

Masculine and Feminine Constructions of Migration in Swahili Literature: *Mbali na Nyumbani* and *Mhanga Nafsi Yangu*

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Abstract

There is a contention in Kiswahili literary discourses which argues that apart from migration rooted in refugee movements, the predominant form of migration discernible in Kiswahili literature is that of male labour, migration that is motivated by economic imperatives - which also implies it is migration in search of better education, training and employment opportunities. This is the migration that accounts for the relocation and exodus of Africans from their domiciles of origin to new and distant habitats (Senkoro, 2010). This paper seeks to argue that the male trajectory of migration was only true up to a point and it therefore intends to deconstruct this trajectory through a comparative examination of the portrayal of gender - the male-female dichotomy of migration in selected Kiswahili literary works, namely; *Mhanga Nafsi Yangu* by Said Ahmed Mohamed (2012) and *Mbali na Nyumbani* by Adam Shafi (2013). In trying to deconstruct migration as a masculinist concept, this paper proposes to examine the two selected novels on the basis of the journey and search motifs so as to understand and interrogate the complexity of migration experiences, determine types of migration and their implications in constructing masculine and feminine nuances of migration. Theoretically, this study is framed on international migration theories and their socio-criticism, which help the reader understand the causes and complexities of the phenomenon of migration particularly in terms of how they construct a masculine or feminine trajectory.

Key words: Migration, Naturalized and Universalized, Male Phenomenon, Masculinist Concept, Masculine and Feminine Nuances of Migration

Introduction

Senkoro (2010) contends that apart from migration rooted in refugee movements, the predominant form of migration discernible in Kiswahili literature is that of male labour, migration that is motivated by economic imperatives - which also implies migration in search of better education, training and employment opportunities - this is the migration that accounts for the relocation and exodus of Africans from their domiciles of origin to new and distant habitats. It is the kind of migration that has aroused the imagination of scholars and politicians either in their writings, scholarly debates or deliberations in conferences and in policy formulations of various types. In their endeavour to interrogate, scrutinize and understand this phenomenon, scholars and politicians have unwittingly “naturalized and universalized” male migration in general and male labour migration in particular as the norm that facilitates intellectual, technical skills and physical labour movements. It appears that this trajectory of discussions in scholarly and political fora has intimated that migration is a male phenomenon and therefore a masculinist concept.

In this paper, I propose to deconstruct this trajectory through a comparative examination of the construction and portrayal of gender and migration in East Africa in selected Kiswahili literary works, namely *Mbali na Nyumbani* by Adam Shafi (2013) and *Mhanga Nafsi Yangu* by Said Ahmed Mohamed (2012). In trying to deconstruct migration as a masculinist concept, this paper proposes to examine the two selected novels on the basis of the journey and search motifs so as to understand and interrogate the complexity of African migration experiences, discern types of migration and their implications in constructing masculine and feminine nuances of migration. Although the migration portrayal in the selected novels is predicated on the motivations of individual needs and desires, it is nevertheless socially contextualized in the sense that in the migration motivations of the individual, one can read a mosaic of social expectations, desires, needs, dreams and fantasies of “the good life on the other side”. Such individual migrations underscore a persistent motivation, the need to resolve complex individual conflicts - conflicts of unrealized dreams and unmet expectations. However, a critical reading of migrant literature, as depicted in *Mbali na Nyumbani* and *Mhanga Nafsi Yangu* is also an insightful encounter with the migrant’s social contexts in the migrants’ country of origin on one level, it is a sobering awakening to the extremes of migration as discerned from the experiences of migration itself - in terms of the journeys, the mixed receptions of arrival, the discriminations, hostilities, exploitations and the whole encounter with racism, xenophobia, loss of identity, dislocation and cultural diversity. Theoretically, this study is framed on international migration theories and their socio-criticism, which help the reader understand the causes and complexities of

the phenomenon of migration particularly in terms of how they construct a masculine or feminine trajectory.

The Migration Odyssey in *Mbali na Nyumbani*

Mbali na Nyumbani published in 2013 is an autobiographical novel that is historically located in the tumultuous and nascent African migration experiences of the 1960s as seen from an East African perspective. The narrator Adam Shafi (henceforth Adam) who is also the main protagonist leaves his homeland Zanzibar in search of education in Europe. His precarious sea voyage on a cargo boat comes to a rude halt in Aden where he fails to pay a security bond of one hundred shillings in order to be allowed to disembark. He is forced to return to Zanzibar, however, rather than disembark in Zanzibar he gets off in Mombasa where he meets his old friends Juma Bulushi and Abdalla Juma Maharuki, who are also scheming to travel (read migrate) to Europe. The urge to migrate and the realities surrounding the actual travelling itself; force them to travel by train from Mombasa to Nairobi and later by other means to Bungoma and Eldoret. The narrator tells a detailed story of his circuitous and tortuous travel to Kampala, his covert attempt to cross into Sudan, but their journey is brought to another rude halt for lack of visas to enter Sudan. Adam and company are transported to Gulu where they are detained in a police station for a while before being returned to Bungoma. His stay in Bungoma takes such a long time than he expected. After some time, Adam and his friends are able to travel to Sudan where life becomes a daily struggle as they search and wait for visas to get into Egypt. Their stay in Sudan, besides taking too long, is a depiction of desperation, hopelessness and living misery whose seminal foundations in the 1960s is emblematic of contemporary African migration dynamics. Adam and his friends are also penniless and completely unsure where their next meal will come from, having exhausted whatever meager savings they had. When they finally get into Cairo, their plans are turned on their heads in that rather than being facilitated to travel to Europe, they end up being recruited into some militia training, they get trained on the use of explosives and other military weapons of the time. Their search for education is thwarted and their energies turned to fighting for political independence back home, specifically the overthrow of the Sultanate in Zanzibar. Adam secretly returns to Zanzibar, joins a trade union, gets involved in independence politics. Later Adam and a few friends get some sponsorship to go for university studies in East Germany. These short and long journeys in which Adam is involved are critical in providing a glimpse of intracontinental and intercontinental dynamics of migrations as will be demonstrated hereunder.

