



LIFE TRANSFORMATION IN NOVIOLET BULAWAYO'S

NOVEL *WE NEED NEW NAMES* (2013)

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Abstract

This article is about the analysis of novel *We Need New Names* (2013) by NoViolet Bulawayo that focuses on how the main character has an awareness to transform her life. The problem in this analysis is how far the main character in this novel exposes the issue about life transformation. The aim of this analysis is to find out how far NoViolet Bulawayo's novel *We Need New Names* bring ups and reveals the issue of life transformation which is done by the main character in this novel. This analysis involved the fictional devices that are plot (conflict) and setting support the issue of life transformation. This analysis is will deal with the concept of life instinct by Sigmund Freud and the concept of self-awareness by Crisp and Turner.

Key words: life, transformation, change, self-awareness

A. INTRODUCTION

People usually tend to transform some aspect of their lives from time to time. They prefer to transform their lives by making significant and lasting changes. Life transformation involves changing the way of life, going beyond the way of life, and co-creating a better life for self. This is used to change some of what is happening within in life, to create what truly desire, and to live differently. The reason for someone decides to do the transformation due to the ups and downs in their life. Someone decides to change because they have awareness. Awareness, in this case, related with the consciousness or the sense of knowing, by perception or by means of information, and it is the key to change something in life.

Changing something in life is not an easy task to do; it really needs the courage and awareness from one's self. Self-awareness can be defined as the realization of oneself as someone's entity. Self-awareness gives human a clear perception of their personality, including mindsets, beliefs, and emotions. People who have more awareness will be able to understand what is right and good for

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them. Self-awareness will guide them to move forward and to understand the system that exists in this world, whether the system is fair or not. Like a system or rules created by the government in a country for the citizens.

Sometimes, the system of the government makes the citizens struggle and attempt for their lives. A few of them do not want life governed by the government; they know that they have free will to determine the meaning of life and transform their lives. According to Collins Cobuild Advanced Dictionary of English (2018), *life* refers to the events and experiences that happen to people while they are alive. Then, the *transform* is defined as a change or alteration the condition of someone or something. In other words, everyone certainly wants a transform in their lives, usually from bad to good things. Life transformation can refer to the individual process, change and effort in facing difficult situations in order to get a decent life. They can do all the things to transform their lives if they have awareness.

This study analyzes the issue of life transformation which refers to the acts will and courage to transform life which is done by the main character in this novel. The main character, 10 years old girl that proves she can change her life and get a decent life.

B. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The design of this research is qualitative, content analysis that is to analyze the text of novel *We Need New Names* (2013) by NoViolet Bulawayo. The data is collected from the quotation in the novel. The data was analyzed by the fictional devices such as character, plot and setting are used to analyse this novel. These devices are related each other. Character is used to reveal the life transformation by analyzing character belief, attitude, and behavior or action. Plot is used to acknowledge the conflicts the character faced. The setting has a function to show the situation, atmosphere, and condition faced by the character in order to reveal how the main character changes her life. In addition, these elements are analyzed based on the life instinct concept by Sigmund Freud and the concept of self-awareness by Crisp and Turner.

C. DISCUSSION

This chapter analyzes the issue of life transformation in the novel *We Need New Names*. The issue was revealed through the investigation of the main character's thoughts and the situation she faces throughout the story. Life transformation in this analysis refers to the courage and determination of the main character in the novel to prove that she can transform her life and get a decent life. In this analysis, life transformation from the main character can be seen in two things; her life instinct and her self-awareness.

1. Life Instinct

The life instinct which is owned by the main character leads her to engage in actions to sustain her own lives, such as looking for safety and survive from the chaotic situation that happens to her life. The main character lives in poverty, misery and government injustice in her home country. She lives in shanty

town because the government has been destroyed her home. The main character attempts to prove that she has a strong desire to survive so she can transform her life. There are two ways done by the main character to prove that she has a life instinct. First, she sets her strong determination to survive amidst the difficult and chaotic situations she is facing. Second, she makes a strong commitment to transform her life to be better. For a ten-year-old girl, this commitment shows that at such a young age, she already has courage and independence.

