



A New Historicist Reading of NoViolet Bulawayo's We Need New Names (2013)

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Abstract

Throughout history, wars, political conflicts, and economic crises have brought about successive waves of immigration, which have been playing a vital role in designing the demographic map of the world. Studying the theme of immigration and the problems of assimilation in human literary production is inevitable. This paper employs the New Historicist approach as its major methodology, which asserts the reciprocal roles which history and literature play in generating each other.

The aim of this paper is to investigate the variety of historical contexts- biographical, political, social, and cultural- that were essential to the process of producing NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*, in which immigration and the problems of assimilation is a major theme. In addition, through a literary analysis to the text, the author's reaction to these contexts will be investigated in the literary work by examining the ways in which the theme of immigration and the problems of assimilation are employed as a reflection to these contexts. The outcome of this analysis will describe the relationship between history and the literary text from a New Historicist view .

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دراسة في التأريخانية الجديدة لرواية الكاتبة نوفيوليت بولاوايو "نحتاج أسماء جديدة" (2013)

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المستخلص:

جلبت الحروب والصراعات السياسية والأزمات الاقتصادية موجات متتالية من الهجرة عبر التاريخ، والتي أدت دوراً حيوياً في تصميم الخريطة الديموغرافية للعالم. دراسة موضوع الهجرة ومشاكل الاندماج في الإنتاج الأدبي الانساني أمر لا مفر منه. يؤكد منهج التأريخانية الجديدة، وهو المنهج الرئيس في هذه الورقة البحثية، الأدوار المتبادلة التي يقوم بها التاريخ والأدب في عملية انبثاق كل منهما من الآخر.

تهدف هذه الورقة إلى البحث في تنوع السياقات التأريخية - البيوغرافية والسياسية والاجتماعية والثقافية - التي كانت عوامل اساسية في عملية كتابة رواية نوفيوليت بولاوايو "نحتاج أسماء جديدة"، فالهجرة ومشاكل الاندماج هي موضوع رئيس في الرواية. فضلاً عن ذلك، من خلال تحليل أدبي للنص، سيتم البحث في رد فعل المؤلفة على هذه السياقات وانعكاسها على العمل الأدبي عن طريق تحليل الطرائق التي

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يتم بها توظيف موضوع الهجرة ومشاكل الاندماج كانعكاس لهذه السياقات. سوف تكشف نتيجة هذا التحليل عن العلاقة بين التاريخ والنص الأدبي من وجهة نظر التأريخانية الجديدة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التأريخانية الجديدة، نوفيوليت بولاوايو، نحتاج اسماءً جديدةً

1- Introduction

For human societies of the Global South, immigration and assimilation have produced existential experiences at a crucial level in their lives. It is a concept that has enormous resonance in literature and forms an entry point through which readers can appreciate its depth. In *We Need New Names*, we are informed of what Zimbabwe looks like in each snippet of life through the eyes of Darling, a girl who later immigrates to the United States. The narrative constructs a complex account of what living through this period was, highlighting the struggles with dislocation and negotiated adaptation. This paper aims at examine the economic, cultural and political contexts of immigration, as well assimilation within the diaspora from Global South, utilizing New Historicism as a critical approach. This will serve as a means to investigate the Zimbabwean Bulawayo's story to investigate the complications of immigration in real life terms.

New Historicism, as a literary theory, calls for paying more attention to the historical context of the literary work. It claims that literary creations are not mere individual endeavours but products of the culture, society and politics within which they are created. This makes such an approach critically useful for exploring the context of *We Need New Names* since Bulawayo's work is extremely tied to the historical and contemporary matters of the African diaspora in general and of Zimbabwe in particular.

Placing the novel in these contexts, we can find out how tightly woven are lives of its characters with larger economic, cultural, and political forces around them.

The economic context of immigrant families, such as that experienced by Darling and her family, is especially key in understanding the various reasons which encourage different decisions. A major theme of the novel is the extreme economic inequity between Zimbabwe and America, as well as the way immigrants face their own struggles coming into a new country. It goes way beyond having a means of support; this includes the loss of social class, and all challenges of becoming established there.

