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Rural to Urban Migration as A Class Struggle in Selected Tanzanian Young Adult Novels

John Peter Madoshi^{1*}, Salma O. Hamad², Emmanuel Kilatu¹

¹Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, University of Dodoma, Dodoma 41218, Tanzania

²Department of Linguistics and Literary Studies, The Open University of Tanzania, Dar es Salaam P.O. Box 23409, Tanzania

ABSTRACT

This study examined a theme of rural to urban migration as highlighted in selected Tanzanian young adult novels. Significantly, the study sought to generate some knowledge on class struggle revealed in the selected young adult novels in Tanzanian society. The study has used Marxist social critical theory as a literary criticism. We have examined qualitatively rural to urban migration as a phenomenon occurring in Tanzanian society as depicted in the selected young adult novels. We argued that rural to urban migration, as depicted in selected literary works, is a social indicator of social transformation in which class struggle emerges as a reaction to exploitation, class stratification and poverty caused by change of mode of production. We also observed that such young adult mobility affects the social welfare of the society culturally, socially and economically. drains the rural labour by creating a class of urban cheap labourers who threaten the material and moral prosperity of the society. We, thus, concluded that young adult novels mirror the social transformation in which a change of mode of production causes a class struggle among the young adults.

Keywords: Rural to Urban Migration, Class Struggle, Young Adult Novels, Tanzania

1. Introduction

Young adult novels in Tanzania have added a literary scrutiny. Despite the expansive opportunities, the novels have not been given full-fledged scholarly studies by re-

searchers in the Tanzanian novels. Recent studies in Tanzanian novels in English in general include that of Mwaifuge^[1]. His study focuses on adult novels on how creative writing has participated in forming ideology to the nation. Ng'umbi and Wakota have examined only adult novels us-

*CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

John Peter Madoshi Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, University of Dodoma, Dodoma 41218, Tanzania; Email doshijope@yahoo.com

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ing single authors^[2,3]. Wakota did a study on gender relations by combining two classic young adult novels: *Mabala the Farmer* and *Hawa The bus driver*^[4].

The few cited studies on Tanzanian novels in English exclude young adult novels. When they have included them, they have studied them in combination with other novels that are not for young adults. Apart from that, the researchers have not examined young adult novels in order to see how young adult novels address rural to urban migration as part of class struggles to effect social changes in the society. Such limitation in examining creative writing in Tanzanian literary works in English, diminishes the breadth of Tanzanian literature in English which also covers a body of young adult novels.

The main objective of this study is to examine how rural to urban migration as class struggle reveals social changes in the selected young adult novels. As researchers, we have asked: how does young adult rural to urban migration reveal the effect of class conflicts on social changes? To answer this question, the study examined this issue using two Tanzanian young adult novels: *Rehema the House Girl* by Dorothy Lukindo and Lema's *In the Belly of Dar es Salaam*^[5,6]. In the discussion, selected texts from the works have been examined and discussed.

2. Theoretical Framework

This study has used Marxist social critical theory. As a literary criticism, the literary theory enabled the researcher to read and interpret the selected works. In Marxist social criticism, literary works reflect the social and political conditions of the time^[7]. Hence, the literary criticism allowed the researchers to examine the society as reflected in the young adult novels. Reading the texts using this literary criticism, offered a fresh outlook to better understand the works, learn more about diverse class struggles^[8]. Generally, the literary criticism controlled the analysis of the selected works.

This study has used this literary criticism in which the texts were regarded as part of social endeavours where conflicts occur. Eagleton presents two ideas that are held by Marxist critics^[9]. He argues that some Marxists see a work of art as nothing other than ideological in a particular artistic form. He further claims that, they regard literature as the means of expressing ideologies of their time. In this

study, we have analyzed the two novels by this literary criticism because the novels reflect socio-economic power structures, and class struggle. Furthermore, we have applied the literary criticism because the novels demonstrate the influence of economic systems revealed in characters, and in the theme related to rural to urban migration. Hunt argues that, within literature, one can see antagonistic social classes^[10]. He further shows that even within dominant classes, this antagonism is manifested. In this study, we have treated young adult novels as literature of the common in which an accurate picture of their struggle for their rights is shown.

