Linnéuniversitetet
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Master's Thesis

Three Times Trauma

A literary analysis of NoViolet Bulawayo's We Need New Names and its potential in the EFL classroom

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Date: 26th of May 2020
Subject: English
Level: Advanced
Course code: 4ENÄ2E

Abstract

This thesis argues that events in the postcolonial novel *We Need New Names* by NoViolet Bulawayo can be viewed as traumatic based on three different aspects; witnessed trauma, transgenerational trauma and cultural trauma. In addition, the thesis provides pedagogical implications and analysis of the novel's usefulness in the Swedish EFL classroom. What is argued in this essay is that cultural clashes, mourning of home country and lacking of expressive opportunities affect the protagonist's identity formation. The protagonist's experiences from and reflections on her home country versus her new one are the focal point of this essay; to prove that belonging to the diaspora is a traumatic, ongoing, event that affects the individual and collective identity process negatively, depicted in the novel. Lastly, the novel's potential in the EFL classroom is claimed to contribute with insight, understanding and acceptance towards cultural "others" in the Swedish society.

Keywords

NoViolet Bulawayo, We Need New Names, EFL classroom, upper secondary school, African Diaspora, postcolonial literature, trauma

Thanks

To my supervisor Anna Thyberg, whose support through this process has been invaluable. Also, to my three boys, for leaving the house, so this thesis could be produced.

Contents

1 Introduction

"If you were born in my country you'd just be ordinary, your runway would be the border, where you'd just be selling things like my mother." (Bulawayo 149) This excerpt represents the contrasts the protagonist Darling in the novel *We Need New Names* is experiencing after migrating from, presumably, Zimbabwe to the United States of America. The author does not clearly state the exact place before the protagonist is migrating, although she has explained that it is done intentionally since the narrative can be applied to several of the former African colonies, and therefore specifying country was uneccssary (Peshel). She is unused to the culture, and it is clear that she disapproves of it being viewed as superior to other cultures, thereof the reflection quoted above regarding how black people are viewed dependent on nationality. The novel by NoViolet Bulawayo (2014) is a recent, yet widely acclaimed, work of post colonial literature. Bulawayo was born in Zimbabwe 1981 as Elisabeth Tshele, but came to start using the pseudonym NoViolet Bulawayo as a tribute to her mother and home village (Peschel). In the same interview, Bulawayo also explains the purpose of the novel which she expresses to be: "It was basically a call for renewal" (Peschel) Although she is referring to the historical, and to a large extent political, context of Zimbabwe she still believes the message of the story to be applicable to other countries' situations. This suggests a possible recognition on an individual and collective level without being from that specific country.

The novel depicts Darling and her friends in the shanty called Paradise, coping with life in the best possible way. For them, that means to steal guavas from the rich, white people in the neighborhood Budapest, snatch the shoes of a woman who hanged herself to sell and buy bread, and trying to get rid of their 11-year-old friend Chipo's pregnant belly. Eventually, Darling is given the opportunity leave all of this for the

United States of America, and she takes it. Although there, with Aunt Fostalina and her family, she is not as happy as she thought she would be. She is starting to forget Paradise and everything with it, and the impossibility to go back is constantly reminding her of the choice that made her a different person; a choice that transforms into loss and mourning over the past, and everything is taken away from her due to that choice.

Isac Ndlovu discussess representation and reproduction of African culture in *We Need New Names* in his article titled "Ambivalence of representation: African crises, migration and citizenship in NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*". He does so by arguing that the novel represents ambivalence in representation of what is viewed as the typical African migrant, namely as victims and as perpetrators. He also argues for the critique within this reproduction of the stereotyped African migrant that is being reproduced in a capitalist, Western point of view. One reference of importance for this essay is that he mentions that what is being experienced by the children and specifically the narrator Darling is traumatic (135), yet, the perspective and definition of trauma has not been explored. What his analysis aims for is to prove the contradictory notion the Western society gains from how Africans in general are portrayed as both victims and perpetrators (135).

Another article analyzes the novel based on borders from different aspects and also the signifigance of language, which is an important part analyzing since Bulawayo mixes American English with her mother tongue Ndebele throughout the novel. The author of the article, Pier Paolo Frassinelli, identifies to what extent the language matters to the protagonist by stating "… the protagonist's mother tongue, repeatedly draws attention to language as a signifier of (un)belonging, psychic (dis)connection and social (im)mobility" (717) This indicates that the diminishing use of the mother tongue and its invalidity in her new country, affects her self-perception and identity formation, especially as a young adult. Extensively, the statement indicates and includes

descriptions of trauma, namely unbelonging and psychic disconnection which are both signifiers of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), although mild ones. Further on, discussing the genre of the novel, Frassinelli suggests the novel to correspond to "traumatic migration novel" due to its portrayal of displacement issues (718). Once again, even though categorized as traumatic by Frassinelli, the novel has not been analyzed as traumatic.

The focus on traumatic effects on the identity is brought up by Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, who discusses the impact of belonging to the Diaspora African women. To "re-form" the identity because of immigration is defined by her in the following manner: "identity changes in significant aspects of women's lives, including social class, language, courtship, religion, and citizenship" (5) Nevertheless, even though identified as a cause of identity re-formation, the novel has not been analyzed as that Darling's experiences are traumatic and causes harm to her, which is what this essay contributes with. Extensively, it will also present the novel within the EFL context, which is why the Curriculum and Swedish Syllabus for English in upper secondary school will be given space in this introduction.

The Swedish Curriculum emphasizes the importance of working with the individual's uniqueness, their "intrinsic value" (4) Also, one paragraph is dedicated to openness and understanding of others which uses the headline "Understanding and compassion for others" (4) One can ask who the others are and who decides which people should be named the others, which is problematic. The Swedish National Agency for Education explains the importance of acceptance towards foreign cultures due to the transnational, mobile world we live in. Somewhat contradictory but perhaps understandable, is the formulation of the students' identity process being secure by stating "awareness of one's own cultural origins and sharing a common cultural heritage strengthens the ability to understand and empathize with the values and conditions of

others" (4) Acceptance towards foreign cultures does not necessarily exclude a common cultural foundation with the Swedish culture, but the statement could also be interpreted as if the focus should be on standardizing the Swedish students' cultural heritage instead of embracing the differences in the classroom. To match the analysis of the novel, the pedagogical focus will be on understanding.

Therefore, the analyzed novel could be useful in the EFL classroom to focus on the differences from inherited cultures. What happens to a foreigner when he or she is supposed to be integrated in the new society, and how it can affect a person's identity process will be investigated. Why the novel is suitable for the EFL classroom in Sweden is partly because of the free literary choices the teachers in English have. Due to the absence of mandatory literature, the teachers can make literary choices that enable them to include the demands stated the Curriculum through literature teaching in English. This freedom of choice fulfills several purposes and requirements from both the Curriculum and the English syllabi for courses 5, 6, and 7.

The Syllabus for English upper secondary school starts with justifying the subject by explaining that the subject can give the students "greater understanding of different ways of living" (Natl. Ag. f. Ed. 1) This in combination with the last of the five purposes of English studies, namely "The ability to discuss and reflect on living conditions, social issues and cultural features in different context and parts of the world where English is used" (2), basically give teachers the opportunity to work with any novel since it could be argued that English is used almost everywhere in the world. Furthermore, due to the colonization and the spread of the English language over the globe during the British Empire, English is one of the lingua franca used today. Therefore it can be argued that almost any part of the world could be included in the EFL classroom. Also, the country depicted in the novel is Zimbabwe, which has English as one of the official languages.

What is not argued in the previous research is that the emigration process Darling goes through can be viewed as a traumatic event. The Master's Thesis by Moa Jonsson (2019) analyses the traumatic event of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in the autobiography *Desert Flower*. As for trauma studies or definition of trauma, the horrible event of FGM in *Desert Flower* corresponds to the definition of trauma as an extraordinary event of shock and/or fear. However, the definition of trauma can also be expanded and applicable to other situations, as will be presented in the theory section in this thesis. Jonsson presents trauma theory in her essay, and accurately includes the perspective of postcolonialism. This is an important factor to consider in order to present a broader picture of trauma than the usual, which often tends to belong to white Westerners and thereby not fulfilling trauma theory's purpose of solidarity since the trauma of others are left out (Andermahr 501). Nevertheless, it could also be valuable to present a female non-Westener's trauma as nothing less than a trauma despite that she is not exposed to direct physical trauma. Compared to the *Desert Flower* where the protagonist suffers from direct trauma, the protagonist in *We Need New Names* is affected due to other kinds of traumas. Stated by both Ingegerd Stenport, and Roy Valisani, the trauma of an anti-stereotypical diaspora character as in *We Need New Names* could arguably be progressive in comparison to the stereotyped African, victimized woman.