In addition, the cultural context to immigrant experience means the loss of identity. One of the main themes with which this novel is concerned revolves around immigrants' conflict between assimilating into a foreign nation's culture and losing their cultural heritage due to that process. Stressing the communication barriers, preservation of national identity and the creation process of hybrid identities; this novel focuses on exposing assimilation as a deeply painful and fraught practice.

Lastly, the political context of immigration incorporates comprehending the main drivers behind the decisions immigrants make to depart from their country of origin and the subsequent political difficulties that confront them in the destination country. The key themes of the novel involve the immigrants being politically excluded, exposed to xenophobia, and the lack of political stability. Additionally, the story examines the role played by transnational politics and the connections that immigrants continue to maintain with their countries of origin.

Through an examination of the aforementioned contexts, this paper intends to offer an in-depth understanding of experiences of immigration and assimilation presented in *We Need New Names*. The

comprehensive analysis will conduct an exploration of the political, economic and cultural contexts of Darling's narrative as well as the wider consequences for people of the Global South.

2- Economic Context

2.1- The Economic Reality of Paradise

By comparing the economic situation in the Zimbabwean shantytown of Paradise and the wealthy suburb of Budapest, the disparities within the country are starkly contrasted. The story commences with the theft of guavas by Darling and her friends as "we didn't eat this morning and my stomach feels like somebody just took a shovel and dug everything out" (Bulawayo, 2013, p.1). The extreme hunger described here emphasises the impoverished conditions experienced by those living in Paradise. As the children are reliant on stealing fruit to survive, this exemplifies the desperate economic conditions in which they are forced to live. The lack of sufficient food in Paradise is a reflection of the wider economic breakdown within Zimbabwe, where people can no longer afford to buy staple foods as a result of unemployment and hyperinflation. The harsh conditions force children to take extreme risks to survive, such as resorting to theft. Daily struggles have a profound impact on people's physical and psychological well-being.

Paradise is further depicted as being characterised by hopelessness and hunger when the author describes the activities of the children. The reason why they choose to steal the guavas is not for enjoyment but the fundamental need to survive. Life in Paradise is described as being extremely harsh, as children must become self-sufficient due to the lack of support provided by either their parents or the authorities. They lose their innocence as the economic realities mean the struggle to survive becomes more important.

On the other hand, the suburb of Budapest is portrayed as being affluent with wealth that is beyond the reach of those in Paradise. For example, Darling observes, "Budapest is big, big houses with satellite dishes on the roofs and neat gravelled yards or trimmed lawns" (Bulawayo, 2013, p. 4). The contrasting economic conditions highlight the inequalities motivating people to move to other countries for a better life. The immaculate environment of Budapest, exuding wealth and modernity, starkly contrasts with the ramshackle huts and widespread poverty in Paradise. Contrasting the two areas in such a way highlights the socioeconomic disparities and the appeal of migration as a way of escaping poverty. As Budapest is primarily depicted as being a utopia, it reinforces the economic disparities that exist within Zimbabwe, particularly emphasising the desperate experience of the residents of Paradise.

The systemic nature of economic disparity is also emphasised by the comparison between Paradise and Budapest. Paradise is depicted as lacking infrastructure, essential services, and economic opportunities, whereas Budapest represents a highly prosperous world with plentiful resources. Such inequality not only involves individual fortune but reflects the wider structural inequities that permeate throughout the society of Zimbabwe. The factors causing the economic desperation are systemic in nature and include corruption, financial mismanagement and the effects of economic policies implemented at a global level (Ndlovu, 2019, p. 85).

The origins of Zimbabwe's dire economic situation can be traced back to a series of economic and political mistakes. that have had adverse impacts on the county for many years. As discussed by Isaac

Ndlovu, the economic meltdown in Zimbabwe is not merely a consequence of bad governance but also the result of the country's complex historical and socio-political dynamics (2015, pp. 9-10).

Zimbabwe's historical context is critical for comprehending the economic deprivation that motivates the decision of Darling and her family to immigrate in order to improve their lives. As a result of various economic policies implemented by Zimbabwean governments at the turn of the millennium, a number of significant challenges emerged including widespread unemployment, hyperinflation, and a decline in public services, leading to conditions in which a vast proportion of the population struggle to survive on a daily basis.