The Phases and Contexts of Migration in *Mbali na Nyumbani*

Migration may be defined simply as a person's movement from one's country of origin because of a multiplicity of reasons negatively affecting that person's life

circumstances, to another country or locale to create new lives, in some other country or abode, usually perceived as availing a wide range of economic activities, better socio economic life and opportunities for self actualization. This definition is adapted from contemporary international understandings of migration and migration dynamics; this desire for self actualization is what is pervasively enacted through individual motivations, struggles and actions as reflected in the selected novels. The intra-country and intercountry migrations, that's movements and relocations within and across countries notably in Kenya, Sudan and Egypt; and the inter-country migration, notably underlined by crossing borders in *Mbali na Nyumbani* are depicted in a series of phased journeys, false starts, circuitous travels and forced sojourns in locales never imagined or anticipated. The interrogation of these macro-migrations is important in uncovering the numerous dynamics and strategies of constructing gender in migration. The main migration story, however, focuses on Adam, the protagonist who's caught in a web of encounters, challenges and misadventures. Though this is Adam's story, it is also a story about other migrants caught in similar circumstance like him. Adam's migration arises out of his desire for university education in Europe, a desire for self actualization, a desire that is informed by the perception that Europe offers quality education, thus projecting the probable promise that enhances one's employment desirability, but this desire is not confined to Adam alone, his friends in this web of searching for better life share the same aspirations. However, rather than go straight to Europe, Britain in particular, the actual migration journey takes Adam to strange places and bogs him down to an odyssey of the strange and absurd. Adam's journey is mapped out in phases as follows;

The Zanzibar to Eden Phase

The first phase marks Adam leaving his home in Zanzibar in 1960 his sole purpose being to migrate to Europe for university education, the education being provided locally have subtly projected Europe as providing better and high quality education. Consequently, the education system as designed and implemented in colonial Zanzibar and East Africa as whole, accounts for the seminal foundations and motivations for migration from East Africa to Europe. Adam's journey of migration is secretly planned and executed, only a few of his friends know about it because they were involved in planning it in one way or other, like helping to raise the fare for him. The friends, male friend as it were, Khamis Mohammed Nura, a Zanzibari migrant staying in London that time, was a point of reference in terms "success", as seen by those still "left behind" in Zanzibar. The other friend is Abdalla Mwinyi who escorts Adam to the harbor to sail aboard M.V. Ubena, which is strictly not a passenger ship rather a cargo boat (uk.13). Two critical issues with respect to migration emerge in this phase, the seminal foundations of constructing the male conceptualization of migration in

these that the nature of education in Zanzibar exposes men to outside possibilities, it also subtly nurtures the desire to migrate. The second issue relates to two integrated issues, the legality of migration and the means of travel deployed to facilitate migration. It turns out that both legal status and the travel means as noted in the 1960s have stood out as emblematic of the unconventional and risky endeavours that even migrants in cotemporary times are exposed to.

One other important observation in this phase is that, whereas it is only one person migrating, the migration itself is widely networked - interestingly and ingeniously amongst male friends, acquaintances and old mates who have already moved to Europe. In the boat that Adam travels on he meets three other passangers - Ame traveling to Aden and later Mecca for religious purposes - here religion is subtly presented as a reason for migration, though this is not for permanent settlement; two Arabs, residents of Tanga returning to Yemen, running away from possible independence trouble - a case of migration informed by political reasons. On arriving in Aden, Adam and Ame are not allowed to disembark; they are unable to pay a security bond of six hundred shillings. This incident marks the initial challenges associated with migration, money and legal requirements intriguingly marked by restrictive migration policies embedded in simple instruments like the acquisition of a visa. At the shipping office that is mandated with the management of the boat on which Adam travelled, he meets Dr. Idarusi Baalawi a dentist who recently migrated from Zanzibar now resident of Aden - here the doctor's practice of his medical training provides further and concrete motivation reinforcing the imagination and desire that migration actually pays, hence fueling Adam's unwavering determination to migrate no matter how perilous the undertaking.

In merely mentioning people without developing them elaborately, the writer ingeniously weaves chance meetings between Adam and various other people in the migration mire and is thus able to foreground reasons for migration which range from the quest for self actualization embedded in the desire for better education, religious obligation, and in a number of cases frighteng political situations at home and other work related reasons. Further, the journey by sea that is facilitated by a cargo boat rather than a passenger ship, underlines the dangers that migrants are exposed to through sea voyages, as their safety is not guaranteed. Adam's and Ame's denial of entry is symbolic of the encounter with limiting travel and migration policies; and for purposes of this paper, up to this point there are no women migrants, thus unwittingly *Mbali na Nyumbani* initiates, constructs and accentuates the formative construction of migration as a male phenomenon.

This, therefore, marks the initial phases of constructing migration within the masculine trajectory.

Mombasa to Bungoma Phase

After the abortive attempt to get to Europe through Aden, Adam is turned back to Zanzibar, however he disembarks in Mombasa to a life of uncertainty—not sure where to acquire food and accommodation. He ends up in a coolie's hovel in Mwembe Tayari where he meets his father's friends Ahmada Saidi and Adam Mwakanjuki. Adam Mwakanjuki is residing in Tudor and he offers to take care of Adam providing him with accommodation and food. Mwakanjuki introduces Adam to trade union leaders. While still in Mombasa, Adam meets Abdalla Juma Bulushi and Abdalla Juma Maharuki. They share their experiences and dreams and in the process scheme to travel to Cairo and thus attempt to access Europe through the Mediterranean Sea. Unknown to them is that their journey is going to be very twisty and winding. They travel from Mombasa to Nairobi in the company of Ben Opar Mboya, a trade unionist based in Mombasa. Their stay in Nairobi is very brief, they move on to Eldoret where they are hosted by Saidi Manywele. In Eldoret Abdalla Bulushi is able to raise enough fare to enable them travel to his uncle, Bakari, in Bungoma. The travels in Kenya, earlier on referred to as intra-country migration, entailed the migrants engaging in casual labour for purposes of sustenance and ultimately raise fare to travel to Cairo. Again, like in the travel from Zanzibar to Aden, the travel from Mombasa to Bungoma and its intra-country variants is strictly a male affair, and where women are mentioned, they are mentioned in their peripheral presence as well as their tangential roles. The concept of male as migrant is thus further emphasized.

Bungoma to Kampala Phase

In Bungoma, Adam is engaged in casual work as a bus conductor and thus has an opportunity to raise enough fare to enable him travel to Cairo, but the stay in Bungoma takes longer than anticipated. Adam and his friends' idea is to stay with Mzee Suleiman Manoti in Bungoma for a short while, and then continue with their journey to Cairo. In Bungoma, they meet other young men from Zanzibar who had come earlier - Abdalla Elyas and his brother Kassim, Adam's former fellow students at the *'Comorian School'*. When they finally get to Kampala, Abdalla Juma Maharuki, simply gives up and decides to go back home. The ordeal and tribulations of this journey are just too much to bear. However, Adam and Abdalla Juma Bulushi decide to press on with their journey to Cairo. They use "*The National Geographic Magazine*" to map out their route. They leave by train to Namasagali. There are very many other passengers in the train, women holding their children's hands and pushing their luggage. They pass through the port of Masindi and later arrived in Butiaba. From Butiaba they head north to Nimule where they expect to cross into Sudan. At the Sudan border they

are asked to produce their visas to enter Sudan. They have none and are turned back to Kampala to apply for visas for entry into Sudan. This is after some detention in a police station in Gulu. Rather than return to Kampala, they decide to return to Bungoma. Abdalla Bulushi relocates to Nakuru leaving Adam behind in Bungoma. Adam stays in Bungoma for six months and then moves to Nakuru with Shaaban Salim to look for Abdalla Juma Bulushi who was waiting for them. They move to Bugembe in Uganda where they are hosted by Maalim Idi, who takes them to Kampala. They are assisted by Sheikh EL-Hadadi to get visas to Sudan. The group that moves from Nakuru to Kampala includes Adam, Abdalla, Shaabani, Elyas and Kassim.