Lastly, the thesis aims to investigate traumatic aspects in Bulawayo's novel, specifically, how migration is depicted as traumatizing. Another aim is to analyze the novel in an EFL context, and explore whether it can increase understanding towards immigrants similar to the protagonist by being a witness to the story; founded on the author's expression of the novel to be "bearing witness" to the situation in Zimbabwe (Kohler). For the literary analysis, this thesis will argue for the traumatizing effects emigrating has on the protagonist and other characters at multiple levels. It will argue

for the novel's potential usefulness in the EFL classroom to emphasize and embrace different cultures and aid the identity process of adolescents. In addition, the three different aspects of trauma - witnessed, transgenerational and cultural – will be presented as having a negative impact on the individual and the collective's identity formation.

2 Trauma Theory

For the purpose of this essay, it is important to emphasize that trauma theory is connected to psychological factors and experiences, and not only physical experiences. Therefore, the theory section will provide brief background information of the early views and beliefs on trauma theory to explain its origin; and then proceed to more recent studies of what the concept of trauma theory has come to include. This is because the early definition of trauma made in the late 19th early 20th century has changed to the degree that it is less relevant for the trauma depicted in the novel analyzed in this study. Based on the novel's belonging in the genre of postcolonial literature, the more recent research on trauma theory is going to be emphasized and presented in this section.

2.1 Development of Trauma Theory

The concept of trauma has widened its description of causes and effects since the early 20th century; more specifically, the concept nowadays also includes long term traumas and not only single, shocking events. Originally, trauma was referred to as a bodily wound (Caruth 3). A prominent author in this field of development of trauma theory is Sonya Andermahr, who illuminates the need for trauma theory to have a broader representation of traumas instead of limiting the examples of trauma to white Westerners (500). When Sigmund Freud started his examinations in psychoanalysis, they were mostly executed on white, Western females suffering from what he called hysteria and he posited that this symptom was the effect that the traumatic situation had

caused (Freud 315). Worth mentioning, is that he did examine the psychical and not the physical trauma, however it was then directed towards women's unconscious, sexual experiences (Leys 18). Nevertheless, what is further problematized by Stef Craps is that this former definition of trauma is stated to be "a single, extraordinary, catastrophic event" (31), which then excludes for example the trauma of racism (Andermahr 501). In contrast to the extraordinary, shocking, single event, trauma of racism is an ongoing process without clear distinction between before and after as in the event-based trauma model (501).

Nevertheless, Freud confirms in his *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* what his colleague Josef Breuer had already found out, namely that through transforming the unconscious to the conscious is when the healing process can take place (321). This means that the traumatized person is supposed to be mentally aware of one's own neurotic symptoms. Caruth, drawing upon Freud's ideas, also emphasizes the interconnection between the belatedness of memories entering the known from the unknown, and it is not until then the truth is available (4). When the conscious becomes aware of the repressed experiences, the individual transforms. Kalí Tal too views trauma as "… a transformative experience, and those who are transformed can never entirely return to a state of previous innocence" (119) Again, the above seems to adhere to the event-based model of trauma with a state of mind before and after, which definition will not alone cover the traumas in the analyzed novel.

Considering this view on traumatic experiences, it would be problematic to include the transgenerational trauma discussed by Ann Kaplan, since transgenerational traumas are inherited and not even existing in the unconscious mind to begin with (73-74). This is actually claimed by Kaplan to be valid for cultural traumas in general, in which the transgenerational trauma is included (68). This is a contrast to Craps who states the opposite; that "cultural trauma theory continues to adhere to the traditional

event-based model" (31) Continuing on Kaplan's reasoning, transgenerational trauma is explained as trauma inherited by ancestors. This means that the trauma lived by the ancestors is later in the child's life understood as a trauma, which that person starts to realize and it becomes traumatic at that point (106). The novel analyzed in the present study corresponds to the transgenerational trauma and is written within the genre of postcolonial literature, and therefore the theoretical framework needs to be directed towards marginalized groups and the stories of non-Westerners, which can be included in cultural trauma.

Visser argues for the inadequacy of trauma theory not being applicable to postcolonial literary studies. This is because the definition of trauma is insufficient and inadaptable to that genre of literary works (271). Interestingly, in Craps' view, the purpose of trauma studies is to enhance the cross-cultural solidarity, but he concludes this aim to be unfulfilled (2). His standpoint aligns with Andermahr's suggestion that trauma literature should "provide alternatives to dominant trauma aesthetics; and lastly, address the unexplored relationship between so called First and Third World traumas" (Andermahr 501) In order to apply to the genre, it is argued by Visser that a focus on politics, history, and memory need to be included in order to do the literary work justice (275). The analyzed novel is challenging in its portrayal of the black, female protagonist by not depicting a stereotypical victim compared to Freuds early studies made on white females stated to suffer from hysteria due to traumatic experiences. Instead, to a high degree, politics, memory, and history are themes treated in the novel. Accordingly, it shares the view of cultural trauma theory and postcolonial literary concerns and its striving for being an alternative to dominant trauma aesthetics.

For alternative trauma aesthetics, the importance of recognition and inclusion within the field matters. Craps argues for the purpose of redefining trauma theory, and he claims it to be "… that trauma theory can and should be reshaped, resituated, and

redirected so as to foster attunement to previously unheard suffering" (4) What is being criticized by him is the Western societies' ownership of the term trauma and what is encountered as such. Thus, to understand trauma of the non-Western cultures, the concept has to be broadened. The emphasis cannot be made clearer by Craps, that the broadening and so called "decolonization" of the trauma theory is crucial, and with that broadening comes the shift of trauma stories. What is indicated is that stories such as *We Need New Names* should be encountered as traumatic due to their telling of mourning, loss, and cultural inquiries, thus a different trauma than what Westerners are used to think of as traumatic. Craps means that this is what can bridge the mental distance between world citizens (6). Visser, in one sense, contradicts this since she inquires for a narrower, more precise description of traumas aligning to postcolonial studies, although they seem to conclude more or less the same thing. She concludes that "A more comprehensive conceptualization of trauma is needed to theorize collective, prolonged and cumulative experiences of traumatization" (280). Craps is adding the problematic aspect of recognition and identification with the told trauma. This ends up being a question of what the witness of the trauma values as such (13). Therefore, to start naming and claiming traumatic experiences of the others is to open up the possibility for greater understanding.

Perhaps, Dominick LaCapra has contributed to specify and exemplify traumas of others by, for example, include "forced displacement" as traumatic (384). That is due to the post traumatic effects that it creates on the individual, or in this case groups, since he refers to indigenous people being placed in reservations, and thus experience loss of sacred land (384). If applying this concept to the novel, the diaspora has to be mentioned. In *Diaspora and Memory*, the diasporic identity is said to include three dimensions; the local diasporic group, geographically other diasporic groups, and lastly the imagined homeland, the origin (Barionian et al. 11). Further, the connection

between place (the imagined homeland) and memory is discussed and however important the memory might be, it is also stated to be fragile, re-articulated and perhaps even confusing in itself, compared to the place that people of diasporic identity shares (11-12). The novel to be analyzed here is not written from the perspective of indigenous people, but still the forced displacement is of highest significance for the protagonist, and thus highly relevant for the analysis. Since the protagonist is far from alone with her experiences on this phenomena, the aspect of postcolonialism deserves exploration.

Kaplan explains that the destructive contact during colonization counts as traumatic for the indigenous people due to elimination of cultural features (105). Due to the non-Western context, Craps believes that changing focus to non-Western testimonies as insufficient, traumatic experiences also needs to be handled on the conditions of non-Westerners (19). That indicates that it could be difficult for me as a white, Western female to analyze the protagonist of the novel in this study, since she is a black child and diaspora adolescent. Nevertheless, what Craps is cautious about can also be interpreted as that *other kinds* of traumas should be recognized as such from the analyzer's perspective, and then regardless of gender, ethnicity, nationality and sexuality one should be able to discuss the others' traumatic experiences. What needs further exploration would then be the effects on those individuals exposed to the specific trauma.

2.2 Traumatic Symptoms and Effects

Freud explains that a person suffering from trauma does not necessarily have to become neurotic, but "only" alienate oneself from the present and future due to the obsession with the past (316). Even though Freud does not elaborate further on this, the observation is of relevance for the analysis of the novel in the essay. The protagonist does not become neurotic because of her trauma; hence it "only" affects her present and future life. Nevertheless, the explanation of alienation made by Freud seems to have

inspired Milan Miljkovic's usage of "restorative nostalgia", which is the obsession with the dead and past, and the unwillingness to disconnect it from the present (49).

Mentioned by Freud as well as Miljkovic, is the mourning of the past's traumatizing effects on the individual. The mourning as phenomenon and connection to cultural trauma is analyzed by António Sousa Ribeiro. He analyzes victims' writing about the Holocaust, and interestingly states about his informant Jean Améry, a surviving Jew, that "although his allegiance to enlightened universalism was permanently overshadowed by his own experience of alienation and exclusion" (31) This draws upon Freud's observations of the "giving up on life" due to the memories (316), despite the fact that those are spoken out as in the case with Jean Arméry.