2.2- Immigration as an Economic Necessity

Many people from the Global South choose to immigrate as a result of economic deprivation. In this case, Darling's mother departs for the border for the purpose of selling goods, something that many frequently do as a source of livelihood. Darling says, "Mother went to the border to sell things so I have to stay with Mother of Bones until she returns" (Bulawayo, 2013, p. 24). This reveals the fragmentation that occurs within families resulting from economic immigration. People in areas lacking economic stability often cross borders to engage in informal trade as an economic strategy. However, such cross-border trade is generally very risky and challenging, with participants prone to attacks and exploitation. Nevertheless, they are critical for subsistence due to the general lack of formal employment opportunities. Such activities emphasise the extent to which people in the Global South must become resilient and innovative faced with the need to overcome the risks and complexities present within their countries to support their families.

When people decide to immigrate, within their own country or to another country, sacrifices and difficult choices must be made. It can often lead to the separation of families as members depart seeking to improve their economic situation abroad. When separated in this manner, the family can be profoundly impacted socially and economically as it places significant strain on family ties resulting in disruption to the traditional networks of support. The description of Darling's mother choosing to cross the border to trade goods reflects the general trend of economic migration such that people are forced to depart from their homes and families to seek new economic opportunities.

After immigrating to America, Darling is confronted by different economic problems. Although superficially it seems that opportunities will be plentiful, the real situation involves meagre wages and financial challenges. Fostalina, Darling's aunt, finds employment in a nursing home, a common practice among immigrants. Darling notes "Well, go, go to that America and work in nursing homes. That's what your aunt Fostalina is doing as we speak" (Bulawayo, 2013, p. 11). This stresses the extent to which immigrants become economically marginalised, irrespective of how qualified they may be. Low-paying jobs in the host country reflect the reality of the systemic problems that exist generally in terms of economic marginalisation and the exploitation of immigrant workers. Although they may be highly skilled and qualified, the opportunities open to immigrants are restricted to jobs with low wages and laborious conditions. As a result of being economically marginalised in this way, the poverty cycle continues and immigrants have few opportunities to reach the economic stability that immigration initially promised. The disparity between purported wealth and the real economic conditions experienced by immigrants within the host country is a frequently observed phenomenon among immigrants from Global South countries (Ngoshi, 2018, p. 92). Bulawayo's description of Aunt Fostalina working in a

nursing home reflects the general economic situation confronting numerous immigrants. Along with minimal wages, immigrants often must work for extended periods in challenging conditions with few benefits. They generally find employment in industries that domestic workers tend to avoid including domestic services, manual labour and agriculture. The extent to which immigrants are exploited economically is exacerbated by the fact that they are not legally protected and under perpetual risk of being deported, removing their voice to seek improved working conditions (Moji, 2018, p. 4).

Furthermore, the economic reality confronting Darling's family is representative of the challenges that members of the Zimbabwean diaspora face in general. Immigrants from Zimbabwe often find themselves in precarious economic situations, working long hours in low-paying jobs that offer little opportunity for advancement (Ndlovu, 2015, p. 13). Rather than the abundance of opportunities that immigrants expect when arriving in the host country, they must face the reality that their economic struggles will continue.

The reality of the economic situation immigrants find themselves in is compounded by the necessity to financially support their family in their home country. The need to send money to their families applies considerable financial pressures on the immigrants. Being responsible for both supporting themselves in the host country and also supporting the family in the home country adds to the economic strain they experience. As immigrants are required to make sacrifices in such situations, it emphasises the intertwined nature of cross-border economic challenges.

2.3- Remittances and Economic Contributions

Although their economic situation may be dire, immigrants make important contributions to the economies of their home country by sending money. Similar to numerous other immigrants, Darling's mother is reliant on the remittances sent by family members living in other countries. The stability of families remaining in their home country depends on this economic connection. Darling remarks, "Uncle Vusa sent them when he first got there but that was a long time ago. Now he never sends anything" (Bulawayo, 2013, p. 7). If such remittances stop, their economic situation can deteriorate due to the extent to which families are reliant on them. Remittances have significant importance as they provide valuable support for numerous Global South economies. They offer a means of survival for families, allowing them to buy staple products, healthcare and education. Nevertheless, the extent to which families are dependent on remittances also emphasises their vulnerability, as their ability to become financially stable is reliant on the economic situation of family members living in other countries. If such remittances are interrupted or terminated, the resulting impacts can be catastrophic, leading to a return to poverty and worsening economic disparities.

