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RESEARCH ARTICLE

SCHOLARLY LITERARY CRITICISM ON ZIMBABWE'S POST-INDEPENDENCE REALITIES IN NoVIOLET BULAWAYO'S NOVEL, *WE NEED NEW NAMES*: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The child narrator is a popular narrative technique in children's literature, especially magical stories and fantasies. However, most authors prefer adult narrators when narrating issues like political instability, gender-based violence, the AIDS scourge and religious exploitation, as this voice projects a feeling of seriousness and authority of experience to potentially attract a bigger readership, especially the adults in the society. Nevertheless, child narrators are an interesting choice because of the degree of emotions they inject in a story, which gives it an earnest tone and makes the reader want to empathize and sympathize with the narrator. Further, since their identities are in the process of formulation, the reader can see, understand and critique how ideologies play a role in the formation of identities and worldviews. Child narrators also appeal to child readers who form a large section of any country's population and future leadership. The objective of this study was to critic the deployment of the child narrative voice in No Violet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013) in presenting Zimbabwe's post-independence realities. This study critiqued the effectiveness of the child narrator in presenting, representing and (re)presenting experiences of and challenges faced by Zimbabweans within their country and diaspora. The study targeted blooming authors who are hesitant to use child narrators as the protagonists in their works, and readers and critics who might be interested in discovering ways in which child narrators can be used by an author to address myriad concerns.

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INTRODUCTION

We Need New Names is set in Zimbabwe in the years after her independence. The author, Elizabeth Zandile Tshele, prefers to go by the pseudonym NoViolet Bulawayo. "No" in her Ndebele language means "with", whereas Violet is the name of her late mother. In an interview with Ben Greenman on 19th March 2014, Bulawayo said that she chose to call herself NoViolet, to mean "with Violet" in memory of her mother who died when she was 18 months old. Bulawayo, her second name, is a reminder of her yearned-for home city in Zimbabwe, home to the Ndebeles. Bulawayo was born in Zimbabwe but moved to the United States when she was 18 years old to attend college. She left her father and siblings back home and joined her aunt. Upon returning to her motherland thirteen years later, all she could see around her was mere disillusionment. In an interview with *The Guardian* (2016) she states that:

> It was a strange country, I went there in search of the Zimbabwe I knew and it was a shock: power cuts, water cuts, just driving down the streets the potholes were amazing, and 80% of the population not working. Just seeing the desperation, wherever you went, people were struggling. That was a picture of the country that I never knew […] my generation is known as the born free generation: we really don't buy this stance against the west because we are aware of our problems, and our problems are really specifically home grown.

Svetlana (2001), observes that there are two types of nostalgia, restorative and reflective nostalgia. The former stresses *nostos* (home) and attempts a trans-historical reconstruction of the lost home. The latter thrives on *algia* (the longing itself) and delays the homecoming -wistfully, ironically, desperately. Bulawayo had longed to go back to her home country. She was filled with restorative nostalgia; the kind of longing to be home and relive the beautiful moments she once had in her country. Unfortunately, political turmoil had taken a toll of her country. She coined the term "born free," to refer to the Zimbabweans like herself who were born after the country gained her

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independence. The freedom is however a mirage, since it worsened things for them. The state of the country was more deplorable than before; high poverty levels, the AIDS scourge, unemployment, poor health facilities and political instability were among a host of many other problems affecting her country. Literature can be used to bring to the attention of the masses the happenings in the society. Probst (1998) notes that while we read literature, some of our beliefs concerning the world are re-affirmed, modified, or even refuted. Bulawayo, through her novel, brings to the attention of her readers the experiences of Zimbabweans at home and the diaspora. The issues she represents in her text can be said to be raising awareness about the experiences of Zimbabweans. During a television interview with Greenman (2014) Bulawayo confessed that: "I must say I come from a place with colourful names […] in the title of the book I was trying to speak to the need of the new ways of imagining our identities, new ways of seeing the world and seeing our future." It is evident that Bulawayo was trying to reach out to the masses concerning the plight of Zimbabwe and its citizens. My study will therefore examine how the author portrays the various images of Zimbabwe in public imaginaries and how the characters she chooses negotiate their identities and realities as Zimbabweans. Zimbabwe, formerly Southern Rhodesia, is a landlocked country in southern Africa. It is a former British colony that earned her independence in 1980. The country has to date had two presidents, the first president being Robert Mugabe and the current president is Emmerson Mnangagwa. Zimbabwe is mainly composed of two major ethnic groups, the Shona and the Ndebele. The Shona are the largest group and they live in the northern part of the country. The Ndebele occupy the south-western part of Zimbabwe, primarily the city of Bulawayo. The Ndebele have borne the brunt of being in the opposition. Minority Rights Group International (2018) postulates,