Moreover, because of the aspect of shortfall of language in the novel, the matter of verbalization is of interest. Freud and Breuer emphasize the importance of memory, but add the value of verbalizing the experience. Ruth Leys boils down the treatments of trauma, thus the memories, to two alternatives; participatory and surgical (87). It can be argued that verbalizing the experience is of a more participatory characteristic, and thus to be able to testify by using language and verbalization is crucial for the healing process. Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery* focuses on the healing process of trauma. The first aspect of healing she states is "Remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites both for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims" (1) Agreeing with Freud and Breuer, Herman suggests more confidently that this *is* the way towards healing, not an optional one. In the quote above Herman states the social order and *individual* victim as healed, however, according to Kaplan, the individual and the collective are inseparable; therefore, it seems as if both parts would benefit from the narration of traumas.

The ambiguity of a cultural and psychical, traumatized person cannot be mistaken if one takes into account the conclusions made by Ribeiro, namely that the

traumatic memory is part of the identity and is not something easily removed. Further, as stated before, the untreated trauma prevents the individual from being one's fullest potential, and thus a part of the human is lost (33). The impact of traumatic events and the remaining memories of those have an affect on ones identity. LaCapra expresses it as that the traumatic memory "has a crucial role in the formation of individual and collective identities" (391) Further, it is also stated that the untreated, foundational trauma has a negative impact on both the individual and the collective (391). In short, it is suggested that the identity is based on the past and present; dependent on traumatic experiences in the past and the coping of them till present time. Part of the conclusion in Miljkovic's analysis of national mourning is precisely this; the reinforcement of the hurtful images of the past disables the individual and collective identity to develop further on (66).

Untreated trauma risks ambivalence towards one's identity. Ndlovu exemplifies refugees, in the same novel analyzed in this thesis, who do not know how to relate to neither their home country, nor their new one, due to displacement (140). Thus the trauma continues to affect the identity process negatively, and post traumatic symptoms such as dissociation, estrangement or mourning will not disappear. As for the healing process of foundational trauma it is, according to Craps, also important to consider *how* the trauma is supposed to be treated dependent on cultural differences. From a Western perspective, the need for the spoken or written word of trauma is essential for healing, but this might not be the case in other cultures. Since this analysis is leaning towards cultural trauma, worth emphasizing is that those PTSD symptoms associated with Western traumas might not be the specific outcome of untreated trauma in other cultures (22-23).

The non-Western aspect in terms of symptoms needs to be considered, and this issue is raised by Kaplan. She includes the collective repression of cultural trauma

victims, which are stated to perform “forgetting” due to the amount of pain that the trauma causes them, thus leaving them untreated. (74) This could potentially be the symptom of traumas for other cultures than Western ones. Paradoxically, this untreated trauma also becomes part of the identity, especially the collective identity since it contributes with group coherence and unity, raised by LaCapra (391). Michael Rothberg differentiates between “histories being transmitted” and “passing down of memory” but he claims them to be equally valuable (270). Interpreting this stance, one definition of the distinction between them could be histories being told and histories being received, which are equally important but to the individual of different importance. The person who transmits the history would according to Herman start to recover (1), whereas the person receiving the history would firstly then understand it as a trauma if identifying with the same culture, ethnicity or nationality (Kaplan 106).

3 Trauma Narratives and Identity in the EFL Classroom

This essay is partly analyzing the novel *We Need New Names* by using trauma theory, but in extension, it also aims to suggest the novel’s potential usefulness in an EFL context. The novel has the potential to aid in teaching multiple identities as well as collectively treating the traumas portrayed in the novel from the aspects analyzed in this thesis. Moreover, it is an example of a non-Western narration treating post-colonial concerns, and from the perspective of a black, female, child/young adult. From experience, the term postcolonialism was more or less unknown to my 18-19 year old students, which they showed great interest and curiosity about. Important to mention is that this curiosity is one of the pitfalls as well as a motivation. Exotification or pity for cultures of non-Western heritage is an unwanted outcome. Especially considering the multidiversity of students in the classroom, who some of them will identify with the characters in the novel. What could be a positive achievement working with the novel in

the EFL classroom is to create empathy, awareness and understanding towards others different from oneself through literature. Linguistically, the novel can be worked with in all three courses in Swedish upper secondary school, due to its every-day formulations and informal language. Accordingly, the following section will investigate what use and purpose literary texts can serve in the classroom in connection to trauma and development of identities.

3.1 Trauma, Identity, and the Classroom

Firstly, it is of significance to sort out the pedagogical question of *why* teachers should consider incorporating identity as a means for learning. Head presents the following self-perception of adolescents: “Individually, the central task is to achieve a sense of personal identity …” (Head 5). With this view on adolescent students, teachers can through literature serve as support in this process in students’ lives. If teachers adhered to LaCapra’s view on traumas’ impact on collective and individual identity, they might work with untreated traumas since those traumas figure as foundation for the positive development of the identity. Further, it is implicated that the variety of traumas needs representation due to the multicultural society Sweden is. Spear suggests that working with trauma narratives with the purpose of healing on an individual as well as collective level (54).

Somewhat contradictory to Kaplan’s inseparability between the individual and collective trauma (1), Head presents the identity mainly as a process towards autonomy (7). Considering this view on identity, the Swedish curriculum states under the heading “Fundamental values and tasks of the school” that “The task of the school is to encourage all students to discover their own uniqueness as individuals,” (Natl. Ag. f. Ed. 4) and this seems closely connected to working with identity. However, Head does not dismiss the collective and identity, but refers to that as social identity, which differs from the individual process (8). For the purpose of this essay, I argue that a fusion

between them both is the only of interest instead of a focus on one perspective. The reason to that is the classroom context in which learning and fostering takes place, and the aim is to individualize the teaching paralleled with the group context.

One aspect of using this particular novel is to illuminate the presence of multiple identities and to increase understanding towards this. Appreciation of and ability to live in a multicultural society is addressed in the curriculum by firstly stating its challenges, and secondly that teachers should strengthen people's ability accept this (4). Further on, culture is directly connected to identity and the importance of students possessing a "secure" identity that should include Swedish, Nordic, European, and global relatedness (4). To problematize Tal's quote about group identification of posttraumatized individuals, explaining that "Current group interests and status will increasingly take precedence over survivor group identification," (10) could be relevant when discussing multiple identities. Therefore, I argue that the analyzed novel in this essay can bridge the somewhat contradictory statements of valuing cultural diversity *and* value of identity relatedness to Swedishness by using the protagonist as a common ground for students to ponder, discuss, and analyze in the EFL classroom.

The novel could be used as a common ground and starting point for working with trauma narratives and identities. Spear argues for what value literary texts on trauma can bring into the classroom. She noticed that the read trauma became the collective trauma (55). However, respect and cautiousness towards diversity in students' backgrounds and experiences is important for safe learning. Janice Carello and Lisa D. Butler suggest a trauma-informed teaching, that is to firstly inform of how a victim might be affected by his/her trauma, before exposing students to the actual trauma. By applying this method, this would be to take the edge of trauma, and, stated by the authors, to avoid the risk of retraumatization (156). Shoshana Felman discovered this risk in her class, exposing them to too much trauma (48), hence, the methodology of

literature teaching trauma stories, needs to be carefully balanced by the teacher. Nonetheless, despite this risk, the EFL classroom is an appropriate context to use trauma narratives for understanding. One of the purposes of the subject is to offer students an understanding of the surrounding and different ways of living (Nat. Ag. f. Ed. 1).

Maria Nikolajeva argues that literature offers precisely this; a different type of knowledge compared to empirical knowledge (21). Not unproblematic of course, the pre-knowledge and age of the readers are of interest to Nikolajeva, since the reader is dependent on that in relation to how the story is being perceived (26). With both the purpose of teaching English and Craps arguing for the value of others' stories in mind, not only the age could be regarded as a factor of pre-knowledge, but also the extent of cultural, non-Western pre-knowledge should be encountered as factors of pre-knowledge when teaching trauma literature in the EFL classroom.

3.2 Trauma and literature

The term "witness" in trauma studies has double meaning; it means someone who has witnessed something horrible, also named viewed or secondary trauma, and testifies about it, but when discussing trauma and literature, the witness is the reader. Discussed by several scholars is the role of the witness in the studies of trauma and literature. To begin with, the trauma witness is described as the one obliged to testify due to traumas that has been witnessed. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub present the era of testimony, and its contribution to a truth that cannot be named knowledge, but merely a speech act (5). Further, the readers of these testimonies is by Caruth described as someone forced to listen to survivors (9). One researcher in the field calling for a distinction between witnesses, especially readers of postcolonial works, is Visser, who argues that a distinction between witnesses based on cultural heritage is required in

order to do the testimony justice (275). The same kind of distinction is made by Kaplan who states the different exposure to trauma to be a "degree of terror" (1)

Tal discusses the practice of reading trauma, if trauma can even be conveyed through narration, and concludes with dependency on the reader. She makes a distinction between nontraumatized and survivor readers. The words used by the narrator provoke different emotions, memories, and images dependent on which category of reader one belongs to (16-17). However, it is still claimed that a nontraumatized reader can access the story of trauma based on their literacy ability (17). According to Holland, this is dependent on the individual's emotional memory, and is connected to former experiences that are being brought into the literary work being read (91). Tal presents a Holocaust survivor who ponders the possibilities (or impossibility) to testify by writing about the traumatic experiences, and how a survivor cannot create the same experiences through language. Nevertheless, he concludes that "One had to force man to look", which Tal identifies as the "defining characteristics of trauma literature" (121)

The above stated about non-traumatized readers can be an issue of how the critic should be able to analyze texts far from their own experiences. Jo Collins problematizes the conception of trauma witnessing as ethical reading, since it maintains the differentiated relationship with First and Third World countries. Extensively, she claims the reader to be practicing appropriation since merely reading and interpreting traumas of non-Westerners is a highly valued course of action (8). Contrasting this, or a solution enabling Westerners analyzing non-Western works, is Kaplan's concept of translation. She inquires for interconnection and interchange between cultures, which has the primary aim of understanding and even nurture learning (104). In my interpretation, both Kaplan and Craps (19) call for an awareness of what relationship, similarities and

differences, the critic has to the text; including the depicted trauma, author, culture, ethnicity, sexuality, class, gender and so forth.