The remittances sent by immigrants provide support to more than just their close relatives as they finance community projects, develop infrastructure and small enterprises in the home country. Such economic input promotes local development and has the potential to reduce the systemic economic problems that communities must face. Nevertheless, the need to support both their relatives and communities emphasises the dual responsibilities immigrants must bear, overcoming economic problems in both host and home countries. As the narrative in *We Need New Names* depicts, the economic situation experienced by immigrants when faced with the need to assimilate is representative of the general systemic issues of economic disparity, marginalization and resilience of people from the Global South. Bulawayo poignantly explores the economic drivers of migration in her narrative and the complex

challenges faced by immigrants when seeking improved lives: “Aunt Fostalina doesn’t have the energy since she is so busy with her two jobs, one at the hospital and one at the nursing home” (Bulawayo, 2013, p. 85).

Remittances have considerable importance for development as they finance basic services and infrastructure that the government does not sufficiently support. Such economic support is valuable for enhancing life quality, creating educational opportunities, and improving healthcare for Global South communities. Nevertheless, as families are so reliant on remittances, this is an indication of the inability of local economies and authorities to provide citizens with sufficient opportunities and support. Such reliance on financial support from overseas underlines the systemic economic problems that motivate immigrants to leave their home countries.

The dual economic responsibilities confronting immigrants are exacerbated by the need to honour their financial obligations in their host countries. Their already limited financial resources are often put under strain by increased living, education and healthcare costs incurred in the host country, thus restricting their ability to put money aside to send to relatives in the home country. This economic strain is aggravated by the necessity to support relatives remaining in the home country, perpetuating the economic burden and making them more vulnerable.

As portrayed in *We Need New Names*, the economic context of immigration and assimilation furthers the understanding of the systemic economic problems experienced by those immigrating from the Global South. The narrative depicted by Bulawayo emphasises the extent to which immigrants must become resilient and resourceful as they attempt to withstand the challenging and frequently risky economic conditions when seeking to improve their lives. The economic challenges confronting the characters in the novel are not merely reflective of their individual struggles, but mirror the general systemic problems impacting communities and countries as a whole. As Polo Belina Moji notices: “Darling’s Aunt Fostalina who lives the satirized American dream because she makes enough money to send to her relatives and subscribes to American beauty aesthetics is rendered powerless by being labelled as ‘foreign’” (2014, p. 7).

3- Cultural Context

3.1- Cultural Dislocation and Identity

Two of the main themes in *We Need New Names* are cultural dislocation and identity crises. The narrative encapsulates the tension created by the need for the immigrant to retain their cultural heritage and assimilate into the culture of the host country. This can be observed in the experiences of Darling as she attempts to negotiate the challenges presented by life in America while also being homesick for her life in Zimbabwe. She poignantly expresses her cultural dislocation when she says “I am hungry for my country and nothing is going to fix that” (Bulawayo, 2013, p. 70). This quotation underlines Darling’s profound feeling of loss and desire to return home, even though America seems to offer an abundance of material opportunities. She does not yearn for food, but her hunger is to be cultural and emotionally nourished by her home country.

Bulawayo starkly contrasts the conditions in Zimbabwe and America. For example, when living in Zimbabwe, Darling and her friends live in a familiar world where the customs, social structures and languages are not alien. However, when arriving in America, she finds a cultural environment that is

significantly different causing her to experience alienation and disconnection. The need to assimilate into the culture of the host country increases the sense of cultural dislocation. Darling's identity crisis is exacerbated by the expectations that her Zimbabwean heritage and the conditions in American place on her. This dichotomy leads to continual tension as she attempts to create a balance between the two different identities. "What Du Bois refers to as a double consciousness, a psycho-social splitting of the self in multiple as a result of abject subjectivity wherein the self is dislocated and fails to unite" (Sibanda, 2017, p. 86).