The import of this detailed account is to foreground the preponderance of masculine construction of migration in which it is noted that in all the tribulations that this male cast undergoes, women are neither accorded any central role in the journey nor in the search for visas. Women are merely side-line participants. At this historical moment in East Africa and perhaps in the rest of Africa, there is valid anthropological evidence that suggests that women had not overtly ventured into education, the foundational process that exposes naïve people to alternative lifestyles, nurtures personal ambitions and turns the people who go through this education system into economic beings - in the sense of the people who get saddled with the obligations of earning incomes for self and family/society. This is particularly accentuated in *Mbali na Nyumbani* considering that women are depicted and portrayed in terms of performing subdued menial tasks. Women are, thus, involved in peripheral tasks making their presence tangential. Another important observation alluded and reflected throughout the narration in this phase, is the kind of networks that are activated and harnessed to enable and facilitate migration - there are family networks, business networks and even religious networks - essentially meaning that, from its onset, migration has never been purely an individual affair excluded from the expectations of the larger society, it was and continues to be societal; and given that at this time the central characters are male, the perception of male as migrant is further entrenched.

Crossing into Sudan

After Adam and his colleagues secure visas to Sudan, they embark on their journey to Sudan. They travel by train from Kampala to Namasagali. In the train, there are many casual labourers of Kakira sugar plantations accompanied by their wives and children - note that at this stage, the initial involvement of women in migration is mainly to join family but never migrating as fully fledged economic beings. Women are portrayed simply in their supportive yet marginal roles. The train goes through the small port of Masindi to another equally small port of Pakwach. At a small police post they are interrogated, their luggage is inspected; in Abdalla's bag the police find a picture of Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda. They are quickly branded politicians, get arrested and detained at Arua police station.

In the interrogations Adam is accused of being a Kikuyu from Kenya where the Mau Mau freedom struggle had been waged. After a dehumanizing search, they are released and ironically assisted, given transportation to Laropi to catch up with the boat that had left them behind. They are lucky to catch up with it and thus finally cross into Sudan. It is prudent to note here that torture, dehumanization and all manner of subhuman treatment of migrants, is part and parcel of the migration ordeal. In the boat they meet other young men from Kenya, Elly and Amos, who are also on similar mission to move to Cairo. At the Egyptian Embassy in Sudan they meet more young men from Kenya - Julius and Edward, also looking for visas to go to Cairo. They are treated to all manner of excuses, presented with hurdles and unanticipated problems as they look for visas to travel to Egypt. Their stay in Khartoum unexpectedly takes longer than anticipated. Their life is precarious, sleeping in the open at the railway station. They move from place to place - the University of Khartoum, the small town of Omduraman. Generally, they have no fixed abode - a reflection of the fluidity, insecurity and uncertainty of migration. All the migrants, the people in search of visas are still men, most of them in search of university education and others looking for better economic opportunities. It is while in Khartoum that the reader encounters the first woman in university - Zainabu from Zanzibar. This is the first, so to speak, woman economic migrant - migrating from Zanzibar to Sudan in search of education and hence preparation for the white collar labour market. By the time of meeting Zainabu, women migrants and women migration generally, is a much muted issue, so Zainabu is an exception rather than the rule. At the University of Khartoum, they meet Daniel, a man who shares in their ideals and who gives them his small shack outside Khartoum to stay in while they await their travel visas.

Arriving in Cairo

Finally, Adam, Shaaban and Abdalla succeed in entering Cairo. They look for a place called Zamalek, on Ahmed Hishmet Street, House number 5. They had been given directions to this address. They are welcomed into Ali's house and later they move to Munira, further away from Zamalek. Here they meet other young men from Zanzibar who are students in different universities in Cairo. They are sensitized into the political ideals of the time - freedom, struggle and independence. Gradually, they are persuaded to join some military training - they move into some desert place, a windy, cold and hot place, far from the city. Those who join military training include Adam, Abdalla, Shaabani, Hemedi, Suleiman, Nassor, Ali, Mansour and Mohammed. After the military training with all its hazards and casualties, Adam doesn't proceed to Europe. Instead he returns secretly to Zanzibar accompanied by Abdalla - their purpose being to fight for freedom with the use of arms. Note that the crossing into Cairo does not end up advancing their migration journey. Their migration dreams are one again

frustrated and their energies redirected to activities and ideals totally unrelated to their personal ambitions. Nevertheless, the narration as advanced this far continues to affirm the construction of men as migrants and the concept of migration as male. Indeed on their arrival in Cairo, Adam and company have interactions with women, but this interaction is transient and tangential. The consequence of this is that the depiction of men as migrants is further enhanced while women absence or marginality is exacerbated.

Finally in Germany

On returning to Zanzibar, Adam joins a trade union agitating for workers rights. Following the riots that took place after independence on 1st July 1961, Adam gets a scholarship to travel to Germany to study economics at University. On this scholarship travel to Germany Adam is accompanied by Suleiman Hemed and Hussein Mbarouk, other activists involved in agitating for workers' rights. Migration to Germany is strictly for educational purposes though this does not preclude other possibilities. In Germany, they meet other migrants from other parts of the world. Again, the central characters are male. Some of the people in the group that went to Egypt went to Cuba and Russia.

Characters in *Mbali na Nyumbani*

This section discusses characters not in the traditional sense of creative imagination but rather in terms of temporal realistic depictions. This arises out of the fact that in spite of its literary veneer, the autobiographical nature of *Mbali na Nyumbani* grounds it in realistic temporal contexts. Consequently, the particularity of characters in *Mbali na Nyumbani* is that they are real people, they are not imaginary creations. They are depicted and presented as encountered in actual lived contexts and the roles they play. The events and encounters narrated are also real not imagined given that the novel is itself an autobiographical presentation. Consequently, a critical reading of this novel, inevitably calls for a realistic adjudgement of reality as presented by the narrator, who is also the main protagonist. Though autobiographical writing is not entirely new in Kiswahili literature and given the fact that it is not popularly practiced; this reality has consequences in discussions of character and characterization in the sense that such discussions must be tempered with doses of reality. For instance, how can the subdued and marginalized presences of women be accounted for in this novel? The presence of women in certain contexts and their absence in other contexts in this novel is not a question of creativity but rather a presentation of historical reality as encountered by the narrator within specific historical and geographical spaces. The marginal presence and/or utter absence of women in various contexts in *Mbali na Nyumbani* is a reflection of women's concerns within the temporal circumstance of narrator's society as constructed within a historical, social, educational, economic and anthropological paradigms. Their presence and

absence is, therefore, a reflection of historical reality. As Ruth Robbins (2000) argues, marginal presentation of women, or accidental presentation of women or even their minimal numerical presentation or their complete absence, are issues that must be interrogated critically in respect of the prevailing or emerging realities. For instance, given the strong migration undertones in the novel generally, in what ways are women's marginal presentations in *Mbali na Nyumbani* historically plausible?