> Throughout the implosion of Zimbabwe's economy, which accelerated in 2000, the Ndebele people, prominent among the opposition MDC and distrusted by the government of President Robert Mugabe, continued to feel the brunt of his regime. Prior to elections in 2002, human rights organizations reported that the ZANU-PF allegedly threatened the Ndebele with starvation, and a document surfaced which allegedly contained a plan to exterminate the Ndebele. [http://minorityrights.org/minorities/ndebele/]

It is evident from the above observation that the Ndebele have been a disadvantaged ethnic community for a long time. Their allegiance to the opposition worsened matters for them. Described as Zimbabwe's largest minority, the Ndebele comprise around 17% of Zimbabwe's total population. Other minority groups include the Tonga, Sotho, Venda and Hlengwe. The realities that inform what Zimbabwe is inform the content of Bulawayo's novel and my reading of it.

Research Objective

The research objective was: To critic the deployment of the child narrative voice in NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013) in presenting Zimbabwe's post-independence realities.

Synthesis of related literature on scholarly literary criticism on zimbabwe's post-independence realities: Amongst all the issues central to the Zimbabwean post-independence crisis is land. Musongah (2012) identifies land alienation as one of the most emotive issues that arose from Mugabe's dictatorial regime. Wines (2011) captures the intricacy of land issues in Zimbabwe in his *New York Times* article. It is worth noting that most scholars who have studied Zimbabwe's realities have tackled it from the economic and political angles, but few have delved into literary studies. This therefore presents me an opportunity of examining how literary writers represent issues affecting Zimbabwe as a country. Speaking with a Zimbabwean context in mind, Magosvongwe (2013) uses African-centred frameworks to critically analyse how selected black and white Zimbabwean-authored fictional narratives published between 2000 and 2010 against the backdrop of Zimbabwe's post-2000 land redistribution processes depict and project issues of land and identity in the post-independence phase. She takes the land question beyond the 1990s by exploring Zimbabwean writers' perception of the post-2000 land redistribution exercise including its aftermaths, as well as the relationship between land and identity in the Zimbabwean context. She also examines how the selected post-2000 Zimbabwean-authored fictional narratives depict land experiences. Her main focus is the influence of these writers towards shaping people's conceptions of their human worth and dignity, including the well-being of their communities for sustainable development. Magosvongwe observes that excluding white-authored narratives responding to the land question similarly entrenches existing racial binaries. She therefore discusses how both the black and white authors deal with the land issue. My study will go beyond the land issue as a form of identity among the Zimbabweans.

Another great source of crisis faced by Zimbabweans as a result of dislocation mainly due to land issues is migration. In "*We, Afropolitans*" Eze, focusing on Darling, observes that diasporic subjects face many challenges when navigating diasporic locatedness, an integral aspect of Zimbabwe's history. Toivanen (2015) also identifies Bulawayo as a third-generation novelist who features the theme of mobility in her novel. She argues that despair in *We Need New Names* is a manifestation of the post-independence crisis that pervades the Zimbabwean nation, a consequence of colonization. By affiliating her characters with national identities, she argues, Bulawayo presents suffering in her novel as a consequence of Africa's colonization by Europe and its legacies in the post-independence era. Thus, unhomeliness in Zimbabwe and the resultant nostalgia are post-colonial realities that mark Zimbabwe. Mavezere (2014) considers these endless migrations in search for 'greener pastures' as a search for Utopia, as reminiscent in Darling's disillusioning experiences in America as an illegal immigrant. Chipfupa (2016) further argues for a consideration of name changing in *We Need New Names* as a result of migration reveals the feelings of unbelonging that confronts many Zimbabwean migrant subjects. Frassinelli (2015) also addresses the issue of migration facing many Africans in the post-independent moment. He focuses on how borders in the novel *We Need New Names* become strategies of navigating the translatedness of migrant subjects. He also discusses how Bulawayo presents us with characters who have the capacity to manipulate language to navigate their multiculaturalism.