Cultural dislocation is significantly influenced by language. Darling's need to replace her mother tongue with English as her main language is a reflection of the general necessity for immigrants to engage in linguistic assimilation. "I am starting to talk fast now, and I have to remember to slow down because when I get excited I start to sound like myself, and my American accent goes away" (Bulawayo, 2013, p. 99). This statement exemplifies the challenging and emotional strain immigrants feel when they substitute their mother tongue with the main language spoken in the host country. Language loss is reflective of a more profound loss of cultural identity and cultural connection.

Furthermore, Darling's sense of cultural dislocation is exacerbated by the discrimination and stereotyping she experiences in America. When she is the target of racist and xenophobic acts, the alienation she feels from the new society she is attempting to assimilate into is increased. The struggle within her mind mirrors the general challenges experienced by immigrants when attempting to balance integration with preserving their cultural heritage.

"When I first arrived at Washington I just wanted to die. The other kids teased me about my name, my accent, my hair, the way I talked or said things...When you are being teased about something, at first you try to fix it so the teasing can stop but then those crazy kids teased me about everything, even things I couldn't change." (Bulawayo 2013, pp.76-77)

3.2- Cultural Preservation and Hybrid Identities

Although immigrants are under pressure to assimilate, they also experience a strong need to maintain their cultural heritage. When Darling interacts with fellow immigrants from Zimbabwe, her experience depicts this tension. They establish a representation of their own culture on a smaller scale in America, allowing them to preserve their social practices, languages and traditions.

"Whenever they come, Uncle Kojo leaves the house for most of the time because everybody will be speaking our real language, laughing and talking loudly about back home [...] The uncles and aunts bring goat insides and cook ezangaphakathi and sadza and mbhida and occasionally they will bring amacimbi, which is my number one favorite relish, umfushwa, and other foods from home, and people descend on the food like they haven't eaten all their lives" (Bulawayo, 2013, p. 73).

This statement emphasises the extent to which members of the Zimbabwean diaspora endeavour to preserve their cultural heritage and establish a feeling of community in their new country.

A key factor in the cultural context of immigration is the development of hybrid identities. It is often the case that immigrants mix elements of their own culture with those of the country to which they

have migrated, creating a distinctive, hybrid identity. While Darling is empowered by this process, it is not without its challenges. She is required to find a way of combining her Zimbabwean and American identities, striking a balance that enables her to respect her traditions while also adjusting to the new conditions.

However, developing a hybrid identity can be a complex process. Immigrants are frequently exposed to prejudice and discrimination in their host countries, presenting obstacles in their path to complete integration. When Darling is the subject of hatred and racist acts in America, this exemplifies the social challenges immigrants are required to navigate. The novel underlines the hostile behaviour and exclusion to which immigrants are frequently exposed, thus increasing the challenges involved in cultural assimilation.

To maintain a sense of identity and continuity, it is important that immigrants preserve their cultural traditions and create hybrid identities. Darling and other Zimbabweans can maintain their cultural identity by continuing cultural practices like communal gatherings, language and traditional rituals. Such activities promote a feeling of unity and support among members of the community, facilitating the process of assimilating into the new society.

3.3- Identity Formation and Transformation

The formation of identity is a process that is continually evolving, particularly for immigrants navigating a path between two different cultures. Darling's narrative reflects the dynamic nature of identity, as it changes as she has new interactions and experiences in the new society. Bulawayo emphasises how identity is continually evolving, demonstrating the process by which Darling adapts and integrates elements of American culture while still ensuring that her Zimbabwean heritage is maintained. This transformative process is reflected in her statement: "Maybe I will finally see things that I know, and maybe this place will look ordinary at last." (Bulawayo, 2013, p. 109). Darling reveals here how the formation of identity is a continual process of change as well as the effect of cultural assimilation on how she perceives herself.

