

Scatology and the Representation of the Abject in NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*

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Abstract

NoViolet Bulawayo's debut, *We Need New Names* (2013), presents a kaleidoscope of a broken nation, of twisted dreams and frozen expectations. It is a documentary on individuals trapped in want of freedom and in the difficulty of finding meaning to their existence. The story eloquently testifies to the fractured humanity and a bold statement on the dysfunctional leadership in present-day Zimbabwe. Being a nation conflicted by internal squabbles and set on edge by both political and economic insecurity, Zimbabwe, as artistically represented is an ailing nation with a slim hope for its citizens. The existential and identity crises are the corollary of the dislocated national centre. This paper interrogates Bulawayo's vision for Zimbabwe through a myriad of strategies of representing this atrophied nation and its people as seen in the novel's characters, the plot trajectory and the setting, all of which reveal the turbulent inner landscapes of the troubled heroine. The language - words, phrases and metaphors - is seen in this paper as deliberately mobilised to highlight the mangled dreams of a people in whose nation things have really fallen apart. Through metaphorization, the image of a dislocated nation is clearly built. But the author's vision for a just society and an ennobled humanity is seen beneath the portrayal of the traumatized lives of the people, which she creatively explores.

Keywords: Noviolet Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, Scatology, Representation of the Abject, *We Need New Names*.

1. INTRODUCTION

In this bildungsroman, *We Need New Names*, Noviolet Bulawayo presents the story of the abject condition of a postcolonial state which fractures the hopes of the young and even frightens the adults as both cavort within the margins of existence. The rudimentary conditions in the fictional paradise do not inspire much hope about the inhabitants, nor do they hold a promise of giving human dignity to their lives. Violently uprooted from home in a slum dwelling and groomed by hunger and torture by both physical and psychological pain, the inhabitants are in an existential crisis. The uncertain future they face, lack of educational opportunities and economic destitution suggest that Zimbabwe which is mirrored here is a postcolonial *cul de sac*. All of this is conveyed

through the innocent but serious child heroine Darling.

Scatology and the grotesque are the predominant metaphors used to represent the crisis and disillusionment of the people of these failed postcolonial states. It is also deployed as a symbol of rejection of characters' abject conditions at the same time. The younger heroine's denial of her troubled identity is equally relayed through the scatological in the text, the most dominant of which is 'excrement'. In the novel, excrement is a leitmotif, a metaphor that signifies the dehumanization and repugnant conditions in postcolonial Zimbabwe and the less than dignifying experiences of the postcolonial immigrant in the west as the Other.

In the story we encounter Darling, Bastard, Chipso, Stina, Sbhoo and Godknows pressured by hunger at home into the stealing of

guavas at the high-brow area of Budapest. The experiences of the children as told by Darling reveal the harsh realities of life in Paradise and provide both the political and economic context for the migrations in the story to the other countries in search of opportunities. It is in this context that Darling hatches her dream to join her Aunt Fostilina in the United States. The second part of the story dwells on the difficulties and unmet expectations of the immigrants in the United States where the crisis of identity is deeply implicated, much in the circumstances that do not promise upward mobility as much as in the abject conditions at home. Thus, the immigrant abject persona is conflicted by both the history and the background of political failure and Othering hegemonic discourses. Darling's experience is that America is not a bed of roses. Despite that, it still holds out something to her, hence she cannot return home for fear of losing the opportunity of re-entering America since she is on a tourist visa. As the heroine grows towards adulthood, it becomes increasingly clear to her the futility of fleeing home. She relapses into the memories of home, of children stealing guavas and being robbed of their childhood. Thus, the story ends where it begins.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The postcolonial theory and the concept of liminality readily lend themselves as theoretical perspectives for the analysis of *We Need New Names*. Robert Young has asserted that it is from anti-colonial struggles that postcolonialism draws its inspiration and that as a critical tool it aims at re-examining "the history of colonialism from the perspective of the colonized; to determine the economic, political and social impact of colonialism on both the colonized people and colonizing powers; to analyse the process of decolonization; and above all, to participate in the goal of political liberation, which includes equal access to material resources, the contestation of forms of domination, and the articulation of the political and cultural identities" (Habib 2008, p. 160 – 161).