Apart from migration, another post-independence reality faced by Zimbabweans is poverty. Butale (2015) examines the similarities and differences between fictional representations of poverty in Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe. In reference to the selected stories from Zimbabwe, his main focus is poverty

in the urban areas. Butale discusses how literary writers have expounded on the effects of high poverty levels in the Zimbabwean urban centres. He addresses the complexity of poverty; both as a socio-economic problem as well as a hindrance to development. My study intends to discuss many other issues in Zimbabwe, other than poverty. These include power struggles, disillusionment, the AIDS scourge and stigma associated with it, religious exploitation and sexual exploitation. The excesses of these difficult conditions are linguistically mediated in Bulawayo's text as will be discussed.

Ngoshi (2016) reads *We Need New Names* as a carnivalesque of post-colonialism's vulagarities. She reads the grotesque portrayal of the characters in the novel and the vulgar speech they utter as well as the excesses they demonstrate as symbolizing marginalised subjects' moments of agency. She argues that vulgarity and the carnivalesque are stylistic choices made by Bulawayo to symbolize protest in the novel. These techniques, she suggests, are subversive in the sense that they counter social norms that inform Zimbabweans' performance of their selfhoods and national belonging. Other than language, Arnett (2016) examines how photography and videography in the context of Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* function as stylistic techniques critique the humanitarian industry's privatization of aid and charity has created expectations about Africanness that has resulted in the commodification of pain and suffering. His witty categorization of the representation of pain in the novel and to the West as a performance presents an avenue for reading portrayal of pain and suffering in the novel as an act of protest. Eze (2016) unravels the ethical dilemma that surrounds what he considers Bulawayo's vulgar portrayal of poverty in *We Need New Names* to appeal to a Western audience, a factor that needs to be critically interrogated through a re-reading of *We Need New Names*.

The marginalization of women is another reality facing Zimbabweans and Murray (2017) views *We Need New Names* as a textual resistance to patriarchy. Her paper explores shame, silence and gender violence as markers of patriarchal domination over women. She reads the violence meted out on women as grounded in the Zimbabwean society at the discursive, epistemic and institutional levels. She views this violence against women as transcending various boundaries including age and class. This paper suggests an approach to *We Need New Names* that looks at this text as a place where women's voices break the silence and transcend the shame imposed on women who have been victims of violence and patriarchy.

Similarly, Nyambi (2014) uses Valerie Tagwira's novel *The Uncertainity of Hope* (2006) to delve into the experiences of women who are caught up in a volatile and economic and political situations in Zimbabwe. She discusses how this crisis has affected the women in terms of their female identity formation and how the impact of these transformations on the women's socio-economic problems. She also studies how this has made the women vulnerable in the context of Zimbabwe's post 2000 economic crisis. Her study is confined to the effects of unstable governments on the identities of its womenfolk. This ignores the effects on men and children, which I intend to discuss in my research. Moolla (2016) studies *We Need New Names* as a novel that shows how women experience nationalism. Focusing on culture, Moolla argues that Zimbabwean diasporic subjects experience nationalism and identity transformation through the familiar. For Moolla, food is one such technique that Bulawayo applies in her text as a strategy to negotiate the hybridization of Zimbabwe through colonization and Europeanisation of its people and culture. Isaacs (2016) reads *We Need New Names* as a text that mediates women's global existence. She argues that the novel strategically transmits an affect through social media platforms to question the disembodied and de territorialised spaces engendered by digital networks. She also reviews these digital platforms as spaces that enable Darling to process and come to terms with her nostalgia as a dislocated subject.

