maintains her cultural traditions and at the same time adopts some features of the American cultural practices. In this way, she successfully passes the processes of acculturation and adaptation. In an essay entitled "Contexts of Acculturation," Berry shows that integration is the most successful strategy of acculturation (37). It is nostalgia that helps her in this integration process. It alleviates her acculturative stress by strengthening the importance of cultural customs and traditions of which she was formerly a part. Darling has a deep attachment to her native country which is obvious in her nostalgic actions and lifestyle in America. She ornaments her room with a textile which looks like the bazaar in her homeland. Furthermore, she places on her wall an ivory piece that is the form of the African map. Moreover, she places on her wall a copper clock that is shaped in the map of her mother country with a giraffe. This stuff indicates her strong connection to Zimbabwe. Finally, she hangs on her wall a typical mask that is half black and half white. This mask represents her integrated identity. It also signifies her change and self-awareness of the world around her. Such nostalgic rehearsals are the road she travels so as to restore her memories and facilitates her "search for continuity" (Davis 35). Accordingly, identity continuity will be possible. Darling is brought up in Africa and her outlook of the world is formed by Africa; however, she is pleased about the cultural integration.

Thus, nostalgia helps Darling in coping with acculturative stress and achieving long-term adaptation. In his essay "Acculturation," Berry refers to adaptation as "the relatively stable changes that take place in an individual or group in response to external demands" (709). Darling's personality witnesses such stable change while adopting the strategy of integration. She keeps

connection to her native land and she also sustains the inspiration of homecoming whilst she is staying in The U.S.A. She longs for cuisine from Zimbabwe; nevertheless, she likes eating American cuisine. She rejects some African cultural practices; however, she follows certain American cultural rehearsals. In Africa, for example, it is considered bad-mannered to look at the elder in the eye; yet she learns that it is impolite not to look at the elder in the eye in the U.S.A. Therefore, she adopts some American traditions. She also learns to take pleasure in Western music, films and programs; on the other hand, she is still attached to Zimbabwean music, programs and news. Moreover, she masters the English language; however, she speaks her native language in her social gathering. Additionally, she learns how to eat with forks and knives; still, she eats with bare hands in family meeting. Darling is tolerant to comprehend and value the peculiarities of those who are different from her. She never utters any criticism or judgment to those who don't belong to her race.

NoViolet Bulawayo's storyline shows a view of nostalgia-related immigration that is scarcely tackled and often ignored in migration literature. Proficiently, she uses her protagonist Darling to point up the positive role of nostalgia on the experience of migration. Bulawayo herself uses nostalgia as a coping strategy by adopting a pen name. NoViolet Bulawayo is actually Elizabeth Zandile Tshele. In an interview with Alice Driver, she explains that NoViolet, which means in her language "with my mother Violet," is a name she embraced in memorial of her deceased mother, Violet, who died when Bulawayo was less than two years old. Her surname, "Bulawayo" is of great importance because, as she elucidates in the same interview with Driver, "it is the city of my people...where I grew up...being away from home and not being able to return for more than a decade created a kind of nostalgia." In this sense, Bulawayo's pen name implies nostalgia; on the one hand, nostalgia for her mother, and on the other hand, nostalgia for the town of Bulawayo which she has left for more

than a decade when she writes *We Need New Names*. So, her pen name is very significant as it represents her connection to her homeland of Zimbabwe while being in America.

Conclusion

This study helps in filling a remarkable gap in the migration literature that has not been adequately investigated. By exploring NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*, this paper turns a lens on how the protagonist's nostalgia can be a positive emotion that acts as a coping mechanism to acculturative stress. Moreover, nostalgia is used to evaluate the protagonist's consciousness in response to her acculturation and adaptation in America. While many researchers have approached nostalgia differently, only few of them have noticed its pivotal function in the processes of migration, acculturation and adaptation. Moreover, it was commonly defined as a negative emotion that indicates the failure of the process of migration and adaptation.

Applying the theories of acculturation, acculturative stress, nostalgia and adaptation from the perspective of social and cross-cultural psychology, the fundamental argument of this article is that nostalgia that is triggered in Darling is a kind of positive or bittersweet emotion that is stimulated by negative psychological state. Darling's negative psychological state results from her experiences of migration and acculturation as she strives to adapt to the American way of life. The psychological consequence of this state is Darling's acculturative stress. She finds that the language, weather, customs, traditions and even religion are different from her homeland. She is torn between maintaining her ethnic identity on the one hand and assimilating in American lifestyle on the other. In such times, nostalgia provides her with strength and stability in the face of the change that pervades immigrants' life. When the past and present come together in Darling's mind, nostalgia plays an important role in maintaining her identity, having a sense of meaning, increasing her self-esteem, and developing her self-awareness. Moreover, Darling's nostalgia helps

her in keeping in touch with her customs and traditions. Furthermore, it helps her in forming her integrated identity by adopting certain customs and traditions from both the guest and host cultures. Accordingly, nostalgia offers her a positive emotional and soothing place through which she can cope with her acculturative stress and achieve the final adaptation.

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