The hegemonic discourse of the other as a way of dehumanizing the self lies as the cornerstone of the epistemic violence in Africa, on which rests the logic of colonialism and imposition of values on a subaltern people (Akoda & Imbua 2005; Imbua 2015; Eba & Imbua 2017). But the postcolonial critic also interrogates issues of internal colonialism, marginalities, and peripherality (Okpiliya & Eyang 2003; Eyang 2016). Gayatri Spivak's concept of the subaltern and the question of whether the subaltern can have a voice to counter the hegemonic voices of the colonizing power are useful in discussing the marginalized people of Zimbabwe and immigrants from abject conditions in the United States. How the identity of the immigrants is implicated in the situation of abjection is equally significant in the examination of the text. In interrogating *We Need New Names* from a similar perspective, DesireeR. Fitzpatrick observes that: "the oppressive forces of Othering and the subaltern are represented by Bulawayo naming the economic, social and historical chaos that occurred in Zimbabwe under Mugabe's rule, the remnants of British white colonialists and their presence within Zimbabwe, and Darling's experiences in America as an immigrant" (2015, p. 3). The impact of the oppressive forces of Othering on the subject of immigrants' psychology and well-being is in a sense a definition of their phase of transition described as 'liminality' in social anthropology, a term coined by Arnold van Gennep in his *Le Rites de Passage* (1909).

3. ABJECT CONDITIONS OF HOME

The marginality of abject conditions of the people in their home country of Zimbabwe on the heels of poor leadership is the steering of this narrative, from the perspective of a child whose childhood has been robbed by a wicked combination of utterly despicable developments and experiences. As a consequence of a failed and melting economy, there is hunger in the land, loss of value of the currency, destruction of livelihoods, insipid migration to other countries in search of greener pastures, and a general fall

in the quality of life for the people (Eyang 2004; Eyang, & Okune 2004). All of these amid the political dictatorship and violence unleashed by Robert Mugabe subject the people to live under the rubble. Operation Murambatsvina (restore order), unnamed in the novel, a government policy of Mugabe's regime to eradicate poor housing communities is what has created the make-shift Paradise with the concomitant lack of facilities. The failure of the programme and the toll on human lives want and disease are the narrative focus of the child heroine, Darling. The 'Bulldozers' become the symbol of destruction and of daylight robbery of lives and livelihood. As Desiree Fitzpatrick observes that, "the un-naming of Operation Murambatsvina is a way in which Bulawayo incorporates a metaphor for Darling and the people of Zimbabwe being oppressed and moved over by their own government" (2005, p. 10). The infamous operation as recounted started in 2005 ostensibly to clear illegal housing and informal jobs that had a terrible effect on hundreds of thousands of poor urban dwellers. Bulldozing homes without warning, causing destruction, killing and traumatizing the people and without any allocation of land left to them to build shanties where they could find solace. It is this experience, engraved in the narrator's memory that is the history of paradise, a place whose name finds meaning in its irony because of the lack and squalor. However, it still offers human warmth, which registers itself as a home in the narrator's mind.

The conditions of Paradise emblematic of the majority of Zimbabwe, are not what the narrator likes to identify with as part of her identity or heritage much as they are an inseparable aspect of her realities. To express her aversion to the oddities, therefore, she uses scatology and the grotesque to present the panoramic view of undignified life, the injustice in the society. The overall dominant leitmotif in the text is the use of 'kaka' (faeces) in describing the country and the horrific experiences in Paradise that point to the unfortunate condition of abjection. From the hunger that prompts the

children into stealing guavas in the elite residential area of Budapest, the reader has an idea of the suffering child narrator: "There are guavas to steal in Budapest, and right now I'd rather die for guavas. We didn't eat this morning and my stomach feels like somebody just took a shovel and dug everything out" (WNNN p. 1).