Bulawayo's novel has also been criticized within post-colonial discourses as a novel that addresses Zimbabwe's place in the global world. For example, Ndlovu (2016) examines *We Need New Names* as a postcolonial text that treats Zimbabwe as a failed experiment of cosmopolitanism, thus its history is tragic. A good example can be derived from Musanga's (2017) study, which presents a literary analysis of how ordinary Zimbabweans conceive of their country's relations with China. He reads this narrative of China as a subversion of ZANU-PF's development policies that conceals a dictatorial agenda. He notes that though this rhetoric has been presented as promising by the state, the ordinary Zimbabweans' voices have been silenced in public discourses. Thus he reads the children characters' contemplation of these issues in *We Need New Names* as reminiscent of ordinary Zimbabweans' contestation of this agenda. This calls for an examination into how through jokes, humour, catchphrases, anecdotes, *We Need New Names* questions how the ordinary Zimbabwean is neo-colonised by so-called socialist enterprises. Ndlovu (2012) also reads the text as an example of how writers commodify their culture as literary capital to gain the attention of a Western audience. In her novel, he argues, Bulawayo tackles the standards set by the literary marketplace that determine who becomes a superstar writer or not. His research suggests a possibility for inquiring into how through equipping her characters with a sarcastic tone, Bulawayo strategically exoticises Zimbabwe, its history and her people to counter dominant narratives that misrepresent Zimbabwe. One such issue which has been commodified is the narrative of AIDS. Musongah (2012), who mainly discusses how the AIDS pandemic has wreaked havoc in Zimbabwe, explores the conditions that have aggravated the situation in Zimbabwe. Musongah highlights a number of issues that have made the situation overwhelming, including deplorable healthcare services mainly due to the economic crisis as a result of the authoritarian rule of her former president, Robert Mugabe.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study involved a critical reading of the novel *We Need New Names* (2013) which was treated as primary data. Secondary data was obtained through library and desk top research. Therefore, the study adopted a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research involves the study of things in their natural settings in an attempt to interpret them. This kind of research aims at understanding the social realities of groups, individuals and cultures as its participants experience it. Qualitative research was therefore appropriate in my study, since literary data is mainly non-numerical. Creswell (2014) defines qualitative research as an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. He further states that the process of qualitative research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting,

data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data. The target population was Darling, the protagonist in the novel, and the other child narrators namely Godknows, Sbho, Chipo, Stina and Bastard. The text *We Need New Names* by Bulawayo was purposively selected despite the availability of other literary texts with a child narrative voice. This is because the novel has a child protagonist. It also addresses the various issues in post-independent Zimbabwe that the study wanted to discuss. The study focused on Bulawayo's representation of the experiences of Zimbabweans during the post-independence era in the context of *We Need New Names*. This was conducted through analyzing events as depicted by Darling and other child characters in the novel. The study mainly focused on Darling and the other child narrators namely GodKnows, Sbho, Chipo, Stina and Bastard. They were deliberately picked on because the study intended to discuss the child narrative voice. Darling and her friends were all children, aged between nine and eleven.

Data collection was done through a close critical text analysis of *We Need New Names* (2013), by NoViolet Bulawayo and other secondary sources like online journals, theses, dissertations and newspaper articles. The researcher also listened to interview clips with the author, carried out by the press. Data was also collected through note-making as the researcher interacted with the primary and secondary data sources. The collected data was presented by a logical sequence of discussions. Analysis of the data was done by organizing information in a logical sequence and eventually presenting them as themes. These themes were presented and discussed according to the findings from each research question. The tenets of post-colonial and narratology theories guided the researcher in the discussion of the objectives of the study. Information obtained from different sources and used in this research was acknowledged in order to avoid plagiarism.

Scholalry literary criticism on child narrative voice on zimbabwe's post-independence realities in noviolet bulawayo's novel. "*we need new names*"

Preview: The novel under study, *We Need New Names,* is geographically set in Zimbabwe and America, although other landscapes are narrated within the text. Zimbabwe, formerly Southern Rhodesia is a landlocked country in southern Africa. Zimbabwe was named Rhodesia after Cecil Rhodes, who played a key role in its creation. It is a former British colony which earned her independence in 1980. Zimbabwe is ethnically composed of two major ethnic communities, the Shona and the Ndebele. There are however other smaller ethnic communities like the Sotho, Venda and Hlengwe. The Shona are the largest ethnic community and they live in the northern part of the country. The Ndebele occupy the south-western part of Zimbabwe, primarily around the city of Bulawayo. According to Nations Encyclopaedia, the Shona comprise Zimbabwe's largest minority, making up around 16% of the total population.