Nevertheless, teaching empathy or understanding through trauma literature is debated. Suzanne Keen argues for that the "empathy-altruism theory" (suggesting that reading changes the reader's mind and behavior) rarely happens within readers' minds since the motivation for reading a novel differs (65-66). Further, Collins argues that due to lack of identification with the literary characters, trauma literature does not automatically provide with opportunities of practicing empathy (7). The demand on the reader of trauma literature is identified by both Collins and Nikolajeva, although Collins compares the role of the reader with that of a therapist and concludes that the roles cannot be equally valuable since the survivor/therapist includes two-way communication, which is not the prerequisite for reader/text relationships. Opposing Collins' view, I would argue that the teacher could figure as the communicator by adapting to Carello and Butler's trauma-informed teaching that emphasizes awareness and preparation (163). This could possibly answer the pedagogical question *when* and *how*, meaning that the teachers' role is crucial for bringing in the trauma novel in the classroom.

Nikolajeva presents that inexperienced readers can too feel empathy even though lacking real life experience of the feelings portrayed in the text (83). Important though, is to distinguish between the experienced and non-experienced students since the text will appear differently to them. For inexperienced students, the text may work as preparation, as Nikolajeva claims "reading fiction prepares students for empathy in real life" (79) However, for experienced students recognizing the trauma, working with the text may have a more healing purpose and effect, even though the risk of harming students should not be dismissed. For teachers, this approach to working with trauma is challenging since teachers cannot be sure of all of the students' experiences and lived

traumas (Spear 53). On the other hand, the steering documents clearly advocate working with empathy, and literature; where vicarious trauma through narratives could be one way of conducting the studies.

Just as humans perceive traumas differently dependent on the psyche, a similar thinking about empathy and literature is true. Keen provides with the example of environmental differences and that the individual's capacity of empathy is traceable to the psyche (3). Agreeing with Holland regarding true feelings towards literature, however, she also states "No one text evokes the same responses in all of its readers, and not all texts succeed in stimulating readers to feel and act …" (4) If teachers are to work with literature to discuss personal topics such as identity, mourning, and cultural differences, an aim for teachers could thus be to prevent "empty" empathy that Kaplan has coined (93). In practice, teachers would need to contextualize the images, or texts, students have experienced in order for them to become real, and thus increase the possibility of making the students become more empathic.

Ariel Cunningham confirms the notion of literature as a moralizing tool teachers can use to develop the students' personalities, including identity (111-12). Considering Keen's quote about differences in responses in the former paragraph, the task seems difficult. The pedagogical question is obviously *how* teachers could engage students. Kaplan's conclusion of media's portrayal of a war hero is "We are encouraged to identify with specific people … "(95), with emphasis on a positive, identifiable image of the culture to create a collective notion. Very important becomes the choice of literary texts in the classroom to correspond to the multicultural representation of the classroom. In addition, if media encourage us to identify with specific people, the role of the teacher could be to encourage identification with people different from us.

The protagonist of the novel is a child in the first half of the narration, and the second half she is a young adult. For the matter of identification, this aspect would be

beneficial if we are to believe Eva Fjällström and Lydia Kukkola's findings on students' ability to identify with characters. Their conclusion is that for young adults to identify with, attempting to understand and empathize with an adult compared to an adolescent "was clearly difficult" (405) On the other hand, the protagonist being a black girl could probably be an obstacle for white male students in practicing their empathy skills. Extensively, based on the study they also concluded former experiences to influence the student responses (408). However, traumatic reading seems to have a different impact on students, as described by Spear, and also by Felman and Laub. Hence, trauma stories could serve a great purpose in engaging students usually not engaged in literature; implying that it is the traumatic event that gains students' interest and engages their empathy skills.

4 Traumatic Aspects in *We Need New Names*

In the following section, the aspect of trauma in the novel *We Need New Names* will be analyzed. For efficient readability, this section will be divided into three parts, as follows: *aspects of witnessed trauma*, *aspects of transgenerational trauma*, and *aspects of cultural trauma*. All three sections serve the purpose of strengthening the argument that the protagonist Darling's identity is affected by the different traumas she is experiencing.

4.1 Aspects of Witnessed Trauma

The identity re-formation of the protagonist appears in her adolescent years, although the traumatic experiences are founded in her childhood in what is believed by critics to be Zimbabwe, and that is where the first viewed trauma occurs. 10-year-old Darling, Mother of Bones, a woman taking care of the children in the shanty of Paradise, and her 11-year-old friend Chipo are on their way to a sermon in a church on the mountains (26). Half way through the sermon the, in Darling's opinion, disgusting

priest Prophet Revelations Bitchington Mborro is to exercise demons out of a woman's body:

> He places his hands on her stomach, on her thighs, then he puts his hand on her thing and starts rubbing and praying hard for it, like there's something wrong with it. His face is alight, glowing. The pretty woman just looks like a rag now, the prettiness gone, her strength gone. I'm careful not to look at her face anymore because I don't want her to find me looking at her when she is like this (40)

Darling witnesses sexual abuse, and even though she finds the situation terrible, she is lacking the vocabulary to express it. Extensively, she is also a child that does not have any sexual experience, and therefore, in alignment with Freud, she will discover this memory as a secondary trauma after she becomes aware of her sexuality and understanding for what it actually is (315). Further on in the novel when she has moved to America, Darling and some friends are watching porn on the computer, but ends up accidentally watching a clip of a female circumcision. Darling then refers to the moment earlier in her life, "I am reminded . . . how Prophet Revelations Bitchington Mborro and the Evangelists held down the pretty woman on the mountain to exorcise her demon" (213), so as the image re-appears in her conscious, she becomes aware of the pain the memory reinforces (Miljkovic 66). Moreover, this can be explained as the moment where Darling transforms from innocence, from which state you cannot return (Tal 119).

Continuously, it is clear that the protagonist experiences this as traumatic even though she is not the victim, since she is having difficulties expressing herself in the situation. Further, she does not tell any other character about it, but only mediates the memory to the reader of the novel. Thus, by not telling any other character, she has tried to practice "forgetting" (Kaplan 74) of this memory, but when viewing the clip she is

reminded of her past. That part of the protagonist's identity has been abandoned due to her desire to belong to the new group, namely her two new American friends. Since the protagonist is not sharing the painful memory with her friends, it seems as if belonging to the new group has become more important than identifying with people experienced the same trauma (Tal 10), and that is how her identity has been negatively affected based on the event.

Turning to the character Chipo's reaction during the sermon, the "degree of terror" that differentiates the victims (Kaplan 1) will be discussed. Chipo, who is pregnant by rape and so traumatized by the experience that she stopped talking, is worth analyzing from the aspect of differentiation, affection and reaction. Chipo recognizes herself in the situation of rape, being retraumatized (Carello & Butler 156), and suddenly starts speaking of her horrible memories with Darling; describing what her grandfather did to her. Thus, Chipo's healing process starts, since her ability to speak the unspeakable re-appeared (Caruth 1). On the other hand, Darling, who has not experienced a rape, responds accordingly:

> I watch her and she has this look I have never seen before, this look of pain. I want to laugh that her voice is back, but her face confuses me and I can also see she wants me to say something, something maybe important, so I say, Do you want to go and steal guavas? (41)

If applying Nikolajeva's terms "inexperienced and experienced readers" (83) when analyzing this narration, Darling is the inexperienced reader that still has the ability to empathize with Chipo. Her response can to the reader of the novel seem emotionless, although to the characters, guavas are a necessity both in terms of survival and for their social life and group identity. Hence, the protagonist could read the situation and empathize with her friend to some extent, even though incapable of giving Chipo the reponse she wished for. Interestingly, what Chipo experiences could be compared to

what Felman and Laub's students experienced; the disappointment of not receiving any proper response from people not sharing the traumatic experience (50).