Obviously, the hunger is real and the lack palpable, hence the narrator and her food-hunting peers are not on any past-time; they are scavenging for food for survival in the nearby neighborhood Budapest, which in its opulence and serenity serves as a clear mockery of Paradise. The 'kaka-ness' of life in the circumstances of this setting is to be seen in the child, Chipu, being pregnant at the age of 11 at the instance of the grandfather who raped her; as she confesses at seeing sexual violation in the church:

"He did that, my grandfather, I was coming from when Find bin Laden and my grandmother was not there and my grandfather was there and he got on me and pinned me down like that and he clamped a hand over my mouth and was heavy like a mountain" (WNNN pp. 40 – 41).

The apparent act of incest and violence and child abuse wrapped in one which Chipu is a victim of metaphorises how meaningless life has become in Paradise, bereft of human decency and morality. It is also an emblem of the robbery of childhood in the story and the dystopic conditions of the country. The very idea of the fulfillment of life that the child represents in Africa is destroyed. As Robert Muponde (2015) asserts about the depiction of childhood in Zimbabwe literature: "the imaging of the child and childhood by the adult writer is tied to the history of the nation that inflects it. As a result, the literature itself and the Childhood it depicts, participate in conveying the meanings of history, politics and the nation" (p. 3). In the case of Zimbabwe, childhood is a sacred experience pointing to the discontinuities and disruptions as grim conditions of the children suggests.

Childhood becomes here a text to the larger canvas of social political and historical upheavals in the country. Reasoning in this line. Mupondeo pines that childhood memories and representation have a way of signalling the world around it as well as the explanation of the world.

Grotesque as it is, the idea of a child being pregnant, the adult in Paradise does not acknowledge it except the children, a development that signifies that, such ugly instances have become too common to worry about or that the child victim is to blame for whatever happened to her. But the children themselves understand the aberration that pregnancy is out of tune with the child, hence they try in their Innocence to get rid of the pregnancy by adopting different roles as doctors in the American TV programme ER. The attempt itself, which reveals innocence and danger as the children are left to themselves, into premature adulthood. They know the dangers of giving birth to a child. The death of Nosizi is a reminder of that and a sad commentary on the lack of medical facilities in the country, which is why they must terminate Chipo's pregnancy: "Today – we are getting rid of Chipo's stomach once and for all. One, it makes it hard for us to play, and two, if we let her have the baby, she will just die" (WNNN p. 78)

The grotesque sight of the dangling body of a young woman who has committed suicide for having the dreaded AIDS disease is a repugnant image to the sensibilities of the children. Yet survival is of paramount importance as the children take off the shining shoes from the dead body and sell them to buy bread. The dangling body is a horrific sight and an assault on their minds:

"The woman's thin arms limp at the sides, and her hands and feet point to the ground. Everything straight, like somebody drew her there, a line hanging in the air. The eyes are the scariest part, they are almost too white, and they

look like they want to pop out... (WNNN p. 17).

By obtaining the shoes from the corpse, the children appropriate from horror, a means to negotiate their survival, signified by the hope of bread, evoked by its delicious aroma: "... the dizzying smell of Lobles bread all around us now," (p. 18) as they scurry back into the bush. This negative image disjointed with childhood just as how the children obtain their bread. The oddity of guava theft for survival and gruesome of the hanged women collocate in making typical the squalid conditions in Paradise.

Amid want, deprivation and injustice come survival relative to the dissonant social incongruities which themselves accentuate the marginal life of the people and the troubled childhood of the characters in the story. Also reinforcing these social anomalies in the narrative, consistent with the scatological significations above is the motif of faeces, filth, and the repulsive and obscene which are the strings that hold up the story of the abject conditions. Zimbabwe is described as "kaka country" (p. 13). Constipation from guava and defecating in the open (bush) by the children are part of this experience of difficult nationhood.