Miller (1990), in his work '*Theories of Africans 'Voice and Silence'*', avers that the criticism of African literary works using Eurocentric theories in African contexts, must call for a new thinking. Miller argues further that pre-colonial African familial systems or any other societal system for that matter cannot be blamed wholesale as marginalizing women merely by juxtaposing them against European cognates. Therefore, on and above being autobiographical, *Mbali na Nyumbani* is also historical in terms of its setting in that it is set within realistic historical circumstances when continental Europe was in its nascent phase of attracting migrants from Africa. Consequently, female characters in this novel are presented within realistic domestic, economic, educational and leisure contexts - meaning women had not been primed as possible migrants for European markets. As such, their roles as cooks, home keepers, mothers giving birth and nursing children are predicated on those realistic circumstances of their time. In view of these practical predispositions, it is important to eschew the routine lamentations in African gender studies and discourses that women are marginalized because indeed during the historical period of the novel's setting, women were almost wholly dependent on men. The social and cultural fiber of many African communities had not as yet suffered foreign intrusion, men protected and provided for their families. Women hadn't become economic beings as will be demonstrated gradually. There is, as such, no intention on the part of the writer to isolate or indeed marginalize women in this writing. What the reader encounters in the writer telling it as it were.

Miller (1990), within his anthropological treatise of African literature, cautions about the dangers of explicating gender issues within the narrow perspective of social culture. In interrogating *voice* (presence) and *silence* (absence) in Senegalese literary writing of the time up to 1976, Miller asserts that the absence of African women writers accounts for the absence and/or marginalized presentation of female characters in African literature. In anthropological terms, women's entry into literary composition was a delayed eventuality, which is buttressed by the fact that women made appearances in literature long after men had written and established their presence in literature. This anthropological line of argument does, indeed, present a more realistic picture of women as of the time in which the narrative is located. In other words, when did women start to write - long after men had established themselves as

writers and acquired privileged status in literary creativity. In Miller's view a plausible and conceivable argument is proffered, that in Africa, education for women was delayed because of the cultural ideologies and practices that never anticipated seeing women in activities that were meant for material gain. Men were privileged, they went to war, saw the other world; and when schools were first established men were equally privileged with reaping the first benefits of education. This digression into Miller's anthropological discourse is deliberate because it seeks to explain the passive and marginal presence of women in Shafi's *Mbali na Nyumbani* and as such explicate the forceful and mainstream construction of male as the norm in the migration dynamics of the time.

Female Characters in *Mbali na Nyumbani*

Women characters in *Mbali na Nyumbani* are realistically portrayed, in specific instances taking on true area names and in other instances they are depicted in a collective sense where the narrator either makes reference to 'mwanamke' woman or 'wanawake' women or 'binti' lass. The depiction of women is predicated on realistic contexts and roles played such as presenting them in familial contexts, contexts of economic activities or in travel contexts. In anthropological terms, the depiction of women in the contexts of their social or other roles is a true rendition of women within the confines of the home, within what may be observed as a norm. Any other depiction of women outside of the confines of the home in a realistic underwriting of the daring ventures out of those confines. Thus, the depiction of women and the performance of their roles in social contexts enable the exploration of their peculiarities in historical and anthropological terms. Within the confines of the home, women are seen performing their roles as mothers (the bearers of children,) nurturing children, cooking and general housekeeping. This is first noted in the presentation of the writer's family in Upanga, Dar es Salaam where the write makes reference to his wife, Fatma's household chores - bedecking the house, a core role for women yet marginal in terms of societal hierarchies (p. 1).

Shafi also mentions his daughter, Laila, an excellent cook, whose range of specialties is quite wide (p. 2). Another woman who is mentioned is Asha binti Kassim, the writer's grandmother in whose house the writer and his brother Saad stayed. Consequently, in Fatma, Laila and Asha we are presented with mothers, home keepers, cooks - forever busy at the service of men. These are culturally sanctioned roles no matter how marginal or banal they may look in modern terms. So as the writer moves from place to place in his migration odyssey, he presents more and more women in similar circumstance - Biti Siti, Mzee Abdalla Ngazi's wife in Eldoret, a genteel, humble and loving mother and wife (p. 57), but also a cook, a person imbued with patience given that her other chores such as fetching water, gathering firewood and nursing babies are very demanding. Then there is Halima, the Somali woman and her daughter in Bungoma - humble and

welcoming - good cooks. The daughters of Sheikh Maalim in Bugembe - respectful, subservient, kneeling before men and carrying their luggage, warming bath water for the male visitors, cooking for them and preparing their beds.

Similar presentation of women is re-enacted in Cairo where Asha, Ali's wife and Nuru, Adam's wife perform the same roles as the women presented before them. The writer's mother is depicted in her house in Zanzibar - a nursing mother. In Kampala at Muhanji Msuo's house, a big religious party was arranged - the Ugandan women are presented in their roles as cooks (p.185). What needs to be noted here is that virtually all these women are merely mentioned, they are presented in their collective sense. They are peripheral to the main story - they are not functionally critical to the writer's troubles in his efforts to secure travel documents to enable him migrate to Europe. This, therefore subtly constructs male as norm in migration contexts.

Women in the Contexts of Travelling in *Mbali na Nyumbani*

It has been mentioned before that the whole story of *Mbali na Nyumbani* is predicated on a journey and search motif. Just like in familial home contexts, women's roles in travel contexts are not in any way different from what is experienced in the confines of the home, they are still confined to child bearing, nursing babies and cooking. By associating women with these roles even in the contexts of travel essentially means women have not been enabled to either discard their routine roles or take up new challenges as presented by the realities of travel. They are perpetually encumbered with the same critical but subsidiary roles. We see Ugandan women struggling with luggage at the rail station (p. 68), women carrying children and queuing for tickets (p. 74). The writer mentions children's cries that are only heard by their mothers because such cries don't bother men (p. 77). On the boat journey to Nimule, we meet women seated away from the men nursing babies, cleaning the children's faeces and their running noses besides cooking for the men. A similar incident is reported (on p. 226) where a Nubian woman dangles her child with mucus running down the baby's between her legs. At the train station in Khartoum, women are depicted in the same collective roles - notably the Nubian woman and her three children performs the same routine and familiar roles. The casual labourers at Kakira sugar plantations are accompanied by their wives who are carrying children (p. 279). Yet again all these women are merely auxiliaries to the main journey - the migration of a man.