From an authorial perspective, the differences between the characters can illustrate the differences between real life individuals' experiences. To also include the contextual place, a Third world country, one point made is that all African children have not been raped and pregnant by the age of 11. The author herself has clearly stated that she herself was not in the protagonist's position as a child (Peschel), but still she felt obliged to "bear witness" of the situation in her home country Zimbabwe (Kohler). Possibly, it is important for the author to differentiate between individuals in order to not enforce stereotypes viewed from a Western perspective. Nevertheless, by using the child perspective, the protagonist and her friends' way of playfully coping with traumas of every day life seems necessary for continuation of life. Possibly, it is clever to depict the characters as both victims *and* happy, innocent children, to provide Western readers with a differentiated picture; to avoid appropriation (Collins 8).

The second witnessed trauma that is to be analyzed is the attempted abortion executed on the protagonist's friend Chipo, which affects all of the participants. The friends are aware of that giving birth kills, so they have to save Chipo so they can play properly with her again, but they are too little to know how an abortion is supposed to be executed (79). Eventually, Forgiveness approaches with a clothes hanger she has been straightening out, and asks Chipo to take off her shorts and spread her legs, although she refuses (85). When Forgiveness has explained the procedure Darling notices the following on Chipo: " You are lying, the patient says. Her thighs are pressed together, her face contorted as if the hanger is inside her already. I notice her eyes are wide now, fearful" (85). Again, Darling is not in the moment aware of that she is witnessing a trauma; at the moment it does not seem as if this event harms the person. This would according to Freud be due to belatedness. Meaning that the event

experienced in childhood bothers the traumatized person much later (Freud 314-15). although the outcomes will be discussed further down. However, she is unable to feel and share the fear since she is not unwillingly pregnant herself, and she is also unaware of how the baby will arrive into the world. Theoretically, the event is what Kaplan and Tal would define as "degree of terror" (Kaplan 1, Tal 2). All the characters are suffering, but to different degrees.

The level of identification with Chipo's trauma plays a significant role for the instant reaction to it. Suddenly interrupted by MotherLove, a woman from the shanty, asking what is going on; Chipo starts crying loudly and it accelerates as MotherLove becomes angrier; ending when Forgiveness explaining everything. The outcome is unexpected from Darling's point of view, by MotherLove dropping to the ground and Darling sees:

> There are tears in her eyes and she is clutching her chest like there's a fire inside it. Then MotherLove reaches out and holds Chipo. We are all watching and not knowing what to do because when grown-ups cry, it's not like you can ask them what's wrong, or tell them to shut up; there are just no words for a grown-up's tears. (88)

Darling's struggle to empathize is due to her lack of a similar experience. Spear values the shared experience of trauma as a possibility to work through it (58), but since Darling is a child she can only attempt to understand. In contrast, MotherLove knows what Chipo is going to go through, and thus can empathize with her.

In addition, the empathy MotherLove is able to feel is not only dependent on age or being a woman, but also on contextual basis. To discover the children trying to perform the abortion physically aches her heart, because unlike the children, she is aware of the humanitary injustices their "wretched" country offers. In comparison to Westerners, such as the woman from London, who is close to fascinated and exotifies

Chipo's pregnancy when finding out her age, by utter "wow" and taking pictures of them (7-9), MotherLove lives in the country and also lives the prerequisites, which the Westerners only perceive through news. At closest, the white woman feels pity for the children, which Keen defines as sympathy and not empathy (5), whereas MotherLove feels what Chipo feels. What is being illustruated is, that from a Western perspective the scene might be viewed as a misfortune, and from the stories owners' perspective it is a trauma. This is an aspect highly valued by Tal and Craps, who claim that the owners of the trauma are the ones who should retell it (Tal 7), and sufferings formerly unheard should be told and viewed as traumatic (Craps 4).

Nevertheless, important to emphasize in accordance with Craps, is the fact that Darling might not be in need of speaking about this trauma, since that is a typical Western view on how to heal traumatic memories (22-23). However, there is evidence that this truly was traumatizing for the protagonist by showing symptoms of PTSD (Herman 120-23). When Darling has moved to America and at the end of the novel is talking to Chipo on the phone, she seems to suffer from memory repression, what Kaplan describes as "performing forgetting" due to memories too painful to think of (74). On the phone with Chipo, whose voice she barely recognizes, Darling asks: "Where are all the others?" meaning their friends, and Chipo answers the question. Darling continues: "So it's just you all alone? I say. I'm not alone, I have Darling here, she says. Darling? Yes, Darling, my daughter. You forget?"(285) It is not until now the memory re-appears in Darling's consciousness and is damaging her, precisely like Freud and Caruth describe the process of belatedness (Freud 321, Caruth 4). She expresses pity for Chipo who gets upset with her, and accuses Darling of hypocrisy for claiming their home country her country, since she left. Darling then shows PTSD symptoms by throwing the computer across the room, feeling as if "the air has been

sucked out" and telling the reader that "My heart is beating fast, and my throat is tight" (286-87), which are all signs of traumatic symptoms (Herman 120-23).

In contrast to the previous example, this last example of a viewed trauma can be said to immediately have a traumatizing effect on the protagonist's identity formation. Darling finds her father, unexpectedly, lying on a bed in their shack coming home from South Africa; in his last living days dying from HIV/AIDS (89). Initially, Darling does not recognize her father and reacts accordingly: "I don't even know it's Father so I run outside, screaming and screaming" (90). Her mother hears her screaming and wants Darling to be quiet, so no one else can discover what is being hidden in their shack. When Darling's mother forces her into the shack to more or less say goodbye to the half-dead father, the narrator takes the reader back in time, to just before her father left, and gives the reader access to her thoughts and feelings about him leaving. This desire to bring the past back to life through memories is evidence in itself of the traumatizing effect this has had on the protagonist; best referred to as Miljkovic "restorative nostalgia" which is the desire for the irretreavable past (49).

The protagonist's father leaving *and* returning are events that have a negative impact on her life a well as identity process. As the chapter starts, the reader can immediately read Darling's disappointing, angry, and blaming tone towards her father. She explains to the narratees: "Father comes home after many years of forgetting us, of not sending us money, of not loving us, not visiting us, not anything us" (89), and instantly one also becomes aware of her father leaving in the past, was also a trauma that now makes itself reminded. Hence, the pain and dejection over this trauma makes it difficult for her to narrate this part coherently to us. Darling's narrative can be linked to Herman's explanation of the desire to speak out about the trauma in order to heal, although often fragmentedly executed (1-2). The narrative from Darling can be interpreted as an attempt to describe to us the traumatic event of her father leaving and

returning like a wandering corpse; however, since she is a child it is even more difficult for her to describe the mourning to us. The trauma of her father leaving is enforced by him returning, only to leave again but this time for infinity. The impact this has on the protagonist is that her anger towards her father causes confusion and questioning towards herself. Continously, this causes guilt, shame and self-blame, which are all listed by Herman as "Alterations in self-perception" due to Complex PTSD (121). Further, this negative self-perception could have a negative impact on the identity, as explained by Ribeiro (33).

The traumatic experience reveals itself in terms of loss and mourning from Darling, now coming to the surface when her father returns. She remembers:

> And later, when the pictures and letters and money and clothes and things he had promised didn't come, I tried not to forget him by looking for him in the faces of the Paradise men, in the faces of my friends' fathers. I would watch the men closely, wondering which of their gestures my father would be likely to make, which voice he would use, which laugh. How much hair would cover his arms and face (93).

A pattern in the protagonist's coping strategy of traumatic events seems to be remembering, and not speaking, which is by Herman emphasized as important for healing (1). Interestingly, Darling's coping strategy seems insufficient since the focus on memory can be "a process of displacement *itself*," (Barionian et al. 12, original emphasis) where the mental displacement seems to affect her everyday life. However, the traumas have not begun to explicitly make her alienate herself, neither is she demonstrating symptoms of inability to function wich could be due to the characteristics of trauma belatedness (Caruth 4, Freud 321). However, what her behavior does demonstrate, is that the traumas have a major impact on her identity process by searching for relatedness and stability both of the past and in the present.

4.2 Aspects of Transgenerational Trauma

To the reader of the novel, it is at first glance described and depicted as if the move to America is voluntarily made, and full of joy, which at first is the genuine notion for the protagonist herself. However, Chapter 10, only two pages long, named "How they left" is narrated differently from first-person, which is otherwise the narration of the novel. The chapter is the last one before Darling migrates to America, although it is narrated as if she is pondering on the sufferings of migration long after she herself has migrated; almost as if she has realized in hindsight that she was not alone experiencing the sufferings from the trauma (145-46). The former description of the chapter is how I will analyze it, assuming that it is Darling's narration still, but much later on in her life. It is described how people are "leaving in droves" (145), all kinds of people are leaving their homes. Then Darling refers to experiences she has had herself; starvation and "tears wiped away in strange lands, the wound of despair bandaged in faraway lands … blistered prayers muttered in the darkness" (146), but has realized that this is part of her national heritage. So many others before and after her, belonging in the margins, to Third World countries, have been doing the same involuntary journey due to aftermath of colonization.