"We just eat a lot of garbage because it is the only way to kill our hunger, and when it comes defecating, we get in so much pain it becomes an almost impossible task, like you are trying to give birth to a country (WNNN p. 16).

All through the text, there is this painful reference to country in relation to filth. In underscoring the metaphorical import of faeces in the text, Anna-Leena Toivonen (2015) posits that:

"With respect to the motion of abject, it is noteworthy how often the term 'kaka' referring to faeces in the text. It is telling that 'kaka' is often associated with the state of the character's home country, a failed postcolonial nation-state, in such repulsive terms lies at the

core of abjection in *We Need New Names*. It is symptomatic of the abjection notion of 'kaka country' that those who referred to it as such as citizens of that failed state. [T]he concept of abjection is ambiguous as

it signals discomfort about something repulsive that is part of the self and that cannot be treated as an object" (p. 4).

The characters facing abjection in the text and fully aware of this is an inconvenient accompaniment of their postcolonial heritage. In other words, much as it is repugnant, it is a part of their realities they would wish to distance themselves from, hence their attempt to imagine themselves somewhere else. Darling's dream, for instance, is to travel and live with her Aunt Faustilina in the United States of America. Secondly, when the NGO people come and deliver relief materials in the country, the children run after the returning vehicles shouting: "take me with you" (p. 56).

In the text, excrement and filth, therefore, communicate a meaning that is both political and social beyond the unhygienic conditions that are literally described with scatological aesthetics. Joshua D. Esty (1999) posits that excrement in literature has a political interpretation as it represents underdevelopment, "excessive consumption" and "wasted energies" (p. 34). It is "...a symbolic medium for questioning the place of autonomous individual in new postcolonial societies" (p. 36 – 37). For Darling and her friends, their place has been compromised by injustice, political instability and economic meltdown, disposessions, etc, manifesting in the debilitating conditions in the country. The abjection in the text is also ideological. The children's abjection to the nationalism that fosters hatred and injustice and a bad feeling is exemplified in the violent attacks on whites in the elite Budapest. As children are on the guavas helping themselves, a gang of armed hooligans with machetes representing Third Chimurenga fighters breaks into a house,

humiliates and takes away the White couple people shouting, "Kill the Boer. Africa for Africans" (p. 111), etc. The exchange between bastard and Sbho illustrate this: "What, are you crying for the white people? Are they your relatives? Bastard says? They are people, you asshole! (WNNN p.127)

The temporary access to the privileges of the elite Whites home in Budapest by the children who also help themselves to the food and comfort therein is juxtaposed with the reprehension of the barbaric acts of the eviction and the humiliation. While the children welcome comfort as meaningful life, they object to the kind of nationalism that engenders bad feelings. This episode ends scatological: "There is also a terrible reeking smell, and we look at the other end, and there, near the toilet, we see the words *Black Power* written in brown faeces on the large bathroom mirror (WNNN p.130). Excrement on the mirror is a thought-provoking metaphor in its symbolism of abjection and objection of aggressive nationalism. Toivanen (2015) posits that: "The mirror invites the children's identified themselves with the abject sort of black power that the Third Chimurenga fighters represent, that is, to see themselves in their abjection (WNNN p. 7). While the children condemn the situation, there is at the same time a threat by them to deface Budapest with their faeces as captured in, "You want us to come at night and defecate all over?" (p. 47). This is some identification with the Chimurenga fighters, using excrement as a means of expressing their protest against social inequalities and decay in Zimbabwe.

As part of the abjection in the text, there is the squalid condition and broken health of Darling's father, who returns from South Africa, lying critically ill with AIDS. The Handling of AIDS subject reveals the unhealthy stigmatization and secrecy that characterize the disease referred to euphemistically in the story as "the sickness" (p. 102). The air around him is loathsome, disgusting and offensive, and is everything scary to Darling and fills her with shame.