The first one is she sets her strong determination to survive amidst the difficult and chaotic situations she is facing. It can be seen in the following quotation that shows the reason of the main character to survive her life:

“I dream about what happened back at our house. In my dream, which is not a dream-dream because it is also the truth that happened, the bulldozers appear boiling. I spread my fingers so I can still see; people beat the earth with her head and hands. Then later the people with cameras and T-shirts that say BBC and CNN come to shake their heads and look and take our pictures like we are pretty. It is a bad dream, and I don’t want it to come.” (p.69)

The setting in the text above shows the tense and chaotic situations faced by the main character. This chaos and tense situations are triggered by the decline of the economy in her country. The setting leads to the external conflict where her home is destroyed because of the greed of the government who wants to enrich themselves. The main character, which at the time of that incident is still 10 years old, described the chaotic situation in her country as a “*bad dream*”. The chaos in her country makes her think she should be stronger than before; it is a nightmare which she certainly does not want and she hopes it will end soon. The quotation above shows that not only the government but the people who come to cover and record the situation only see the chaos as a ‘show’. The sentence “*then later the people with cameras and T-shirts that say BBC and CNN come to shake their heads and look and take our pictures like we are pretty*” is sarcasm towards those people who only take the pictures of her and the situation that happens like it is an entertainment to be seen. The main character hopes that with coverage from the BBC and CNN she will get interviewed and then helped. But those people only come for the sake of work and only to raise their rating. It shows a sad situation which is actually still happening in this time; people who only think of their own benefits. Then the sentence “*I spread my fingers so I can still see; people beat the earth with her head and hands*” shows even in the midst of the chaos that happens, the main character still ventured to see the chaos directly. She even does not shout or cry like everyone else at that time. She proves that she has the courage to face this condition. This chaotic situation drives the life instinct of the main character to survive. It also proves that the life instinct which the main

character has leads her to sustain her own lives. This condition is certainly a strong reason for the main character to transform her life to be better.

The second one is she makes a strong commitment to transform her life. It can be seen in the following quotation that shows life instinct drives her to be independence:

“There were guavas to steal in Budapest, and I’d rather die for guavas. We didn’t eat this morning and my stomach felt like somebody just took a shovel and dug everything out. Now we just eat a lot of guavas because it’s the only way to kill our hunger, and when it comes to defecating, we get in so much pain it becomes an almost impossible task like you are trying to give birth to a country.” (p.18)

The setting in the quotation above refers to the chaotic situation faced by the main character during her life in her home country. The setting leads to external conflict she faced such as poverty and famine. This external conflict causes internal conflict to occur in the main character’s self. She releases this chaotic situation with her life instinct that she must be looking for food on her own to survive. Poverty and famine are the cause her wants to transform her life. In this analysis, through the main character's eyes, she vividly portrays the horrors of living in poverty. She is forced to steal guava from the neighborhood to eliminate her hunger. The sentence *“we didn’t eat this morning and my stomach felt like somebody just took a shovel and dug everything out”* shows how horrible the situation in her home country, that to fulfill the main needs is very difficult. Then, the sentence *“now we just eat a lot of guavas because it’s the only way to kill our hunger, and when it comes to defecating, we get in so much pain it becomes an almost impossible task like you are trying to give birth to a country”* means the main character has a life instinct to fulfill her hunger and to survive her life, she must do what needs to be done even though she always feels painful constipation after eat guavas. Economic inequality forces to find ways to fulfill her daily needs. She does things that should be the responsibility of adults. Even though she is still 10 years old, she can take care of herself. This also shows her independence.

In short, the courage and determination of the main character to survive amidst the chaotic situation she faced shows that she has life instinct. It leads the main character to do actions to sustain her lives. The main character lives in poverty, famine, misery and government injustice in her home country. She lives in shanty town because the government has been destroyed her home. The variation of settings causes different conflicts to the main character. She must survive and do the efforts to reach her dreams; live in America and change her life to be better. She shows that she has a strong determination to survive amidst a difficult and chaotic situation. She also makes a commitment to transform her life to be better.

2. Self-Awareness

The main character has the self-awareness to transform her life. It makes her aware of the condition in her home country which does not allow her to get a better future if she still stays there. The sad condition of her home country, where there was no school, makes the main character wants to move to America, where she can go to school and get knowledge. The main character is aware that education is a tool to go out of poverty and get a better future. To transform her life and make a better future, she proves that she has the interest and the desire to learn something new. She has the ability to learn something quickly, a good memory, and self-confidence. Then, she proves that she is a visionary.