I would argue that this short chapter covers all of Visser's demands for history, politics and memory to be included as traumatic (275), since Darling mentions the "wretched" home country, "the grief in their footsteps" and knowing they will be "welcomed with restraint" because they do not belong there (146). The forced displacement can be described in several steps; firstly, when the colonists arrive, secondly, when the protagonist and her family's house is being demolished, and lastly, when Darling needs to go to America due to the current situation in the country. In extension, the identity is affected since forced displacement has the same effect as a trauma (LaCapra 384). Moreover, this short chapter also illuminates the inseparability

between the collective and individual (Kaplan 1). Darling identifies with foreigners, who are suffering the same mourning of their past (Miljkovic 66), thus sharing the same trauma inevitably becomes part of her identity, although not claimed to be in a positive manner if the trauma remains untreated (LaCapra 391). Nevertheless, they still share the experiences and thereby form a group of mourners possible to identify with.

Darling has a romanticized picture of "her" America, although when finally there, she finds herself alienated even from her family members Uncle Kojo, Aunt Fostalina, and her cousin TK; especially from her cousin who is born in America. Aunt Fostalina and Uncle Kojo have assimilated to the American society with Aunt Fostalina exercising in front of the TV all the time, uncle Kojo only watching football, and are not bothered by TK playing Gameboy (152-53). All of this puzzles Darling, thinking about TK's playing "What kind of game do you play by yourself?" (153), and Aunt Fostalina's work out: "It is very strange how she just walks in one place. Maybe if it were not for all this snow lying all over, she would walk outside, like how a person is supposed to do." (148) To the narrator, this is a cultural shock, although from an authorial perspective, it can be interpreted as social critique, which will be discussed below.

Darling figures out rather soon that this is how her life and behavior will end up too, due to the forced displacement that she suffers from, and so many others before her; ending up like this is part of the heritage when migrating from a Third world country. Darling concludes that snow is preventing her from living her life, so why could she just not be at home? Then she reminds herself, "But then we wouldn't be having enough food, which is why I will stand being in America dealing with the snow." (153) The sacrifices the protagonist has to make in order to escape poverty occurs to her now for the first time, and make the memories from the past slowly becoming more painful than joyful. What is portrayed is a battle between different types of nostalgia; reflective and

mourning (Miljkovic 50). On one hand, she mourns the past which affects her life in present time in form of prevention of living life, and on the other, she realizes that, even though in love with the past, all parts of the past were perhaps not altogether positive.

The protagonist knows that her identity will be transformed in an undesirable manner, just as Fostalina is telling her "For memories, one day all you'll have are these pictures" (149), and Darling becomes aware of that Fostalina and many others before her have experienced the same journey and loss of the imagined home country. Visible here is the matter of histories being transmitted and passing the memory down, as Rothberg exresses it (270). To Fostalina, who in this brief sentence transmits the case about being an illegal immigrant, verbalizing it contributes with acceptance of the trauma and situation of leaving your country for the social status she is now having. To Darling, receiving this information and the pain that comes with it, raises awareness of her place. Perhaps to a lesser degree than aunt Fostalina, she can still identify with the national trauma of their home country, causing them to be in their current place. Moreover, the consistently made comparisons between the home and new country made by the author correspond to Andermahr's suggestion of exploration of the relationship between Third and First world countries (501). Mostly, I would argue, it is the superiority and centrality of American values and perspectives that are being challenged by the author.

Darling realizes as time goes by that it is an inherited trauma she suffers from, together with others who have left the country. She narrates her obsession with the past and home country that is being shared with Aunt Fostalina and friends of hers that come to visit occasionally. When they do so, they eat food from home, listen to music from home, speak in their mother tongue, and dance like at home (160-62). As described by LaCapra, the collective identity is here built on the trauma of leaving the home country, the mourning and the memories of the past (391). However, the behavior of re-entering

the past culturally could be the treatment of trauma; meaning that the above described could be an example of the non-Western way of treating the trauma towards healing, instead of verbalizing the experiences (Craps 22-23). Extensively, the scene depicted by the author could illustrate the struggle of adapting to multiple identities. Namely, that the migrants can only be their true selves behind closed doors, but officially they need to assimiliate to the new culture.

The narrator tells the reader what her friend Stina said about the trauma of leaving your country: “Stina also said that leaving your country is like dying, and when you come back you are like a ghost returning to earth, roaming around with a missing gaze in your eyes” (160), which is perhaps the most explicitly stated feelings about the trauma, and the statement is similar to both LaCapra’s and Ribeiro’s conclusions on the outcome of collective traumatic experiences (LaCapra 391, Ribeiro 33). Interestingly, this is Stina’s statement, and not Darling’s, who is still in denial of her situation. She is thinking of a response to Stina’s statement, and tells the reader: “I don’t want to be that (a ghost) when I go back to my country” (160), and she continues to think of home and if things even will be there when she returns. These states of being dissociated indicate that Darling is, due to her experiences, to some extent prevented from living her life properly , and this is confirmed by Freud (316) and Ribeiro (31) to be a symptom of trauma.

A last example of transgenerational trauma is when Darling, now living in America, ponders on the history of her country and the notion of home. She herself refers to two homes, but for her family members “There are three homes inside Mother’s and Aunt Fostalina’s heads: home before independence … Home after independence … And then the home of things falling apart …” (191). She proceeds with “There are four homes inside Mother of Bones’s head: home before white people came to steal the country … home when … there was war; home when black people got

our stolen country back after independence; and then the home of now," (191-92) and these thoughts appear when Darling realizes that America is not her home. She, as well as Aunt Fostalina, is only in America due to the history of the country; searching new homes. She has for so long thought of America as better, but realizes that it is not better for her; her as in the diaspora collective and individual. The above corresponds to LaCapra's explanation of loss of land (385), but to elaborate further, Kaplan's explanation of contact between groups of people as traumatic is relevant as well (105). Darling refers to before she was even born; but still, the traumatizing contact between black and white people in previous times traumatizes her since the past has a major impact on her life today. This is confirming Visser's point, that history, politics and memory needs to be encountered as trauma in postcolonial novels (275).

4.3 Aspects of Cultural Trauma

A whole chapter could be argued for belonging in the category of cultural trauma; the chapter is called "How they lived" (237-50). The chapter is not narrated by Darling, but instead it is collectively narrated by adults who are illegal immigrants. The reader is being told how Americans view African immigrants as only Africans, meaning that they do not consider Africa as a continent of more than 50 states with different kinds of people, and that the preconceived notions they have of Africans are believed to be correct. The cultural traumatic aspect is that the immigrants are being asked racist questions by Americans based on their limited knowledge of African countries received from the news, such as ". . . where vultures wait for famished children to die? . . . Where people run about naked? . . . The part where they massacred each other?" (237-38), which reinforce their trauma of leaving their home countires. From the American perspective, the questions asked are not understood as re-traumatizing for the immigrants. To them, leaving the African continent seems like a relief for the immigrants, since their picture of African countries is nothing but misery. Illustrated

here is the inability to participate in others' trauma and thereby lacking of solidarity and practice exclusion of that group (Brooks and Alexander 85). According to Craps, the lack of identification with other people's suffering (13) could explain the Americans' reactions, namely, that arriving to America is not encountered as traumatic due to Americans lack of identification of the positive view of African countries. Characteristic for cultural trauma is the collective memory, and this example reminds the collective (immigrants) of why they are in America, and they also become aware of how they are being portrayed by the self acclaimed superior group.

The reaction from the immigrants to this welcoming is crying, but even more revealing is the statement of the counter-reaction from the Americans, ". . . they pitied us and said, It's okay – it's okay, you are in America now . . ." (238), which reveals the misunderstanding of the weeping, thinking that the immigrants are happy about leaving their countries in favor of America. In fact, they are miserable and upset over their "wretched countries" (238) that have been consistently destroyed to the extent that they are forced to leave. The uncontrollable weeping examplifies Craps advocating for sufferings formerly unheard to be presented (4). Further, he explains the identification of such traumas as problematic, since the audience who is the intended reader in order to fulfill the purpose of bridging cultures, lacks the experiences of many illegal immigrants (2,6,13). However, this style of writing, from the collective's perspective on how they are being perceived by white people, works efficiently in the cultural spectrum; especially considering Tal's argument for owning your story and testimony (7). The chapter serves as the owners of the story implicitly telling the Western readers of a common behavior towards others. It could not be stated clearer than by the interviewees in Tal's study, "one had to force man to look" (121), which is what this chapter does, and thereby presenting the cultural trauma immigrants from Third world

countries are exposed to, and how their trauma is not being accounted for or understood by Westerners.

Further, the diasporic identity is depicted in the chapter, and shows how broad the collective identity of immigrants can be, and the way they are treated based on their diaspora status contributes to cultural trauma and collective mourning. Further on in the chapter, the illegal immigrants depict their work situation; the unsafe environment, the need to hide their names, the need to take unwanted jobs to avoid being detected. Once at the work place, they meet other diasporic men who they finally feel connected to. When they look at the few pictures they keep in their wallets, they express: "We had never seen their countries but we knew about everything in those pictures; we were not altogether strangers." (243) Barionian and colleagues have identified this phenomenon as part of the diasporic identity. Based on the extract, it seems as if the experience and the memories are connection enough for the illegal immigrants to found their diasporic identity on. Interestingly, Barionian, Besser, and Jansen also stress the importance of the place compared to the memory (12), although this is not the case in the novel, rather it is the memories, however fragile they might be, that seem to be more important than the place, since they come from different countries. Nevertheless, the countries mentioned; Niger, Kazakhstan, Sri Lanka, Sudan et cetera, share the historical background of colonization. This is, in my interpretation, why Craps claims cultural trauma is event-based, because it is traceable to a single event (31).