"Future comes home after many years of forgetting us...and packs in the shack, unable to move, unable to talk properly, unable to do anything, vomiting and vomiting, Jesus just vomiting and defecating on himself, and it smelling like something died in there, dead and rotting, his body a black, terrible stick...(WNNN p. 89)... He is just length and bones. It is rough skin. He is crocodile teeth and egg-white eyes, lying there, drowning on the bed (WNNN p. 90).

The loathsome attitude of Darling towards the sick father explains why she tries to hide him from her friends by telling lies of being unwell herself. But the attitude changes to that of sympathy and love when Darling's friends press hard and get into the house and see the sick man. At the expression of love by the children, "there is a strange light in his sunken eyes, like he has swallowed the sun"(p. 103), Bulawayo conveys a message of love, solidarity and support as a way of dealing with AIDS as opposed to stigmatization and condemnation and isolation. Woven around an episode of Darling's father's ill-health is the menacing desperation and fraud of the fake Prophet Revelations Bitchington Mboro who makes outrageous demands of money in US Dollars or Euros, since the Zimbabwean Dollar has lost its value, to exorcise the spirit that has possessed the man. Turning into religion to seek succor from the ravages of economic pestilence is the option available to the dispossessed. Darlings mother goes to the border to sell while Mother of Bones heads to Fambeki Mountain to fast and pray. The health sector is in crisis and the quarks and con man and diviners are on the prowl. The signpost to Vodloza's place is a text that resonates the crumbling foundations of the society, the stranglehold of ignorance on many of the marginalized of the society:

VODLOZA, BESTEST HEALER OF ALL OF THIS PARADISE AND BEYOND AND WILL PROPER FIX ALL THESE PROBLEMS SOME THINGS THAT YOU MAY ENCOUNTER IN YOUR LIFE; BE-WITCHEDNESS, CURSES, BAD LUCK, WHORING SPOUSES, CHILDLESSNESS, POVERTY, JOBLESSNESS, AIDS, MADNESS, SMALL PENISES, EPILEPSY, BAD DREAMS, BAD MARRIAGE/MARRIAGELESSNESS, COMPETITION AT WORK, DEAD PEOPLE TERRORIZING YOU, BAD LUCK WITH GETTING VISAS ESPECIALLY TO USA AND BRITAIN, NONSENSEFUL PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE, THINGS DISAPPEARING IN YOUR HOUSE ETC. ETC. ETC. PAYMENT IS IN FOREX ONLY (WNNN p.106).

In this signpost, the social-economic malaise and their attendant problems are inscribed; and Vodloza has a cure for all of them. The anomie that characterised life in Zimbabwe at the time mirrored this in this novel. Zimbabwe was troubling enough for many to seek spiritual help from self-styled healers and Revelations Bitchington Mboro's church in this sense is not different from the advertised limitlessness of Vodloza's capability to heal. Of particular note is the demand for payment in Forex by both Vodloza and the prophet whose full name is a mockery. This demand is a full Echo of the decimated economy by western sanctions on Zimbabwe over the dictatorial rule and human rights abuses by Robert Mugabe's regime. The total collapse in the value of the country's currency and the use of the US dollars is captured in Mother of Bones agony in holding onto the valueless currency:

"What I don't understand is how this is very money that I

have in lumps cannot buy even a grain of salt... And the American money they are talking about just where do they think I'll get it do they think I can just dig up huh do they think I will defecate" (WNNN, p. 24 – 25).

This morning that is useless to the people collocates with the squalid conditions in Paradise. A concourse of interrelated developments gives shape to the urgency of abjection in Paradise nay Zimbabwe. The climate of political instability and economic depression fuels it and the cheapening of fuel is imperative for change in the country. This, for meaningful change, is a great expectation among the shanty dwellers of Paradise, who have been badly disenfranchised and emasculated. With the expected change, comes the promise of a better life awaiting the people. But all of this is dashed and the people are crestfallen again as "...the change did not happen. And then those men came for Bornfree (p. 135). Bornfree, a stripling courageous youth who ignites the expectation of great change in Paradise is an agent of the opposition. But he is cruelly murdered by the pied pipers of the dictators. His death is a typical instance of abjection in the story as well as a sad commentary on the intolerant political climate in Zimbabwe. In it (Bornfree's death), a symbol of hope is destroyed and the adults left forlorn: "when you look into their faces it's like something was there got up and gathered its things and walked away"(p. 135). They are stranded as empty shells. The disillusionment of the excited congregation of PRMB's Holy Chariot in Fambekiis even more dramatic as "...the voices of worship is folded like a butterfly's wings, and the worshipers trickle-down Fambeki like broken bones and dragged themselves away..."(p. 137).