It will be noted that in contexts of travel - travel by road, rail, waterways and by air (migration essentially implies movement) - there are buses, lorries, ships, boats, trains and airplanes. This implies the presence of various types of workers. Inevitably the workers are categorized; however, either through conscious or unconscious decisions, these categorizations are inherently gendered and

therefore critically implicated in the construction of masculinity and femininity of migration. Thus, the reader meets male bus drivers, male conductors and male passenger touts. All the buses that the reader encounters in the novel are run by men. The import of this is that, buses in this context are centrally implicated in several aspects of migration, thus they are involved in the construction of migration as masculine. Men are presented as having the capacity to persevere the cold, the harsh conditions of operating buses, lifting luggage and touting for passengers, dealing with rude or arrogant passengers. Any women depicted here are presented merely as passengers.

Travel by sea echoes similar patterns of men as captains, sailors, coolies, guards and chefs - (note the gender nuances of cooks as opposed to chefs). There are no women in these kind of work. Men are depicted as having the stamina, bravery and the endurance to withstand the challenges of the sea - violent waves, the patience of travelling long distances over long periods of time. Men can endure the perils of the sea - another masculine trajectory. The only women mentioned in sea voyages are merely as passengers of the wife category and an occasional clerk here and there. Travel by train follows the same trail - train drivers, conductors, mechanics and others are male. And in the air travel the ticketing clerks, pilots, the stewards and ground crews are male. The Europeans serving at the customs desk at Nairobi airport. In all these work places, women's presence is subdued and marginal; they are mainly presented as providing support services while the core services are reserved for men. These, in very subtle ways, are intricate strategies of constructing and projecting male nuances of migration. There are good anthropological reasons for this phenomenon, as viewed and understood within the historical circumstances of the 1960s.

Women in Economic Activities in *Mbali na Nyumbani*

There are a number of instances in *Mbali na Nyumbani* where we encounter women involved in economic activities, earning an income for themselves and for the upkeep of other dependants. These encounters are either in business activities or in formal employment - there are receptionists in offices and hostesses working with the airlines. Whichever way these activities are looked at, they are basically supportive activities, thus underlining the peripheral engagement and marginality of women. The core activities where women perform supportive roles are male dominated - in the offices men are the managers, in the airlines, men are the pilots and the engineers. The receptionist/hostess dichotomy is replicated in other occupations as nurses, primary school teachers, office secretaries, translators, waiters in hotels and sweepers - the European lady receptionist at the *New Stanley* hotel (p. 445), the Scandinavian Airlines hostesses, the shipping line agency office in Mombasa receptionist (p. 39).

Women's depiction in business is both narrow and peripheral - women selling raw bananas at shipping offices (p. 224), usually at bus and rail stations women are depicted selling foodstuffs, thus their involvement in petty trade. The Sudanese lady selling illicit liquor in Khartoum and also engaging in occasional prostitution - the context of these "businesses" is one of darkness, drunkenness, abject poverty, mud walled hovels that are sooty-covered patronized by drunken casual male laborers (p. 331). Mariana may also be included in these economic activities - she is Abdo's girlfriend, the owner of *Mawingo* buses, she also patronizes bars in Bungoma and Kakamega, Mariana is a rural girl venturing into urban areas and engaging in prostitution - some kind of internal migration (p.126-131).

There are very few women depicted in the contexts of academy - two female students are mentioned - Zainabu, a Zanzibari student at the University of Khartoum and Naajat as mixed race student at the University of Cairo, a female don at the University of Bernau in Germany and two female translators at the same university. Zainabu and Naajat are the only two female students to have attained university education. This limited and minimal numerical presence is, indeed, a concern that has been forcefully articulated by Ruth Robins (ibid) and as such accounts for feminist absence in the migration dynamics of the 1960s.

Tentative Conclusions on Male-Female Potrayals

Mbali na Nyumbani is indeed a mosaic of the intra-country and inter-country migration dynamics. The overt and covert forces that expose the chasm of human vulnerability, the crush of hopes and dreams, the compromises and sometimes the abandonment of belief and culture, the dehumanizing realities of migration, the manifestation of the good and ugly veneers of migration and the devastating illusion of certainty that is forever present in migration encounters. In *Mbali na Nyumbani*, one comes across the illusory allure of positive aspects of migration, the mirage and appearances to solving social instabilities in the sense that many of those caught in the migrant's web think and earnestly believe that they possibly will improve their material conditions by leaving their country of origin rather than by staying in such an unstable place. In *Mbali na Nyumbani*, one is persistently assailed by the manifestation of migrant victimhood, most migrants as victims of disillusionment. Many of them do not meet good living conditions in the host countries - look at the squalid and dehumanizing living conditions that Adam and his friends live through when they arrive in Mombasa, the brief sojourn in Nairobi, the extended stay in Bungoma, Kampala, Khartoum and in Cairo. The dehumanizing encounters that migrants put up with and their attendant horrid stories illuminate the illusory promise and eventual disappointment of the immigrant's experience, yet this disillusionment does not necessarily lead all migrants to their countries of origin. They stay but live in loneliness and regret. Indeed Adam lives through all these experiences throughout his migration

excursions. In *Mbali na Nyumbani*, the author subtly presents and interrogates the mechanisms, schemes and strategies of constructing male as the dominant norm in migration and simultaneously explores strategies for coping with the horrid realities of migrant's lives such as despair, the nightmares of failure and loneliness (p. 398-399) and sometimes injuries and death as experienced in the case of Mansour during the military training (p. 409). *Mbali na Nyumbani*, is ingeniously well grounded in the contemporary theory of migration, especially when viewed from its neoclassical approach to international migration. Return migration, the phenomenon of return back home of the migrants is "viewed as the outcome of a failed migration experience which did not yield the expected benefits", this is particularly reflective of Adam's experiences and therefore accounts for his secret return to Zanzibar. The migrants' return to their countries of origin occurs, as a consequence of their failed experiences abroad, or because their great expectations were not met. In spite of all these interesting and critical anecdotes, *Mbali na Nyumbani* is forceful expose of the construction of male as migration norm.

The Migration Odyssey of *Mhanga Nafsi Yangu*

Mhanga Nafsi Yangu (2012) is the story of Afida who leaves her country of origin, Motoni, so that she can go study, work and live in Peponi (loosely translated as Paradise). Afida's journey is a journey in search of good education, good life and wealth, love and contentment. Afida's dreams and high hopes are crashed as soon as she arrives in Peponi, because her auntie, Ms Marneti who made arrangements to bring her to Peponi, turns out to be her greatest enemy, the incarnation of the devil. Coupled with this, Afida comes face to face with the realities of Peponi, the condescending attitude and open xenophobic distaste of the residents of Peponi towards migrants, especially black people from Motoni, because that is what Afida is. Afida is shoved into an openly prejudiced and bigoted environment which makes her life a living a nightmare and impossible to live. Her hopes of success and happiness in Peponi turn out to an illusory mirage. The promise of ardent love she made to Shaaban, her lover in Motoni (loosely translated as Hell in contrast to Peponi) becomes a tragedy now that Afida has to engage in illicit affairs to eke a living. The promises she made to her immediate and extended family are unavoidably broken, they cannot be fulfilled - thus underlying the unfulfilled promises and unmet expectations. Hope is completely shattered and in its place sets in disillusionment, lamentations and despair. Afida's cultural adherence to morality and ethical conduct of her life are brutally assailed, she becomes a ship without a sail.