3. Methodology

This study is qualitative literary or text analysis of young adult novels. The intention of choosing qualitative research was to comprehend phenomenon and to examine patterns^[11]. Qualitative research is the one whose information is basically descriptive in nature^[12]. In this study, the approach allowed for in-depth interpretation and comprehension of the literary theme, characters, and the social context within the young adult novels. Thus, this study involved analysis of the selected young adult novels. These literary works have been used hand in hand with other sources. These sources were obtained from critical works such as text books, journal articles, internet resources, dissertations, theses and essays.

4. Discussion

Several scholars have examined the issue of rural to urban migration in different places of the world. Singh sees that there is an increase of rural to urban migration in India^[13]. He discovered that the movement is prompted by attraction of opportunities and that it has contributed highly to urbanisation in India. He further argues that the movement caused another challenge of development of slums. Thus, the scholar sees that the movement has positive impact, in that, urbanisation takes place and accelerates material development in terms of labour and economic opportunities that come with large population. On the other side, the challenges of slums entail the society to manage a burden of taking care of people in provision of social services such as medical, education and feeding a large

population of unemployed people in urban areas.

The experience of India is almost similar to that of China as it can be seen in the study of Wang and Mesman^[14]. These scholars observe that in China, it is the adults who migrate to urban areas leaving children in rural areas. Such parental migration has an impact on the economy and acculturation between the young adults who grow up in urban areas and those who grow up in rural areas. The two examples of the rural to urban movement prompt a detailed examination of this theme because it recurs several times in some of the selected young adult novels examined in this study.

Indeed, the reasons of the movement in China and India might not be similar to those depicted in Tanzanian young adult novels. Nevertheless, it seems that the rural to urban migration is a global issue and one of contemporary issues that manifest social changes in different societies. Now that Tanzania is part of the global countries, it is not easy to disentangle it from the issues that are occurring in the same globe.

Lukindo's *Rehema the House Girl* depicts the theme of young adult movement from rural to urban places. The story starts by showing Rehema's daydreaming of going to Dar es Salaam as the following text reveals:

Today she was leaving with Asha to go to Dar es Salaam. She was very excited. Dar es Salaam was the city of opportunities! Where girls come back changed into beautiful women with beautiful hair styles, pretty dresses and nail polish^[8]!

From the text above, we read that Rehema is happy to move from her village Kizara in which she was brought up to Dar es Salaam. Although she has not been in Dar es Salaam before, Rehema thinks that the city offers several opportunities for young adult girls. She comes to such conclusion because most girls that leave the village to the city come changed into beautiful women; with gorgeous hair styles and well and sparkling polished finger nails.

The reasons of Rehema to go to the city of Dares Salaam, appears to be absurd and awkward. This is simply because, she is attracted by the appearance of young adults who now and then migrate to the city and come slightly changed and rather civilized according to the observation of many young adults as the text reveals. To Rehema, the city seems to be a demi paradise which she thinks might

provide bliss a young adult may require. We thus, know that the girl has misconception about the city and she comes to realise later the other hellish side the city offers to people who go therein unprepared.

It is important to understand that Rehema leaves her home village when she is seventeen years old. This is the age after primary school and late teenage years. Apart from the reason of beauty, as we have seen in the text, Rehema leaves the village because she is 'tired of eating *ugali* with tiny pieces of fish and watery soup'. She is also happy to leave her village because she is ashamed of few faded clothes she has. She is also described to be ashamed of living in a hut which is described to be falling apart with thatched roof which is full of holes. The above diction is a typical indication of a neglected class of rural dwellers living in great poverty. This highly exploited income producer class breeds young adults who are discontented with rural life. Hence, they think to migrate to urban area where life appears to be better of.