From the vantage point of the tree where Darling and her friends are, the reader has a clear picture of the burial of Bornfree in Heavenway Cemetery. The description of the grave and itself, by sheer number of people brought for burial

there as though they were struggling to help themselves to free bags of food. The age range of the dead, the cruel harvest of AIDS, the anger and grief, and the madness of MaDube, Bronfree's mother, the elegiac mood, general feeling of disappointment, etc, build up a situation of hopelessness. The epitaph on Bornfree's grave indicates that not only was he 25 years of age but also that the political upheavals become unfair and violent election took place in 2008: "BORNFREE LIZWE TAPER, 1983 – 2008, RIP OUR HERO. DIED FOR CHANGE." (p. 139). To demonstrate the repressive style of Robert Mugabe, the children characters in the narrative dramatize the gruesome Killing of Bornfree by agents of the regime who are antithetical to the idea of change interpreted by them (the agent) to mean selling out the country. Re-enacting the gruesome murder of Bornfree with the children as the murderers has its significance of painting the grim political realities of Zimbabwe under Robert Mugabe. But the children do not identify with this cruelty, though they act it out as it had taken place in the full glare of the people.

"The Godknows swings a hammer, making a straight line in the air. It hits Bornfree at the back of the head and I heard the sound of something breaking. Sbho swings an axe and hooks him at the side, above the ear. Next a machete catches Bornfree in the face, splits from the eye to the chin. Then we are just all on him. Trashing beating pounding, knobkerries whacking all over... In all these, Bornfree doesn't even make a sound"(p.141).

The violent attacks on the opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) whose flag bearer was Morgan Tsvangirai in the 2008 elections were a watershed development that received international condemnation. Through voter fraud and violence, the regime stopped the opposition from winning the election and the

crisis that ensued brought about the creation of the office of Prime Minister for Tsvangirai, while Mugabe still held the reins of power as president. Agents of Mugabe unleashed terror on those that opposed him or supported the change mantra of the MDC.

4. ABJECTION OF THE MARGINAL IMMIGRANT

Oppressive home conditions of lack, insecurity and uncertainty and the instigators of mass exile and flight of migration and departure: "Look at them leaving in droves" (pp. 145, 146), in the narrative. The story reveals that abject conditions of the home country are an integral part of the personality of the immigrants and a factor in the perception and reception by the host country. America is Darling's dream and as she leaves Paradise and joins Fostalina in Detroit, Michigan: "Destroyed Michigan", she can only relate to America in reference to her Paradise and Zimbabwe. Through these references, the reader sees both the lack and misery of home, on the one hand, and the uncertainty and marginal existence of the immigrants, on the other. Highly accentuated in Darling's experience in America is a strong sense of home, an irresistible nostalgia of the folklife in Paradise, the hunt for food and guavas. Yet returning to Paradise is challenged by the illegal status in America and the prospect of not being allowed back to the country. This ambiguity towards home and the peripherality of the immigrants as seen in Darling and Fostalina by the menial jobs they do make them conflicted, unsure of themselves, feeling rejected by America.