The main character has the desire to learn and has a good memory. She knows that knowledge is a very important thing in her life. It can be seen in the following quotation:

“We don’t go to school anymore but I haven’t forgotten the things I learned. At our age, the best thing to do is about school, what we want to be when we grow up, that kind of thing.”
(p.32)

The setting refers to the sad situation the main character faces. In this context, the conflict is when the main character has to deal with the condition in her area which makes her cannot get knowledge because there is no school. She releases her conflict by has the self-awareness that makes her not losing her dreams. The main character proves that she has a good memory. Although the main character cannot go to school because the schools in that area are destroyed, she always remembers what she has learned. The sentence “*at our age, the best thing to do is about school, what we want to be when we grow up, that kind of thing*” shows the awareness of the main character that education is a very important thing in life. She is also aware that education is one of the tools to transform her life for the better; by going to school she can become what she wants to be. Usually, 10-year old prefers to play with friends. However, in contrast to children at her age, the main character is more concerned about her future. She is worried about her condition if there is no school. At that time, the knowledge that she wants to get can only be obtained from the school, but there is no school so she cannot transform her life to be better if she still stays there.

She also proves that she has the ability to learn something quickly. It appears in the following quotation:

“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 it is an adult, even if it's rude." (p.196)

The setting refers to the positive atmosphere and full of enthusiasm. The main character shows she is enthusiastic to learn everything. She also shows that she has a high curiosity. She is aware that education gives her a piece of knowledge. The sentence "*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*" means not only from school and the internet, she can learn new things from television. It shows the main character has creativity. She proves that she can learn anything from simple things. The persistence of the main character in terms of education proves that even though she is able to go to school in America and get knowledge from school, but she does not want to stop studying. She can use things around her well; like the internet and shows on television. The utterance "*just listening*" and "*imitating the accents*" shows the main character has a good memory. This is one of the tools to make her reach for what she wants since she was a child; to get a better future. By going to school; and by availability technology, internet, books, and television, make her gain more knowledge and the things she wants to know and learn. This also shows that the main character has a high awareness and curiosity. When she does not understand something, she quickly wants to find out about it. The sentence "*the TV has also taught me that if I'm talking to someone, I have to look him in the eye*" means not only learn the lessons which exist, but the main character also learn how to behave to others. She learns how to behave also from shows on television. Persistence and determination from the main character, which learns everything from anywhere, show her efforts to be better, especially in education. With the efforts that the main character does, proves that she is aware that with learning something new, her knowledge will increase and it will make she can transform her life and get a decent life. She is also aware that knowledge will make her future to be better.

As a child who used to live in a troubled country, the main character always has dreams. She knows what she wants to do and what she will be. It appears on the following quotation:

"Now that I'm almost finished with high school, the thing that I have should do is to get into medicine or some kind of nursing or whatnot when I start college next year, or if that fails, at least do law. I didn't come all the way to America to do meaningless stuff and be nothing." (p.277)

The setting refers to the motivational situation that makes her energetic to reach her dreams. This setting triggers about the dreams of the main character for her future. She is aware that education gives her the knowledge of the world around

her and changes it into something better. Knowledge teaches her to reach her dreams. It helps her to build opinions and have points of view on things in life. The quotation above refers to the enthusiastic atmosphere of the main character during she finishes her school. This enthusiastic atmosphere describes that she always wants to learn something new. The main character has a strong desire to get knowledge so she can transform her life to be better. The sentence “*now that I’m almost finished with high school, the thing that I have should do is to get into medicine or some kind of nursing or whatnot when I start college next year, or if that fails, at least do law*” shows the main character is a visionary, who has a plan for her future. She even has a reserve for her plan if the first plan is not according to her wishes. It also shows that she has a vision for the future. The sentence “*I didn’t come all the way to America to do meaningless stuff and be nothing*” shows the main character that never stops to learn and never stop makes a dream in her life. She wants to be someone who worth in life. It shows that she will keep studying until whenever.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

We Need New Names (2013) a novel written by NoViolet Bulawayo reveals the issue of life transformation. Life transformation in this analysis refers to the efforts done by the main character, a ten-year-old girl who lives in poverty. She wants to transform her life to be better. It is revealed through text-based and context-based analysis by focusing on fictional devices such as character, plot, and setting. This analysis also deals with the psychological theory about life instinct by Sigmund Freud and the concept of self-awareness by Crisp and Turner. Life transformation can be seen through the efforts made by the main character in her life instinct and her self-awareness.

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