Indeed, the reasons for Rehema's rural to urban migration as we have said, may seem illogical or childish if one does not think about them critically. However, these reasons carry sound validation and vindication which might be used as justification of her move to the city. Generally, as we see from the text, young adult migration is prompted chiefly by a spirit of adventure and urge of exploring what we can call as 'new wonder land.'

To Rehema, Dar es Salaam is coloured with every opportunity that offers material prosperity and worldly bliss that a person gets when he reaches there. The explanation given by Rehema does not, however, reveal the challenges she is likely to encounter that come with life in urban settings where almost everything provided is grounded on monetary expenditure. It is until later when we see Rehema realises the different between rural life and urban living.

As we have seen, Rehema is tired of the life in the village. Young as she is, she sees the difference between urban girls and rural girls in terms of material prosperity manifested in appearance. Rehema sees that when girls shift from rural areas to urban, they return more civilised than before. They wear good clothes and keep their bodies orderly and clean compared to the rural girls who are somewhat clumsy in appearance. Such appearance allures

Rehema's young mind and evokes an urge to undergo social changes from worse to better and from poverty to richness. Rehema's account shows that the society in which she lives is highly divided into classes. Here we see a class of rural dwellers who live in great poverty and a class of urban dwellers who, according to Rehema, are somehow better off compared to those living in rural areas.

Rehema, as we see in this story decides to migrate to Dar es Salaam as part of her endeavours to change her social status from primitive life of eating poorly to life of abundance as the text reveals. She also migrates in town because she understands that, materially, people living in the village cannot be compared to those living in town as the text suggests.

As we have seen from Rehema's story, there are class differences between rural and urban people in terms of material prosperity. Young adults like Rehema know from the beginning that something is wrong somewhere. This shows that the gap between rural and urban dwellers is so wide as to attract young adult migration. Rehema is an example of many girls who leave villages to urban living. We see once again that Rehema is a mere standard seven leaver. This shows that she moves to the city without any skills and is too young to work. As a result she is integrated in young adult labour market in which she is likely to be lowly paid because of lack of skills.

Rehema's move to the city, gives a glimpse of the issue of child employment which puts young adults into a class of people who are highly exploited. She is not trained in the work of the house keeping. Nevertheless, she is expected to handle works that require skills and worse enough, she labours for a meagre wage that is spent in buying clothes and boutiques. The lack of skills in the work of house girl shows that the girl is likely to be lowly paid.

Apart from *Rehema the House Girl*^[5], the theme of rural to town migration is seen in Lema's *In the Belly of Dar es Salaam*^[6]. This young adult novel depicts the theme in detail and in a special way. Several young adult characters are well described in their move from rural areas to the city of Dar es Salaam as we can see in the following text:

On that journey to Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar and back to Dar es Salaam again, Prosopa came to rely on Sara in many things. None of them knew where the city was or how far it was from Same town (In the Belly of *Dar es Sa-*

laam)^[7].

The above text describes two young adults: Prosopa and Sara. The two move from Same district in Kilimanjaro region to the city of Dar es Salaam. Although the two travel together, their going to the city is for different reasons. Prosopa intends to go to Dar es Salaam in search of his young nephew who was kidnapped. For Sara, however, the journey to the city is fuelled by the spirit of adventure.

We also see that it is not Rehema, Prosopa or Sara who move to Dar es Salaam. Mansa, unlike Prosopa and Sara, is another character in this work who also migrates to the city. Mansa is a victim of family misunderstanding and child abuse. He merely migrates to Dar es Salaam as an asylum seeker who intends to run away from family problems. From the characters that we have seen, it is quite obvious that rural to urban migration, as depicted in the young adult novels, is caused by several factors that will be discussed later in detail.

Another character that migrates to Dar es Salaam is Kaleb Mbegu. This is the son of cashew nut peasant. Kaleb Mbegu believes that Dar es Salaam offers every opportunity for young adults as the following text explains in detail:

We are planning to go Dar es Salaam to look for work *kutafuta maisha*. To earn a bit of money *braza*. This life here is dry, too mean, like a hungry mangy dog, agh(In the Belly of *Dar es Salaam*)^[7]!