This feeling of discomfort with her immigrant marginality is conveyed through repugnant imagery. For instance, Fostalina's walkouts are compared to the wanderings of MaDube's, whose madness in Paradise was the consequence of the killing of Bornfree her son. Fostalina dieting makes her emaciated to the level her partner Uncle Kojo protests; "Look at you, bones bones bones. All bones. And for what? They are not even Africans, those women you are doing like..." (p. 151). Again, she is

compared to Darling's father's emaciated conditions during his grave illness with AIDS: "...[s]he will begin to look like Father's bones, groaning there on the bed and just waiting to die" (p. 155). Still in reference to bones, before Darling's journey to America, Mother of Bones has taken to the dinner Vodloza who ties a bone attached to the rainbow-colored string" (p. 150) round her waist as a weapon but which had to be thrashed at the airport in America on arrival. The bones represent to Darling misery and dissonance; they convey a sense of disapproval, loneliness, and detachment from vitalizing 'flesh' that makes life a pleasurable experience. The bone is broken and thrashed in the airport emblematises a rejection of bone as abject by Aunt Fostalina; and her losing weight becomes that futile attempt to make American society accept her as part of it.

Description of persons and their countenance by the child narrator has a relationship with their condition; and for the immigrants particularly in the US, Prince from Zimbabwe looks battered with scars from burns, looking much older than he is; "his face is hard and terrible and the light in his eyes is gone, like the snow maybe sneaked in there and put it out" (p. 155). When this is juxtaposed with the heroine's feeling of anger and self-loathing from being teased by her schoolmates in Washington about her accent, dressing, language, etc, and the harder teasing and ridicule a boy, Tom that sends him into committing suicide in school, the reader sees the emptiness, ubiquitous in the novel suggests. The typical case of immigrant frustration in the novel is the story of Tsaka Zulu, who had sold most of his father's property to enable him to travel to the United States. A patient at Shadybrook Mental asylum, his degenerating dementia and aggressive, illusive nationalism, is an indication of his trauma. But Tsaka Zulu just like Uncle Kojo and the child narrator feels great and normal when with people of his country (they are real in their identity with their countrymen and women –talk about the bonding of country-men in exile). His

tragic end is a rejection of the aggressive and violent nationalism the author rejects.

The menial jobs that the illegal immigrants do in America are among the things that assault Darling's concept of America; while in Paradise they are among the things that embarrass him, and about which she chooses not to talk about when her friends call from home, "because they make America not feel like My America, the one I had always dreamed of back in Paradise" (p. 188). The jobs are undignifying and the working conditions unfair: "And the jobs we worked, Jesus – Jesus – Jesus, the jobs we worked. Low-paying jobs. Back-breaking jobs. Jobs that gnawed at the bones of our dignity devoured the meat, tongued the marrow" (p. 244). These jobs done by the immigrants characterise their abjection. Around the jobs are the filth, danger, death, loss of dignity, drudgery, diseases; "We took irons and ironed our pride flat" (p. 244).

Yet in the violent insult of America, it is still a better prison for the child narrator, hence, "And when things only got worse in our country, we pulled our shackles even tighter and said, We are not leaving America, no, we are not leaving" (p. 246). Also disgusting to the child narrator are wounds in Biology just like other things that semiotize the undignifying conditions of her life both in Zimbabwe and America. In the context of her situation in America, Aunt Fostalina writes her to read medicine or nursing or law, meaningful careers that count and will make darling fulfilled. But the narrator has no passion for any of these.

Paradise is still stuck in Darling's memory even though she cannot afford to travel home. The long rebuke by the mother and grandmother against the rationale for fleeing home underscores the position of Bulawayo, which is to stay back in your country and nurture it out of abjection, by struggling to create the conditions for the needed change. "If it's your country, you have to have it to live in it and not leave it. You have to fight for it no matter what, to make it right" (p. 286). The metaphor of the Ncuncu, the stray dog of Bornfree being

brutally killed in the accident, is a gory sight that represents decadent Zimbabwe, the fractured dreams of the disillusioned people who appear to have truly lost their country.