While saying farewell to her relatives and extended family at the airport in Motoni, Afida is assailed by thoughts of censoring Africans because of their strong and archaic adherence to clanship and extended family relations,

relationships that were injurious after all (p.6). She grumbles and agonizes over crude African ways like the obligation to share in someone's success even when such success has not been achieved. Afida's clan and extended family swamps the airport restaurant taking soda and cake, all in the mundane ritual of saying their farewells to Afida. Each one of them has their demands, wishes and needs that they want Afida to fulfill for them as soon as she arrives in Peponi. Bi Zaina (Afida's grandmother) wants an air ticket to Peponi to have her teeth fixed, and also have her hut roofed with iron sheets. Bi Sinangoa, another relative, reminds Afida how she took care of her as a baby and she thus requires of Afida to come and take her to Peponi so that she can be treated in Peponi, that is, once Afida settles in Peponi—subtly Afida has a debt to repay. There is also Kisura, the child that was bequeathed to her by her friend who died of AIDS, wants to be bought some toys from Peponi. Bi Mwamda (Afida's mother) admonishes her daughter not to forget home, her family, clan and the extended family (p. 13). She also wants Afida to ease her daily burdens and chores, she wants Afida to buy her a lorry, preferably a truck to transport her merchandise to the market and a bus to ferry passengers, in other words she wants Afida to facilitate her to do decent business. Shaaban, Afida's boyfriend reminds Afida not to forget their love. In the plane, Air Uropa, Afida's mind veers and wafts into a wistful series of questions - why was she was born a girl, why were so many people leaving their countries to come to Peponi? Then the ghost of Afida's father, Bwana Daudi, appears - he is detached and doesn't embrace her the way he did when Afida was young - symbolically Afida's familial connections are finally disentangled. And her father's ghost reminds Afida about the advice he gave her while he was alive cautioning her that a person takes care of herself. When Afida awakes she finds the plane is descending to land in Peponi and to her astonishment, everything in Peponi is white - a symbolic transformation from things black to things white.

Afida's journey is full of hope and anticipation of good life in Peponi, the kind of life that every African dreams about and yearns for. When Afida arrives in Peponi, she is confronted with a new culture and a cold climate and a weather she was not accustomed to. Bi Marneti's house is adorned with beautiful and expensive furniture, something that reminded Afida of her teacher's warnings, desire for material things and its destructive results, yet Afida could not help but yearn for the same for herself. Bi Marneti, her auntie who welcomes her to Peponi suddenly and completely unexpectedly begins to change and becomes antagonistic, suspicious and apprehensive of Afida, thinking that Afida would finally rob her of her husband - she is young, beautiful and possibly fertile capable of bearing children. Bi. Marneti never keeps Afida's room warm even though she keeps all other rooms in her house sufficiently heated. This causes Afida to suffer chilling shivers and running nose every so often. She is hospitalized and warned about the cold weather of Peponi, something about which Bi. Marneti

condescendingly blames on Afida's ignorance about not knowing how to use a heater. Afida doesn't even have the freedom to shower or bath twice a day like she was accustomed to in Motoni, just because Bi. Marneti, her auntie, cannot not let her. One day as Afida tiptoes to a bathroom, she overhears a squabble between Bi. Marneti and her husband Bw. Bawa. He was wondering why she hates Afida, her niece. Afida realizes she is the cause of the quarrel and there are constant squabbles and wrangles between Bi. Marneti and her husband Bw. Bawa because of Afida. Bw. Bawa was always taunting Bi. Marneti to shun her African envy (p.40). Gradually and reluctantly, Bi. Marneti decides to enroll Afida in school to learn the language of Peponi in six months so that she can get Afida out of her house, she considers Afida a potential danger to her marriage.

In Marneti's house, Afida is literally caged, she is alone and she has nobody to talk to. She hears a voice and decides to talk to that voice - she talked about Marneti's annoyance and disturbance, and the voice talked about rich people buying things for sport not for need, the kind of things that aroused Afida's mind to the newness of living. Afida gradually assimilates into the life of Peponi. Nine month since she arrived, many of her relatives in Peponi had written to her making inquiries about her stay and reminding her of her responsibilities to them. She responds back to a few and in a very infrequent way, the relatives get really annoyed with her and tell how she has betrayed the clan. She cries a lot over many things, the memories of her fading love with Shaabani, the demands from her relatives when she has no capacity to do any of the things they want leave alone meeting her own needs. Finally Afida joins the Peponi language schools, from day one students in her class keep their distance from her and others openly discriminate against her, the language teacher doubted her capacity to comprehend the language of Peponi, yet after nine months of language schools, she excels beyond their wildest dreams and she is awarded the best prize for being the best student from Peponi for the last fifteen years.

In the language school Afida keeps the company of Shuhuda, her friend from Motoni who had arrived in Peponi earlier than her. Shuhuda is so culturally changed. There is hardly nothing left of her old self. She wears extremely short skirts and tops that leave a navel bare. She has become a chain smoker since she arrived in Peponi. In spite of all these changes, their friendship endures though Shuhuda constantly pesters Afida, trying to make her change her perspective of life, to discard her African traditions and adapt to the traditions of Peponi, particularly in terms of leisure and dress. Shuhuda's friend, Saparata takes them to entertainment clubs while they are still in school. He pays for their drinks and food because Afida has no income and she relies entirely on her auntie for her upkeep. While still in school, Afida gets a phone call from Motoni telling her about the death her fiancé, Shaaban who dies of heart attack (p.92). Afida finishes her studies of the Peponi language emerging top of her class. Her friend

Yakrobich praises her profusely for her performance. He starts luring her to a love relationship. They became very close, true and caring friends and Yakrobich visits Afida frequently at her auntie's house. Nevertheless, Afida isn't keen about becoming Yakrobich's lover because she has already found a man who has been meeting her financial needs quickly, sufficiently and who could soon procure for her Peponi's citizenship.

On his part, Neshboch, an old man the age of Afida's father has endeared himself to her and is in a love relationship with Afida. He buys her all manner of presents; Neshboch is a very rich and a well known man. Marneti is quite supportive of this relationship and works covertly to ensure Afida is married to Neshboch. She constantly keeps reminding Afida that if she wants Peponi's citizenship, a prosperous life, if she wants to make it in life, she has no choice but to be married to Neshboch. Because of Afida's overwhelming desire for Peponi's citizenship, she acquiesces to Neshboch's advances and gives birth to a baby boy. Thereafter, they marry formally and Afida gets her Peponi's citizenship (p. 146). After many years of married life, Afida's marriage to Neshboch starts experiencing strains. This is because Afida fails to meet her auntie's, Bi Marneti's demands, wanting to take Afida's child and raise him as her own. Apparently because Marneti is barren, she had covertly made this part of the conditions for bringing Afida to Peponi. Afida and her auntie become sworn enemies and their distaste for each other becomes outright loathing. Bi. Marneti conspires with Neshboch, She-saiza and Bw. Bawa to torment Afida. Indeed Neshboch turns against Afida and starts scorning her, treating her like some piece of dirt. He thumps his wife brutally and sometimes throwing her out of the house in the middle of the night. Afida cannot take this cruelty so she walks out of the marriage. They finally divorce, her husband accusing her of drunkenness and thus claims custody of the child (p.171).