The above quoted text is not spoken by Kaleb. He simply catches the words from other boys who are describing their reasons of migrating to the city of Dar es Salaam. These young adults believe that, the city offers easier possibility of obtaining jobs. From that statement, we can also observe the comparison and the contrast of life in rural area and in the city of Dar es Salaam. To the young adults in the text, the city 'has life' and if a person is intending to get life, one should migrate to the city. The text also indicates that life in rural areas is 'dry'. This simply implies that it is a life without adequate material prosperity. This is to say, it is a life void of achievement and prosperity. We also see from the diction how life in the rural area is compared to a life of a 'mangy dog'. From the tone of the voice one sees the anger directed to rural life as it has been explained in the text.

The text also appears to hit the keynote of the reasons why most young adults to migrate to urban area. The text

carries significant truth that the society is undergoing transformation into capitalism where the allurements of material life attract young adults. The obvious division between rural dwellers is so open as to make any youth decide to seek for life outside the rural life perimeter. Furthermore, the text shades a slight light that the society is economically transforming itself from peasantry as the major means of production into urban opportunities productions.

It is an undeniable truth that cities, as we have seen, attract many young adults. This attraction increases the population in which several economic advantages are created due to an immense population. We see that some young adults migrate to the city to become street vendors commonly known as *machinga*. This is a group of young adults who walk in streets selling many kinds of items from morning to evening. It is also important to know that most migrants are inexperienced in street life. They, however, come to conclude before even coming to Dar es Salaam that life in the street of Dar es Salaam is somehow better than that of the place where they come from.

In the same young adult novel, we encounter a depiction of another character who also migrates to the city from his home place in Lushoto. This is Ali Shekilango. Ali Shekilango is the son of a fruit farmer in Lushoto. He is also described to have become tired of his father's career which, despite the many years of farming, has given the family very little gain. The depiction of Ali's family shows that they live in poverty in a three roomed mud and wattle house in which the parents, boys and girls sleep.

After several misunderstandings with his father, Ali is not content to continue living with his parents in rural area. He sees that the only alternative to get rid of rural life is to migrate to the city of Dar es Salaam as the following text reveals:

Ali woke up, got dressed and walked down the hills without saying goodbye to any member of his family. He hiked a lift to Dar es Salaam in a fruit and vegetable lorry which had come to haul pears and oranges...he had been motivated by the need to acquire a pushcart and sell cigarettes, pieces of bar soap, sweets, pencils and talcum powder (*In the Belly of Dar es Salaam*)^[7].

As we can see from the text, Ali is attracted to the city because he thinks it offers enough for a person to be materially successful. Unlike Kaleb Mbegu, however, Ali

chooses a career of owning a pushcart which could help her sell different wares and become materially successful. Examining Ali, we can see the drive within him which fuels his desire to undergo material transformation from a poor peasant son to a rich urban dweller.

There is similar reason in Ali and Kaleb Mbegu which makes them decide to shift from village to town. Both are sons of peasants although they come from different places of Tanzania. It appears that village dwellers belong to the class which suffer from greater poverty in spite of the immense amount of land which does not yield enough profit to cater for the needs of the farmers. The young adults in village as we have seen, mark the differences between them and their fellows who come from towns. They see that village life does not offer enough for them to be materially progressive. Thus, the only decision they make is to shift from rural home place to urban life. Nevertheless, we understand from the text the harsher life into which these young adults are subjected. They are compelled to live in new experience which is almost alien to them.

So far we have seen many examples of young adults moving from rural areas to urban areas. The rural to urban movement appears liberally in the two texts that we have examined in such a way as to be treated as a theme in the two literary works. As it has been discussed, the movement carries significant endeavours among the youth who seek for social transformation and social changes. The movement as we have seen is intended to effect social and economic changes.

Young argues that urban-rural migration shows a gap that favours people who migrate to urban areas versus those who migrate to rural areas^[15]. He observes that young adults, who are brought up in rural setting, on moving to urban areas, earn much more than non-migrant rural permanent residents. He also observes that young adults who were brought up in the urban areas when they migrate in rural areas they earn much lower income than the non-migrants.