5. DARLING, THE CHILD WORKER

The immigrant experience in the novel is that of dislocation and discontinuity and rootlessness, the disconnection from home on the strength of their illegal status a factor, the terrible circumstances of their home country, the main factor, cultural loss of generations born in exile who have no touch with their roots, customs and traditions. The feeling of being abject in America has a unique hue. Although there is abundant food unlike Zimbabwe ravaged by hunger, the immigrant from an abject country is a psychological wreck in view of their marginality, lack of acceptance by the American society, as in the case of Uncle Kojo who in spite of having spent 32 years in America, studied in the college in the country, his son TK, citizen by birth does not still have the papers (green card or citizenship status). And Uncle Kojo also has serious psychological problems, an unending craving for traveling needlessly.

Morgan's remark to Darling that, "[Y]ou're like all the other kids and all but then you're still different. You're not full of shit. It's an American thing, ain't it?" (p. 25), profile the African immigrant's edifying background and America's ill-preparedness to accept her. The child worker is disgusted by the filth in washing bottles.

6. LANGUAGE AND STYLE

Central to exploring the style of this bildungsroman by Bulawayo is the understanding that the language is mobilized to poignantly delineate the despicable conditions in Zimbabwe and the problem of the peripherality of the immigrant in America, coming from the abject milieu of a postcolonial dysfunctional state like Zimbabwe. First, the author gives us an insight into the traumatic experiences in the country through the viewpoint of a child whose

innocence, deprivation and encounters profile background of neglect and atrophy. Hunger is the unseen character, yet the loudest among the children in Paradise. Disease, premature death, lack of educational system, non-functional healthcare system, incessant strikes, political violence, electoral fraud, religious dubiety and ignorance and superstition and hopelessness form the social and economic canvas against which the people of Zimbabwe exist; these are also instigators to the plight and exile in the text.

There is the use of child language in the novel as rendered where there are duplications to foreground a message. The following are examples.

- "she [Chipo] is not mute-mute" (p. 2).
 "...but that was not stealing-stealing" (p. 5).
 "...the sun is ironing us and ironing us and ironing us". (p. 5).
 "He ching-choningsching-chonings" (p. 45).
 "Now the lorry is gone-gone" (p. 57).
 "...and we laugh and we laugh and we laugh" (p. 62).
 "...and takes and takes and takes pictures" (p. 62).
 "...in ,my dream which is not a dream-dream" (p. 65).
 "It wasn't laughing-laughing" (p. 92).
 "On and on and on and on and on and on and on and on and on ononononon onononononononon" (p. ?)
 "...dead and gone-gone scares me" (p. 9)
 "My Lamborghini, Lamborghini, Lamborghini Reventon! (p. 111).
 "We jump and we jump and we jump" (p. 126).
 "...and rummages and rummages and rummages" (p. 130).
 "Waited and waited and waited" (p. 135).
 "Hitting hittinghitting" (p. 141).
 "Jesus, he has died death" (p. 143).

There is the use replacement to refer to already mentioned expressions, like 'kaka country' (p. 13), 'kaka toilet' (p. 12), 'kaka school' (p. 13),

'kaka place (p. 14), 'cheap kaka' (p. 46), 'kaka buttocks' (p. 53).

A major stylistic strategy in the text is naming, both places and characters. Budapest is reminiscent of the Hungarian city known for its beauty which but which was ravaged by the economic meltdown. Destroyed Michygen is the auto city of the United States that was provided by the economic meltdown that started in 2008.

CONCLUSION

The eschatological aesthetics in the novel have been used by Bulawayo to delineate the abject marginality of not only the Zimbabwean child but also the immigrant from underdeveloped countries who resides in the United States. From the solid realities of Paradise to the loneliness, lack of acceptance and the undignifying conditions abroad, those fleeing from home float precariously on the margins of a meaningful and fulfilling life. This statement is the message of the novel, the implication of which is the imperative of staying back to mend the broken country and work towards creating the needed conditions for its development. Bulawayo's style of using the child heroine in an environment of socio-political decadence weaves together to the problems of womanhood in the context of loose moral fabric occasioned by poor leadership and the degenerating state of economic immigrants as the other.

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