Historically, the novel is set in the early 2000s, a few years after Zimbabwe got its independence. This period is key in understanding Zimbabwe's post-independence realities as it is a time when the country faced innumerable challenges, ranging from health crises, joblessness, indigence, political instability and a host of other problems. The events in the story revolve around and are influenced by these post-independence realities and the novel, against this backdrop, reflects on and deconstructs the realities of this historical period of Zimbabwe. The mimetic potential of Bulawayo's novel in terms of its historicity can be understood through Thiong'o (1972) observation that, "[a] writer responds, with his [sic] total personality to a social environment which changes all the time. Being a kind of sensitive needle, he registers, with varied degrees of accuracy and success, the conflict and tensions in his [sic] changing society […]. For the writer himself [sic] lives in, and is shaped by, history" (47). Evident from Thiong'o's observations above are two key issues. Firstly, that the novelist is arguably male, and secondly, that history is an adult and masculine practice. The fact that Bulawayo is a woman and the story in her novel is told by a child female narrator makes her novel deconstructive and revisionist.

The post-colonial novel is regarded as deconstructive and revisionist because in its original form, this genre was created to refute the mis-representation of the colonial subject by the White coloniser. This trend was especially prevalent in the creative output of the first generation of African writers like Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o among others. Marandi and Shadpour (2011) observe the following about Achebe:

> Achebe, of course, did not believe in the stereotypes that European writers have created about Africa in their works. Hence, he has always been trying to create a new Africa, one which is closer to reality. As a writer he believes in certain rules and obligations. He believes that in societies in which solidarity and community is more important than individuality, the didactic potential of novels is very important. (2-3)

What emerges in the observation above by Marandi and Shadpour is that most African post-colonial writers attempt to portray an image of Africa that is true to its realities as opposed to images of Africa in Western colonial/imperialist discourses. These post-colonial African writers often narrate the challenges, triumphs and nature of post-colonial selves and environment from an African perspective. However, in the post-independence era the novel has evolved in ways that capture more contemporary realities that are not necessarily hinged on colonisation. The dominant narratives that these post-colonial novels contest, and the hegemonic cultures that the post-colonial subjects narrated therein negotiate, are some of the factors that lead to the post-colonial novel being considered as a subversive text. This deconstruction is often facilitated by post-colonial subjects who often bear the characteristic of being exiles dislocated either physically, culturally, socially or politically from their homes, languages, cultures, localities, etc. The narrator becomes the mouth-piece that voices the above histories, identities, and realities.

The story is narrated from a first-person point of view (focalisation) by the main character, 10 year-old Darling, who also functions as a first person narrator. Her voice is complemented with the voices of other child characters. The experiences of Darling, which are portrayed in the novel, share similarities with those of Bulawayo, the writer of the novel. It is for this reason that the novel can be classified as an auto/biographical text. Fitzpatrick (2015) hints at the autobiographical nature of the novel by stating that, "[t]he

author of the novel's own name is representative of her ties to her homeland of Zimbabwe. Bulawayo's writing in *We Need New Names* is a conglomeration of her own personal life, the stories of those she knew, and the story meant to reach every immigrant, who like herself, needed a new name"(7). The text is divided into two parts; the first part narrates Darling's childhood in Zimbabwe, and the second part is about her life in the diaspora after migrating to the United States of America.

Bulawayo's diasporic location has rendered her novel *We Need New Names* as not only post-colonial, but also diasporic. The deconstructive capacity of her diasporic (post-colonial) novel to question norms, re-imagine histories, identities, and realities and to transform societies is best understood through Seraphinoff's (2007) view that "novels are a response to this loss of homes and fields, the uprooting of whole communities, this dispersion of the people, often in foreign lands where their children become assimilated and lose all memory of a lost homeland, a lost language and culture, way of life and identity "(2). In the same vein, my analysis in this chapter is based on the assumption that as a diasporic and post-colonial Zimbabwean writer, Bulawayo uses literature as an agential tool to voice the concerns of the Zimbabwean populace within and outside the country. Her novel further (re)imagines a Zimbabwe marked by utopia rather than the dystopia prevalent in Zimbabwe. To achieve this transformation, Bulawayo re-invents herself as a curator and historian. She then uses a child narrator who tells of a post-colonial reality shared by many post-independent nations. As I will show, Bulawayo intertwines historical facts and fiction in ways that complement each other to present a text that captures the post-colonial contemporary realities of Zimbabwe(ans).