Afida's life is a constant struggle; she doesn't have enough money for her upkeep. She is continuously questioning things and has began to hate those invasive voices. She talks to herself wondering why her relatives don't realize that up to now she has nothing, but the voices continue reminding her that in spite of the challenges, Motoni is worse and she has a right to hate and despise life in Motoni. Her father's ghost constantly visits her in her dreams, reminding her of many things, morality, religion, family separation; the things that make her re-evaluate her life and leave her sad and full of tears. There are issues of drunkenness, false accusations of child battering, the corruption of the court and legal system, Afida is battered by Neshboch, after losing custody of her child, Afida loses faith in the people of Peponi and Peponi generally. She indulges in alcohol and prostitution, the reappearance of her father's ghost reprimanding her over how she has wasted her life, chases her way and calling her names like a dead body that knows nothing. Afida loses everything, her marriage, her child,

the allowances she gets from Neshboch. She also loses the opportunity for university education which she intended to pursue while in Peponi. She starts losing all hope. She starts indulging in drinking and prostitution. Because she still has her maternal instincts, she craves another baby (p. 182). She frequents one particular nightclub *The Lost*, where she meets Sapataro, and she literally begs him to have a child with her without any emotional attachments. She gives birth to another baby. Her health starts deteriorating and when she goes to hospital from treatment she is diagnosed and found to be suffering from cervical cancer. In the hospital she meets Shuhuda who is suffering from AIDS and at the verge of death. Thereafter, Afida just disappears never to be found.

The Construction of Masculinity and Femininity of Migration in *Mhanga Nafsi Yangu*

Though the two novels were published almost at the same time, their story time perspectives are very different. *Mbali na Nyumbani* is predicated on the migration experiences of the 1960s when African countries had not entirely disentangled themselves from colonialism while *Mhanga Nafsi Yangu* is based on 21st century migration dynamics. In *Mbali na Nyumbani*, the writer presents his characters within the lived realities of the period, where it was considered natural and was actually expected that men would migrate for purposes of pursuing employment opportunities, education and better socio economic life. Men were expected to provide for their families; consequently working outside the home was a male phenomenon. This explains why there is a very strong male presence in this novel compared to a subdued female presence experienced earlier in *Mbali na Nyumbani*. Whereas there are very many contexts in *Mbali na Nyumbani* in which there is absolutely no female presence or even when there is female presence, it is peripheral and tangential, female presence in *Mhanga Nafsi Yangu* is constantly apparent.

It can be affirmed that the emerging realities of life and economic pressures afflicting Afisa in Peponi have turned women into economic beings who must fend for themselves and their families. Afida migrates to Peponi hopeful and anticipating a fundamental change in her life but on the day of her departure, her family's indigence is powerfully foregrounded - so many of her relatives present their demands, wishes, desires and for others debts owed - they range from medical needs (Bi Sinangoa needs to travel to Peponi for tummy treatment, Bi Zaina needs an air ticket to Peponi for dental treatment), material needs (Bi Zaina wants her house to be iron roofed, Bi Mwamda Afida's mother wants a lorry and a bus for her business). These and other needs demonstrate that Afida is here being seen as a means to some imagined contentment, as an economic investment upon which the family's fortunes are predicated. Her family and relatives are here presented as new class of consumers within contemporary settings. In these

contexts women are no longer mere consumers, beneficiaries of male labour. Women are now heads of households. Afida migrates from Motoni to Peponi in search of education, good life and wealth. These are desires that have arisen out of extreme economic pressures at home. In *Mhanga Nafsi Yangu*, Said Ahmed paints a contrasting reality marked partially by Bi Marneti's "successes" on the one hand and on the other hand, the sordid picture of the majority of women involved in international migration, women confronted with the possibilities of failure while wrestling with the reality of earning an income for their own upkeep and the upkeep of several dependants. The author forcefully pushes a contemporary picture of female migration different from the family-reunification variety encountered in Shafi's *Mbali na Nyumbani*. Though *Mhanga Nafsi Yangu* has some affinity with magical realism in terms of its plot and narration frame, it nevertheless reflects perceivable situation. The novel, nonetheless echoes historical realities which it deconstructs to mainstream the idea that migration as an activity that used to be largely male dominated has also become increasingly feminine. Whereas it was normal for men to cross borders in search of work, women involvement in such excursions were least expected. So, Said Ahmed working within a magical realism paradigm fronts women migrating independently in search of means of meeting their own economic needs and those of their dependants.

Mhanga Nafsi Yangu is predicated on copious economic forces and social demand factors arising out of contemporary and changed labour dynamics in Africa (Afida's Motoni), where traditionally only men migrated from the continent. The changes in labour dynamics have forced women to move to occupy presumed male spaces in the international labour market; they are no longer "left back home" rather they are competing with men for the shrinking job opportunities. Afida's quest to learn the language of Peponi is need driven, her marriage to Neshboch, a resident of Peponi is materially driven and virtually everything she does in Peponi is predicated on a gain trajectory. Consequently, the subtext of labour migration that is so palpable in the novel, has somewhat blurred the dichotomy of male-female migration and in a sense equalised the migration motivations for both women and men. Just like their male counterparts, female migrants are also advancing economic reasons for their migration, on and above other reasons. This is clearly manifested when Afida is leaving Motoni where she is inundated with requests, demands and wishes; and whenever Afida gets into her constant dreams, she is always shattered by the guilt of failure to meet her familial obligations.

The Dynamics of Constructing Female Migration in *Mhanga Nafsi Yangu*

There is no doubt that women's incorporation into the labour market in *Mhanga Nafsi Yangu* is so evident because every façade of Afida's migration odyssey is

aa attempt to find a personal solution to a larger public problem afflicting women, initially in developing countries from which they migrate and later as they settle in the lands into which they migrate. It is also evident in *Mhanga Nafsi Yangu* that women are no longer beneficiaries of male migration, they have become migrants themselves. We are told in the novel that Afida is black, which obviously insinuates a female migrant from Africa, thus labour migration has blurred the gender categories of male-female as women are now forced to take a leading role in meeting the livelihood needs of themselves and their families. Though it doesn't come out forcefully in the novels, the fact that Afida lost her father when she was young means that by the time she is migrating to Peponi, Afida is a product of female-headed household, something that has become the norm and hence the pressure for women to cross hitherto uncrossed boundaries in search of work, which may be couched in terms of education, though in there failed attempts it may range from domestic work to prostitution, as is manifested in Afida's gradual transition while she is in Peponi. This shift in labour dynamics poses a number of challenges and dangers for women who migrate alone from their home countries. Taking up personal and family responsibilities can be overwhelming leading to situations where decision making on the part of migrants, is dictated by instinct rather than clear thinking. This may then explain the desperation, the disillusionment and finally the demise of Afida and Shuhuda in Peponi. Afida's determination to live morally is unsustainable given that she gradually caves in to arranged relationships and marriages of convenience - Afida's marriage to Neshboch is materially driven, a reality totally removed from her moral ideals of love and faithfulness when she first arrived in Peponi. And at the end of her marriage of convenience, so does everything come to a crushing ending, the material and monetary benefits arising out of the marriage cease (p. 146). The unfolding reality of the mirage of marriage forces her to indulge in alcohol - both Afida and Shuhuda who are migrants to Peponi indulge in drinking as a result of unrealized dreams and unmet expectations, but also as result of the pressure to belong, to act and be like the people of Peponi (p. 177-183). Afida starts her drinking once she gets into a relationship with Neshboch - chasing illusory happiness.