Perhaps Craps is right when referring to the event-based model, but to claim cultural trauma to solely be event-based would be incorrect. Cultural trauma is an ongoing process; new events occurring, damaging the mind based on repetitive experiences and not underlying and re-appearing in the unconscious (Kaplan 68). The adaptations the illegal immigrants are performing are attempts to assimilate to the new

culture. What is lost with those adaptations is the identity, as described by LaCapra (391). One of the adaptations described is:

> 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. When our children were born, we did not bury their umbilical cords under the earth to bind them to the land because we had no land to call ours (247).

According to Ribeiro's conclusion on untreated traumas, these collective traumas would be untreated since the mourning of the past- (one symptom of trauma)- is highly present and has a major negative effect on the individuals' identity (33). In the novel it is described that they perceive America as a prison, a chosen prison, but still a place they cannot leave (247). Thus, they are hindered to develop their identity from there, they are stuck in the past *and* the present (Miljkovic 66), which the depressive tone of the narrative uncovers.

The protagonist's meeting and conversation with a white woman at a wedding is another event exposing her to cultural trauma. Darling is just finished in the bathroom when a white, American woman enters and starts asking disturbing questions of her, such as: "Can you just say something in your language?" (174) The woman proceeds, while smiling, about how much they - (her daughter, she herself, and American organizations) - have done to help the African countries and how moved and grateful the African children were. Darling smiles at the woman, however, the reference the woman makes awakens memories in Darling's consciousness; to how she and her friends smiled at the camera of the NGO people taking pictures of them (177). To Darling, the references the woman makes are, or were, reality, whereas for the woman,

this memory is nothing more than empty empathy, described by Kaplan to happen if the pictures are are out of context (93), and that is why the woman only sees the happy faces. One can also tell of empty empathy since the woman switches subject right after the moment of them smiling.

Andermahr connects this type of racial trauma to the historical context of colonialism, although if traumas are something that could be worked through, then racial trauma would not be damaging (501). This is why the cultural trauma of racism is argued by her not to be only event-based, since it is consistently occurring through racist views, which challenges the aforementioned view on cultural trauma as a single event (501). Nevertheless, the woman's actions are putting Darling through retraumatization, and the mental distance between the two cultural representatives in this scene is telling of an inability to understand the protagonist's experiences as traumatic (Brooks and Alexander 85, Craps 6). To constantly meet these racist presumptions and interpellation is causing negative effects for the identity formation, just as Ndlovu identified (140).

The cultural, individual trauma the protagonist is exposed to is due to her struggle for acceptance in the Western society. During the wedding, Darling hits a disobedient child; namely the bride's child Mandla. He is misbehaving in general, and eventually he throws a ball in Darling's face and she slaps him. The reactions follows: "It's only when I sit back down and look around that I realize what I have done. The white people have already gasped, and a shocked voice has already said, Oh my God. Heads have been shaken and eyes have widened in disbelief." (183) A Zimbabwean man shouts "This is just how we handle unruly children in our culture . . ." (183) as an attempt to calm the situation. Darling is already deeply ashamed and concludes "I know that I will never forget those faces, and I know, looking at them, that I will never hit a kid again, no matter how bad he is." (183) Again, the superiority of the white culture as

the right culture reminds Darling, and the other Africans at the wedding, of their place and status in society. I strongly emphasize that hitting children is not something that should be accepted, rather, it is the white guests' reactions and how it affects the protagonist and the black guests I want to analyze. Darling's awareness of her culturally inferior position makes her realize how much of her former life needs to be abandoned if she is going to earn a place in the American society. Extensively, it is also the realization of the protagonist that her group stands for the wrong and abnormal and that this has to be given up. Ribeiro recognized these difficulties from Jews who felt alienated in their new societies (31). Moreover, the identification with groups of shared trauma, in this case Africans, is stated by Tal to be instable. The reason to that is because of the urge to assimilate to the new group one now desires to belong to (110). The excerpt from the novel is merely one example of Darling's way to show interest for the current group, which causes ambivalence in her identity formation.

5 *We Need New Names* in the EFL Classroom

The pedagogical analysis that follows will discuss the analyzed novel's potential in the EFL classroom. The discussion of the novel's potential will continue to adhere to trauma theory and how that can be included if teaching the novel. The possible pedagogical use of the novel could contribute with enhanced understanding for non-Westerners and their cultural background as well as collectively heal vicarious traumas to aim for a sense of group unity in the classroom. To some extent, I will include the perspective of empathy to be able to properly analyze to what extent understanding could be worked with in the EFL classroom through literature. This section will be structured in coherence with the literary analysis section.

5.1 Witnessed Trauma in the EFL Classroom

A trauma can be witnessed in reality, but it can also be witnessed through literature. For the purpose of clarity in this section, I will now refer to the witness of trauma through literature as the trauma reader. Continuing, using the witnessed trauma can serve the purpose of creating unity among the students in the classroom. Kaplan argues for the usefulness of what she calls "vicarious trauma" (87). The concept of vicarious trauma is linked to secondary trauma, in other words, a person being traumatized from being told about a trauma experienced by someone else (87). Even though it is a risk putting students through a traumatic experience, there are suggestions of how to overcome the pitfalls of such teaching. Carello and Butler argue that working with trauma narratives cautiously, partly meaning to be well prepared and aware of the trauma and its effects (163), could leave the students in a positive state (153).

The pedagogical question of why one should use trauma narratives in the classroom could be to foster understanding and aim for a sense of unity within the class. The value of vicarious trauma is expressed by Kaplan as ". . . being vicariously traumatized invites members of society to confront, rather than conceal, catastrophes . . ." (87). Likewise, using the shared experience, which happens to readers of the same trauma even though fictive, enables teachers to work the students through the *same* trauma (Spear 58). Stated by LaCapra, is that the actual trauma contributes to group coherence (391), hence, working with trauma can enforce the group coherence positively if the trauma is treated. Continuously, by using literature instead of own experiences, the chances of engaging non-traumatized and traumatized students without crossing personal limits may increase.

Nonetheless, the examples from the novel are narrated by a child, which should be positive for the possibility of identification and relatedness for the students (Fjällström and Kukkola 405); they have all been children. However, the traumatic

events that the children are exposed to are probably not as easy to grasp due to lack of similar experiences. Turning to the Syllabus for English in upper secondary school courses, the fifth purpose of the subject of English: "should give students the opportunities to develop the following: . . . The ability to discuss and reflect on living conditions, social issues, and cultural features in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used" (2), which includes many African countries with English as one of the official languages. Also, to use a text by an author from the African continent migrating herself could figure as a sense of inclusion and representation from refugees' perspective, and from non-migrating students' perspective the novel could be beneficial for increased understanding of cultural differences (Craps 4). The curriculum supports this work by stating that "awareness of one's own cultural origin" (4), as well as understanding for others understanding are supposed to be worked with (4). However, despite the presumable experience-based difficulties with identification, the collectively read trauma from the studied novel could be worked with to broaden awareness for other people's backgrounds, preferences, and living conditions.

Therefore, it is important to include the children's experiences as traumatic, considering them living in a non-Western country (Craps 4). To simply name the experiences unfortunate or sad stories only creates pity and otherness, but if one mentions them as traumatic, it transforms into an experience they *need* to work themselves through (Spear 54). Collins accuses this type of reading for being a type of appropriation (8); although then, the question remains of how one should, or could, work with these testimonies at all. Opposed to Collins, Carollo and Butler value the teachers' role highly and address trauma-informed teaching to create a safe environment for the students (162). Connecting this view on teachers' role to Kaplan's strive for translation to be applied to trauma stories (104), appropriation could be avoided. To extend the view on trauma, it is insufficient to read about them; they need to be treated

and healed as well. This in turn could be worked with in the classroom to promote understanding for newly arrived immigrants and their possible difficulties conveying witnessed traumas, especially in a second language.

5.2 Transgenerational Trauma in the ELF Classroom

The possibilities of working with transgenerational trauma are vast and relevant to promote and foster understanding. The curriculum demands teachers to actively combat all forms of discrimination and degrading treatment (4). By using examples from the studied novel in this thesis, it is possible to make visible the impact a human's past can have on the identity. Even though students of Western heritage might find the situation difficult to understand, Nikolajeva and Tal claim, respectively, that inexperienced or non-traumatized readers are able to feel empathy with feelings portrayed in a novel (Nikolajeva 83, Tal 17). It is stated that schools should combat discrimination, although it is my belief that novels, suggestively the one analyzed here, can figure as prevention towards prejudice and discriminating and degrading utterances. In accordance with Nikolajeva, literature can serve the purpose of practicing empathy for future real life experiences (79). Hence, students can "meet" others and their experiences through fiction before making prejudice assumptions about them.