To fully comprehend the immigrant experience, it is essential that the role of hybridity in the formation of identity is examined. Hybridity enables immigrants to negotiate different cultural arenas, allowing them to feel that they belong in both the home and host countries. Nevertheless, having a dual identity can result in individuals experiencing internal conflicts and challenges in their efforts to accommodate the distinct cultural elements shaping their lives. Darling creates a hybrid identity as a means of dealing with the sense of cultural dislocation as well as to develop the feeling that she belongs in her new environment. As Moji argues: "Darling's case, her insertion into the American social matrix – or translational subjectification – is impacted by the connotations associated with the name 'African'" (2015, p. 7).

Forming an identity not only involves cultural blending but also navigating the social hierarchies and power dynamics that exist in the host country. Immigrants are frequently exposed to marginalisation such that their cultural identities and practices are belittled and portrayed as being exotic. Consequently, they struggle to make themselves visible as their culture is erased, experiencing challenges with asserting their identity when confronted with the dominant culture that perceives them to be foreigners.

The process by which immigrants form and transform their identity is complicated and involves a number of different factors. They must continually navigate different cultural factors, social obligations and personal experiences. This experience, for Darling, is a testament to her flexibility and ability to adapt into a totally different environment and to overcome the challenges she faces while preserving her own cultural identity.

We Need New Names touches on the core ideas as explored by NoViolet Bulawayo in her life. Born and raised in Zimbabwe, Bulawayo immigrated to the United States for educational purposes. Her own life is launchpad that would enable a deeper understanding of assimilation processed by immigrants as they develop their new identities from scratch. Bulawayo personal narrative makes the story less sensational due to how authentically she depicts it, rooted in her own experience as an immigrant and that of others. The author and thus main character Darling were born in Zimbabwe and moved to America. Both have had to negotiate the complexities of being bicultural, which comes with a feeling of cultural alienation and identity crisis. The narrative reflects her deep understanding of the psychic and emotional damage immigration may leave with, as well as the resilience that may be required to adjust and survive in new circumstances.

Bulawayo's childhood sets the scene for events happening in Zimbabwe, shown through how it informs the plot line. At that time, Zimbabwe has seen challenging economic and political issues, human rights violations, and hyperinflation. This has in turn been responsible to numerous Zimbabweans to be displaced seeking refuge across borders for new start thereby giving rise to an increasing diaspora community. Bulawayo draws on her personal experience of economic deprivation and the lack of political stability as well as the wider political context of Zimbabwe in the narrative. Bulawayo herself states that "The pain of adjustment not only made me smell my armpits and catch the fine whiff of my outsidersness, but also made me long for my country, even as President Mugabe was bringing Zimbabwe to its knees" (Bulawayo, 2013, p. 200).

4- Political Context

4.1- Political Instability and Forced Immigration

Another factor driving citizens from the Global South to immigrate is political instability. The turbulent political environment depicted in *We Need New Names* motivates numerous Zimbabweans to escape. No stranger to this situation, Darling's family is also impacted by political violence, as she recalls "We hear about change, about new country, about democracy, about elections and what-what" (Bulawayo, 2013, p. 44). Political instability coupled with the lack of economic opportunities force people to search for security in other countries. Forced immigration in the political context involves the interconnection of human rights violations, persecution and violence. Numerous citizens in the Global South immigrate as a means of surviving rather than being merely a choice. The lack of political stability causes populations to be displaced, both within the country and to other countries, resulting in masses of refugees. Zimbabwe is no exception to this phenomenon as the economic upheaval and political violence have displaced millions of citizens in search of stability and security in bordering nations as well as further afield.

The description of Darling's father finding employment in South Africa mirrors the general pattern of people being forced to immigrate as a result of political instability. "Mother had not wanted Father to leave for South Africa to begin with, but it was at that time when everybody was going to South Africa and other countries, some near, some far, some very, very far" (Bulawayo, 2013, p. 64). Many

immigrants and refugees are separated from their families, unable to communicate and gain support from relatives who remain in Zimbabwe. The feeling that they have been abandoned and become disconnected from their home country as a result of forced immigration can be highly traumatic. Many choose to migrate to flee from persecution and violence, coupled with the aspiration to improve their economic situation abroad. However, the process is inherently risky, as they are constantly under threat from exploitation, violence, and legal issues. Immigrants are psychologically impacted by forced displacement, as they are suddenly confronted with both losing their homeland and an unpredictable future.