It is not astonishing, therefore, to see the flow of young adults in the city of Dar es Salaam as it has been depicted in the text that we have seen. The two works, for instance, reveal the economic gap between the rural and urban dwellers. It appears that young adults are sensitive

to the demarcation which is obvious between the urban dwellers and rural dwellers. The gap is so wide as to be noticed by young adults as it manifests itself through characterisation. Thus, the theme as we have seen, tells obviously on social and economic gap that exists in the society.

We understand that until now, Tanzania is economically dominated by the majority who are peasants. These contribute greatly to the national economy. However, from the two texts, we see that the majority of the migrants in urban areas are young adults. This means that only old men are left to till the land in the villages. We see also that most of the young adults who leave their home villages have gone as far as standard seven which is the basic primary education in Tanzania. This implies that the agricultural sector is in danger of lacking labour in the subsequent future since the majority of the youth desert the work although it requires people with vigour rather than the tired old ones.

As we have discussed, most of the young adults migrate to urban area without technical skills of making income in urban areas. Subjected to new environment, the young adults learn to cope with the environment by using any means possible. Consequently, they engage in immoral activities for the sake of survival. In the texts, we see the burden the society encounters in handling drug abuse, prostitution and sexual violence among the young adults.

Duda et al. observe that young adult migration to urban areas creates loss of labour input^[16]. This is because the majority of young adults who are expected to be producers can not conform to the work they think is less paying. As we have seen, the migration to urban area is likely to threaten food security in the country just as Duda et al. observe^[16].

We have also seen that most of the young adults in the text migrate to town with great expectations of securing employment opportunities, despite the fact that they show skill incapability. The movement imposes a threat to employment for the people with skills and proper education. In the private sector, which requires labour for maximum profit, young adult migration is exploited by most people because they are likely to be paid lowly compared to the skilful and educated ones who cannot consent of low payment due to their educational status.

Wang and Mesman argue that it is possible to reduce

urban migration and balance the population and economic gap between the rural dwellers and the urban dwellers^[14]. They suggest that a social change should be made by providing enough social services that can reduce the flow of labour to urban areas. The texts that we have so far seen show that if social services such as good infrastructure, schools and better medical services are provided, none could witness a flow of labour to urban areas where it is misused and becomes a source of immorality and crime in the society.

Mulungu highlights four reasons that accelerate young adult rural-urban migration in Tanzania^[17]. These include: rural poverty, which he sees that it is caused by the toughness of life in rural areas. He sees that, this encourages young adults to covet a good life. This is to say, young adults strive to desert rural areas because rural life offers pain instead of pleasure. He also sees that poor social services in rural areas are the factors that make most of the young adults run to urban areas where social services are obtained.

The Agricultural sector is another factor that makes young adults favour urban life. He sees that the sector, as we have seen, is neglected and receives little attention from the agricultural stakeholders. Apart from these reasons, rural life lacks non-farm activities such as business. This implies that rural life does not offer varieties of activities to rural dwellers and hence youth choose to migrate in town because in urban areas, a wide range of activities are so offered as to make young adult think of making life in urban area.

5. Conclusions

As we have seen in the text, rural-urban migration is a theme that appears in two young adult novels: *Rehema the House Girl* and *In the Belly of Dar es Salaam*^[5,6]. This theme is a typical vindication of class struggle intended for changes in the society. Young adult migration from rural to urban places youth into a social class which is conscious of deprivation of cultural, social and economic opportunities. Nevertheless, this social class which represents the majority decides to migrate to town despite the challenges ahead of them and the social and economic threat that is placed into the ruling class. Thus, we conclude that the two selected Tanzanian young adult novels, have acted as a mirror

of that particular society. Moreover, the works witness the endeavours of changes in which young adult characters are used as a mechanism of the very changes. Generally, the study reveals that young adults can affect changes in society because of their sharpness of their minds. Nevertheless, they are supposed to be well trained in order to properly effect those changes in society through their struggles.

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