Regarding the Swedish context, I would argue that this novel is suitable for the classroom since the critique in the novel is directed towards America and Americans. The critique of white people in the novel is an important aspect to consider regarding white, Western students in the classroom, so that they will not feel guilt or offended. According to Collins, this is how postcolonial (trauma) readers usually read such stories, and therefore are maintaining the socio cultural differences between humans (8). Possibly, students could feel offended or encouraged to feel guilt, or that teachers are using the novel merely for moralizing purposes (Cunningham 111-12), which does not contribute to a safe environment. Nikolajeva stresses the pre-knowledge as crucial for

understanding and empathy to occur, and again, Kaplan's concept of translation (104) could be valuable when working with literary content far from own experiences. To provide students with cultural and historical knowledge, and then emphasize *understanding* as a learning outcome before reading the novel, could possibly encourage cross-cultural solidarity, which is an aim of trauma theory (Craps 2).

Lastly, I will argue for using the analyzed novel to work with the, in my interpretation, somewhat contradictory statement from the curriculum regarding acceptance towards cultural differences and the aim to create a sense of Swedishness as part of the students' identities (4). The novel could figure as an example, for students as well as teachers, of mourning of the home country, and that the memories reminding of that trauma cannot simply be removed, replaced, or forgotten (Ribeiro 33). Since the curriculum must be considered when teaching, thus appreciate "cultural diversity" and foster a "common cultural heritage," (4) the difficulties that the protagonist experiences with belonging and sense of home could be problematized and worked with in the classroom. Further, as raised in the introduction, it is even more problematic for a teacher to know what a "secure identity" is when it is stated that the common cultural heritage is supposed to strengthen "the ability to understand and empathise with the values and conditions of others," (4) because how are teachers supposed teach students who identify with others too? Especially considering Head's description of how vital the identity process is for adolescents (5). In this respect, the novel is relevant when discussing what price is payed when people abandon their original group in favor of the new one (Tal 10) namely traumatic symptoms.

5.3 Cultural Trauma in the EFL Classroom

Considering the core content in the Syllabus for English, culture can be included from plenty of aspects. For communicative purposes, "Living conditions … social issues as well as cultural, historical, political and cultural conditions in different

contexts and parts of the world where English is used" (7), which are all themes included in the novel, and are stated by Visser as necessary to review the literary work fairly (275). Further on in the core content, reception is supposed to include contemporary literature, and students are to use strategies "to understand perspectives and implied meaning" (7), which the novel corresponds to. To work with perspectives and implied meaning, teachers could efficiently include the perspective of trauma to prove the whole novel's point or purpose of being a testimony.

When discussing cultural trauma of others in the classroom, it is of highest relevance and importance to differentiate between the trauma readers; experienced and inexperienced, which is confirmed by scholars (Kaplan 1; Visser 275; Tal 16-17; Nikolajeva 83). To inform students about different reactions to the text is important beacuase real-life experienced students will probably invest emotionally in the text differently compared to a non-experienced reader. This is explained by Holland to depend on the emotional memory (91). Otherwise, experienced students could feel it as if classmates who read about their cultural traumas believe that they know what it feels like, which is not the case Kaplan (91-92). When this distinction is made and it is clarified that this is a fictive story, teachers can still ask of the students to identify with the characters in the novel. Kaplan raises the issue of media telling us who to identify with (95), then it could be valuable if teachers asked of students to practice their empathy skills on someone different; promoted in the curriculum (4). It is also argued that practicing these skills through literature is a safe zone compared to reality (Nikolajeva 77).

Before finishing, the issue of including trauma in the classroom considering traumatized students, needs to be addressed. The novel includes several traumatic experiences, some analyzed in this thesis, and some left out. Therefore, the chances that some students recognize themselves in a similar situation depicted in the novel, also

make them potentially retraumatizing victims. Trauma-informed teaching has already been mentioned (Carello and Butler), although a stronger emphasis could be made regarding the writing process and its healing function. The subject of English offers students to both speak and write, which is stated by several scholars to be crucial for the healing process (Freud 320, Herman 1). Despite the issue of trauma surviviors, students seem to desire speaking of their traumas (Carello and Butler 163, Felman and Laub 48). Spear being well aware of the risks with teaching trauma, suggests a focus on the potential of writing as healing. An extensive focus could also be on the author, emphasizing the "healing journeys" (Spear 60) they have made, and the literary work figuring as assistance in other people's healing process (Spear 60). This focus could, together with trauma-informed teaching, aid the teacher to avoid harming the students. Lastly, and of importance considering non-Westerners, a need to speak about traumas as treatment may not always be the case since verbalization for healing is based on Western perspectives (Craps 22-23).

Perhaps, experience of the same trauma is a prerequisite to be able to work with it in a classroom; considering a whole a diversity of student experiences. Spear as well as Felman noticed that their students were all affected by vicarious trauma, and it created a collective notion between the students; just as cultural or transgenerational trauma in reality does. Moreover, this would give literature a role with high potential of working with fundamental values described in the curriculum. Potentially, the collective healing after guiding the class through the read trauma, could contribute with increased empathy, and become one of the few occasions of readers changing their mindset and behavior thanks to the literary experience (Keen 65-66).

6 Conclusion

The aim with this essay has been to analyze the novel *We Need New Names* by NoViolet Bulawayo through trauma theory; to prove the protagonist's experiences traumatic, and as a consequence her identity process being affected negatively. Extensively, the aim has also been to contribute with an example of a postcolonial literary work to widen the definition of traumatic experiences, and to apply the theory to traumas of non-Westerners. Moreover, the novel's potential usefulness for the EFL classroom has been explored and discussed; with the purpose of creating a vicarious, collective trauma to work with in the classroom. The aim with using the novel would be to increase students' empathy skills and understanding for immigrants and people with different cultural heritage from themselves. Lastly, working with the depicted traumas and their impact on the individual as well as the collective's identities could contribute with a text-to-life experience useful in a multicultural society.

In this thesis, it has been argued that the three different aspects of trauma, witnessed, transgenerational and cultural, has negatively impacted the protagonist's identity. It is argued that due to the lack of language, firstly as a child and secondly as L2 speaker, the protagonist shows difficulties of dealing with her traumas and thus problems with healing. The negative effects or symptoms visible from her suffering is anger, anxiety, dissociation, alienation, but most importantly, mourning. The protagonist's traumas and sufferings alone were insufficient to analyze since transgenerational and cultural trauma aim to include suffering of the collective. From the analysis made, it is clear that the individual as well as the collective are trauma victims based on historical, political and memory grounds; especially clear in chapter 10 and 16, narrated non-chronologically and collectively as a contrast to the rest of the novel's first person narration.

Further on, to make the theory applicable to a non-Western context, the cultural differences from Western societies were considered; namely, politics, history, memory, loss of home land, mourning, and lastly, healing. All these aspects require consideration if trauma theory should be of valid use to those stories. The trauma of colonialism and its consequences can be claimed as an event-based trauma affecting the people of the same cultural heritage generations forward; although cultural trauma is also argued in this essay to repetitively occur through racism and Western superiority. Therefore, cultural trauma is not only event-based, but continuously experienced in the novel.

The effects and symptoms of the traumas depicted in the novel align with scholars of cultural and transgenerational trauma; namely mourning. The mourning of home land interconnected with the memory is argued to play a big part of the identity deficiency, and difficulties with developing further as a human being. Moreover, obsession with the past and irretrievable memories are used as an attempt to cope with present life, and proceed with life. This is showed to be unsuccessful for the protagonist and her cultural equals. Their attempts to treat the traumas by collectively returning to their notion of home has also been considered from the point of view of cultural context. Nevertheless, it is concluded in this analysis that these attempts are insufficient, and the need for verbalization of traumatic experiences is present and yet unspeakable.

In addition, from a pedagogical standpoint, the issue of practicing appropriation when using this novel in the EFL classroom has been problematized. However problematic it might be, it was concluded that a distinction between the shared vicarious trauma in the novel and real life experienced traumas similar in the novel requires informed teaching practice, called trauma-informed teaching. Since the syllabus for English and the Curriculum advocates multiculturalism, the issue of appropriation needs careful consideration. However, teachers cannot exclude working with the others just because risking misinterpretation or retraumatization of students. Also, representation of

"others", meaning not only identifying with Swedishness, deserves space in the classroom. The curriculum emphasizes the individual's "intrinsic value" and "secure identity" as fundamental values, which would mean inclusion and representation in literature, films, commercials, et cetera of all kinds of people due to the multicultural society Sweden is.

Working further on this topic, conducting a student-response study on this novel would be interesting for the purpose of character identification. To examine if the students are able to identify with characters alien from themselves would give educators an indication on how to work with novels narrated by "others". Dependent on the result, methodological indications could be suggested based on such a study, to enable teachers to work efficiently and pro-actively with prejudice against others, as demanded by the curriculum. Perhaps Keen's arguement against the empathy-altruism theory is accurate, although trauma stories seems to have a weld together effect that beneficially could be given space in the EFL classroom when working with empathy and understanding.

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