Policies implemented in host countries can exacerbate the effects of political instability on immigration trends. Such policies can place constraints on immigrants and refugees, restricting their ability to seek legal protection, which makes it challenging to find refuge in the new country. The political environment in such countries impacts how immigrants and refugees are treated, influencing their experiences and ability to assimilate.

“The novel makes us contemplate the effect of the Zimbabwean political and economic crises particularly on children, as both parents and children are increasingly compelled to negotiate precarious citizenships at home and subsequently eke out unstable livelihoods in often unwelcoming foreign lands” (Ndlovu, 2015, p. 1).

4.2- Xenophobia and Political Exclusion

Immigrants are often the target of xenophobic attacks and political exclusion in the host country. Darling's own experiences in America depicted in the narrative of *We Need New Names* reflect this phenomenon. Immigrants are marginalised by political policies and rhetoric, which produces an atmosphere of uncertainty and fear “And when at work they asked for our papers, we scurried like startled hens and flocked to unwanted jobs, where we met the others, many others” (Bulawayo, 2013, p. 161). This statement illustrates the xenophobic environment that immigrants must negotiate, which creates the feeling that they are unwanted and excluded. Political exclusion takes a number of different forms, such as restrictions on legal protections, social services and the inability to participate politically. Due to the exclusion of immigrants from political processes within host countries, they have no influence over decisions impacting their lives. Consequently, they become more marginalised and the cycle of inequality continues.

Immigrants are confronted by both internal and external political challenges. Their divided loyalties and identities are a source of inner conflict. They are required to overcome the challenges of preserving the link with their home country and building a new life in the new country. As a result of this duality, they become alienated and disconnected from both.

4.3- Transnational Politics and Identity

The identities and experiences of immigrants are significantly influenced by transnational politics. By maintaining the link with their homeland, via community engagement and political activism, it is possible for immigrants to preserve a sense of purpose and identity. When Darling reflects on the political environment in Zimbabwe, she reveals the durable relationship she has with her home country “I think the reason they are my relatives now is they are from my country too—it's like the country has become a real family since we are in America, which is not our country” (Bulawayo, 2013, p. 109). This

illustrates the significance of engaging in transnational politics to ensure that immigrants can maintain their cultural identity and promote reform in their homeland.

Through transnational political engagement, immigrants are capable of addressing the factors that caused them to be displaced and play a role in the social and political development in their home country. This engagement helps them overcome the economic and political issues that resulted their displacement. Immigrants are enabled by transnational political participation to evolve a feeling of empathy toward their fellow citizens and keep connection to their own cultural heritage (Ndlovu, 2015, p. 3).

This form of transnational political engagement underscores the dual identities that immigrants are required to take on, with responsibilities to both their host and home nations. They can do so, by actively becoming the bridge between these two poles politically and geographically, fostering a spirit of togetherness in the diaspora. It highlights the role of immigrants in deciding how they participate politically from electoral politics to larger movements for political and social change.

4.4- Political Advocacy and Community Building

In order to tackle difficulties immigrants face in host countries, they often engage with political advocacy and community building. These initiatives foster a sense of belonging and support in dealing with challenging environment an immigrant may encounter. Political advocacy and community building are essential to enable immigrants socialising with their host countries promoting social cohesion. Building networks of support and solidarity, will help ease the assimilation process as well as provide immigrant community with a mechanism to stand up for change. In addition, these initiatives can provide a means by which the immigrant community is able to sustain and retain their cultural identity and involve politically in the new local society.

We see Uncle Kojo talks to Prince motivating him to be well educated, expressing his belief that anyone can be whatever they wish in the field of politics: “Shouldn’t you actually be looking at colleges, Prince? You are in America now and you can actually be anything you want to be, look at Obama” (Bulawayo, 2013, p. 108). For immigrants, political advocacy is especially important since it enables them to address more direct modes of political exclusion and xenophobia. Immigrants, through collective action with other immigrants and supporters can enhance their ability to challenge discriminatory practices and policies, demand legal protections, and increased participation in the political process in the host country. Not just helpful to immigrants individually, advocacy efforts also make the community stronger by uniting them in a sense of empowerment and collective voice.