Other consequences which ingeniously construct the female migrant in *Mhanga Nafsi Yangu* include both the conscious and in some cases unconscious abandonment of culture, traditions and morality especially where they are incongruent with emerging and counter realities of Peponi - Afida discards her morally right upbringing because it is not only alien but also because it is not helpful to her in Peponi. She inescapably changes her dress code and follows in the footsteps of Shuhuda. Casual sexual relationships become normal and acceptable just like uncontrolled drinking. This is manifested in the emergence of new realities - new cultural interactions, new forms of knowledge and expansion

of knowledge, new perspectives on many social and material issues - dress, leisure, employment, health and treatment, new forms of security. Just like the home she left in Motoni, Afida technically becomes a head of her household after the birth of Mkombozi. It will be noted that Afida's search for education in Peponi was meant to prepare her for the labour market, her move into carving and embroidery after separating from Neshboch and after the birth of her second child, is testimony of an emerging reality of women fending for themselves.

Conclusions

A constant thread that runs through the two novels is the variously nuanced fact that the whole phenomenon of migration is entangled within complex political, economic, legal, social, cultural issues in the sense that in Adam Shafi's *Mbali na Nyumbani* - the reasons for Adam's and his friends' migration, range from education, employment, good social life, political and labour liberation. Thought not all, the same reasons are replicated in Afida's reasons for migration in *Mhanga Nafsi Yangu* - good education, good life and wealth, love and contentment. Conversely, these are the very reasons implicated in the construction of both male and female migration, both in historical dimensions and in contemporary contexts; the reasons are no longer gender blind because in contemporary terms they have become fundamentally cross-cutting. Both novels forcefully present an invariable theme in migration literature, the crush and collapse of hope marked by Adam's failure to disembark at Aden in his first attempt and the two-year long wait for visas, arrests, detentions, diversions to casual and military training, engagement in labour trade unions, political struggles. In *Mhanga Nafsi Yangu*, Afida's ill-treatment from those who facilitated her travel, members of her family, her failed marriage, her unrealized desire for university education and her unmet expectations for her family, demonstrate that crash of hope.

Another constant theme in the construction of migration discernible in these novels relates to the fact that the whole phenomenon of migration has to deal with restrictive policies put in place in the countries of transit and countries of destination, such that migration for purposes of education, employment, or even family reunion as reflected in the mandatory acquisition of travel visas in Adam Shafi's *Mbali na Nyumbani* and country of destination citizenship in Mohamed's *Mhanga Nafsi Yangu* Afida's acquisition of marriage certificate to enable her acquire Peponi citizenship. This essentially implies that migration is a critical component in the construction of states and nations throughout the millennia; it is a fundamental economic data in terms of incomes and remittances when seen in terms of the constant inquiries made by Afida's relatives in *Mhanga Nafsi Yangu*, as to why she has failed to meet her obligations to them. Further, as an economic thematic reality in these novels, migration is presented as search for a

new life of contentment and fulfillment, from a poor country where life is a daily torment of hopelessness as depicted in both Adam's and Afida's lives. Both are migrating because of poverty, their efforts are predicated on fleeing from poverty and unfulfilling life. Poverty as such becomes a cross-cutting issue leading women on the road of migration and thus becoming a critical component in the construction of migration as both a male and female concept in contemporary terms. Poverty further insinuates lack of economic opportunity and therefore girls migrating to Europe, as manifested in *Mhanga Nafsi Yangu* is an expectation predicated on the possibility of rising from grass to grace, i.e., from poverty to riches. Regardless of their validity, the expectations expressed or alluded to certain characters in *Mhanga Nafsi Yangu* show that poverty drives women to migrate to Europe to improve their standards of living. Expectations in these novels is an elaborate concept entailing expectations of possession (money, cars, houses) helps to show poor people's great migration expectations - recall the requests made by Afida's family members and relatives.

Another critical theme that arises in these novels is that migration is multifaceted, though mostly in terms of good and bad. In its positive aspects, migration appears as a solution to social instability - many of the migrants think that they could improve their living conditions by leaving their country than by staying in such unstable places as their homes. This is what becomes of Adam, though it appears like happenstance because he gets a second chance. Professor Marjan and his wife are successful; Marjan is a university professor though a black migrant from outside Peponi. However, the bad of migration is a presentation of migrants as victims of disillusionment - many of them, as in the case of Afida and Shuhuda in *Mhanga Nafsi Yangu*, do not meet good living conditions in the host countries, if they do, it is transitory and extremely temporary. The stories of Afida and Shuhuda illuminate the promise and the ultimate disappointment of the migrant's experiences in countries of destination, yet this disillusionment does not necessarily lead all migrants to return to their countries of origin, they stay but live in loneliness and great regret.

Finally, *Mbali na Nyumbani* and *Mhanga Nafsi Yangu*, though set and drawing their strength from different historical epochs. They present critically nuanced contexts and historical/contemporary trajectories that underpin the construction of male and female concepts of migration. The overarching argument in both novels gravitates towards the fact that the historical and contemporary political and economic configurations of the world, as experienced then and now, are ideal incentives buttressing migration. Alternatively, the concentration of wealth, power and opportunity in the hands of few people in certain parts of the world - in the north and west - (Afida's Peponi and Adam's Europe) - and not others will always tempt the deprived majority in the south to strive by all means to access those rich enclaves and these temptations are gender

blind. Given that they affect men and women equally, they are thus implicated in the construction male and female concepts of migration most of the time. Migration will always respond to a discernible stimulus and as such, migrants inevitably will be attracted to such a stimulus. As long as the world's economic system continues to be built on the contemporary dynamics of exploitation, elevating a wealthy few and pushing more than half of humanity into paucity and subjugation, migration will increase with greater frequency and intensity. And as some scholars of migration have argued - disposed people will naturally be lured to move to richer habitats to improve their circumstances. As long as there are better or superior education, health and employment opportunities, social security and other basic essentials necessary for good living, exist only in certain enclaves, migration will persist.

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