5- Conclusion

We Need New Names by NoViolet Bulawayo provides a poignant exploration of political, social, and economic backgrounds that have affected the experiences of issues related to immigration and assimilation for those who belong to what became known as the Global Diaspora. It tells the story of Darling and her family, focusing on immigrants' many struggles in navigating life in a foreign land. The narrative shows that economic hardships, cultural alienation, and political isolation are subject to immigrant stories. They show us how immigrants must be resilient in their attempts to create better conditions for their lives.

The clash of identities is a central theme in the novel, illustrating how immigrants like Darling grapple with the contrasting values, expectations, and cultural norms of their home country and their new

environment. This clash often manifests in dislocation and internal conflict as immigrants struggle to reconcile their past with their present. The quest for an identity becomes a lifelong endeavour as they seek to define who they are in a context that constantly shifts between two worlds. This journey is fraught with challenges as the two conflicting personalities of immigrants emerge, torn between their roots and the demands of assimilation. They are outsiders in both places- never fully at home in the country they left behind nor completely accepted in the one they now inhabit.

Nostalgia plays a decisive role in the lives of Bulawayo's characters, as they long for the familiarity and comfort of their homeland, even as they acknowledge the difficulties that drove them away. This longing is complicated by the reality that their memories of home are often idealised, clashing with the harsh truths they face in their new lives. The conflicting cultures they navigate further exacerbate this tension, as they are forced to constantly negotiate and mediate between different values, beliefs, and practices. This negotiation is not without its toll, leading to feelings of loss, confusion, and frustration.

The novel offers a nuanced examination of the economic, cultural, and political circumstances in immigration and assimilation faced by those within the Global South diaspora. It thus brings to light the multidimensional struggles that immigrants navigate in their new settings and does so with a focus on Darling and her family. The narrative again places the economic hardships, cultural alienation, and political exclusion that people face in the local context, underscoring the story of how creative and resilient those seeking better opportunities abroad are.

The sufferings of the immigrants, both in their country of origin and abroad, are starkly portrayed in *We Need New Names*. These sufferings are not only economic but also deeply psychological and emotional. In their home country, they face systemic oppression, poverty, and instability, while abroad, they encounter discrimination, alienation, and the constant pressure to conform. The dual burden of these challenges highlights the immense resilience required to survive and thrive as an immigrant.

Placing the novel in its historical and contemporary context, this discussion has layered an understanding of how larger economic, cultural, and political forces shape immigrant lives from the Global South. The narrative opens us up to what it must be like for these characters and reflects more significant systemic issues that contribute to immigration and play out in how immigrants are treated. When viewed through a New Historicist lens, *We Need New Names* provides an intricate snapshot into the complexities of immigrating in today's world.

That economic context illustrates the ways in which individuals are driven from their home countries because of inequalities and systemic breakdowns that leave them with no alternatives. The narrative emphasises the necessity position that caused immigration and the unique battles these newcomers face in their adopted land. The struggle for economic stability and dependence illustrates the double pressure under which immigrants are as they encounter economic difficulties in both their home and host country.

The overarching background of this novel is the wider political context. It demonstrates the level at which both intolerance towards immigrants and also different forms of racism are inflamed by xenophobia. More poignantly, in their new homes, immigrants face political exclusion and discrimination on top of the difficulties that all refugees find when trying to assimilate. The significance of transnational politics illustrates the ways in which immigrants keep ties with their territories of origin and navigate broader political forces that affect them.

The themes of immigration and assimilation are vividly exposed in the novel *We Need New Names*, presenting a more diversified, multi-faceted view of the people immigrating from the Global South. In her narrative, Bulawayo artfully portrays how resilient and collectively powerful immigrant communities are in navigating the new country's vast and complex reality and maintaining their traditional heritage. The current analysis contributes to a broader understanding of some systemic challenges immigrants face and their continuous strive for equity and inclusion in the fast-paced globalised world. By analysing the political, social, and cultural dimensions of the relationship between immigration and assimilation, this paper underlines the challenges faced by the immigrants from the Global South and their resilience, offering significant views into their experiences and direct contributions.

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