Literary analysis seeks to examine how form facilitates the expression of content. Thus, my study appropriates both theories of form and content to show how Bulawayo makes use of specific formal components to represent particular issues affecting Zimbabweans. In view of the objective of this study, that is, to show how the child narrative voice/child focaliser narrates Zimbabwe(an)'s histories, identities and post-independence realities, my analysis of Bulawayo's novel in this study was guided by narratology as a theory of form and post-colonial theories as theories of content. To begin with, narratology theory serves as a theoretical lens that will be used to show two narrative aspects; narrator/narrative voice and point of view/focalisation serve as narrative techniques that facilitate the representation of history, identity and post-independence realities. I will demonstrate how the homodiegetic narrator, that is, Darling, tells a story in which she is a participant, giving a first-hand account of events as they unfold in the novel. This study to complement Darling's voice with voices of other child narrators who assist Darling in the narration of the events in the novel.

Darling and her friends are intradiegetic narrators. that is, they are inside the fictional world created by the story. I will show how these intradiegetic narrators front various issues as they unfold. Similarly, the events in Bulawayo's novel are portrayed predominantly from the point of view of child characters like Darling and her friends Chipo, Godknows, Sbho, Stina and Bastard. It is through the eyes of these children that we discover/learn how Zimbabweans navigate the everyday intricacies of life in Zimbabwe and in the diaspora, especially the alienation faced by Darling and other immigrants while in the United States of America. I sought to examine how their ages notwithstanding, the children manage to reflect on and voice issues deemed serious and 'adult' like political instability, abject poverty, religious exploitation and the AIDS scourge among other challenging realities that affect Zimbabweans' day to day encounters in their various homes in Zimbabwe (slums and suburbs) as well as the Zimbabwean diaspora.

As mentioned in this study, narratology only focuses on formal aspects of a text and not thematic concerns. To examine the content (thematic issues) in the text, in this case historical concerns, issues of identity and post-independent realities, requires another theoretical lens, hence my deference to post-colonial theory. My choice of post-colonial theory is informed by the post-independence setting of this novel. Thus, I read *We Need New Names* as a post-colonial text. Post-colonial theory guided my discussion of Zimbabwean histories, identities and post-independence realities. The post-colonial concepts that were used as theoretical lenses include subaltern, strategic essentialism, hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence and Otherness.

Strategic essentialism is a theoretical concept that Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak advances as an agential tool that subalterns can use to voice their struggles. By subalterns Spivak means those groups in any society invented as subordinate by a dominant group. A subaltern refers to the dominated or subordinate group(s) and is often applied to explain power relations the colonised as well as non-colonised societies. Closely related to subalternity is the concept of Othering, also advanced by Spivak. As quoted by Ashcroft et al (2000), Spivak (1985) defines Othering as "the process by which the empire can define itself against those it colonizes, excludes and marginalizes" (171). She uses this concept to express how the subalterns have been marginalised and pushed to the periphery of societies and discursive practices. In this study, I sought to discover how Othering emerges through cultural practices like religion, politics, etc that lead to the treatment of some members of the indigenous communities in ways that subordinate them to dominant groups. In Bulawayo's novel the following can be understood as subalterns: children, women, Black people, Zimbabwean citizens and the Ndebele. Conversely, the dominant groups are adults, men, the Whites, the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) Government and the Shona. Some of the strategies used as strategically essentialist to enable these subalterns speak are: child play, use of unique names, making claims to orality, etc. Strategic essentialism therefore, enables the subalterns to narrate history, an event that had previously been undertaken by the dominant groups.

Hybridity is a post-colonial theoretical concept advanced by Homi Bhabha. Hybridity is defined as the mixing of two cultures. The concept was first advanced by Bhabha to refer to colonial subjects especially from Asia who have been transformed through their exposure to both Eastern and Western cultures. A hybrid subject exhibits both indigenous and Western attributes. In its present usage, hybridity is used to refer to all colonial subjects as well as other individuals who have experiences any aspect of cultural mixing. Hybrid forms can be at the level of text, subjects, or languages. I intend to use this concept to discuss the identities and cultural post-independence realities in *We Need New Names* like religion and other traditions, specifically cultural practices like modes of dressing. I will examine how the concept of hybridity is realized through the mannerisms of religious leaders like

Prophet Revelations Bitchington Mborro, games that Darling and her friends engage in like Andy Over and the language which the children use.

Another post-colonial concept that will be used that is associated with Bhabha is the concept of mimicry. Bhabha (1984) defines mimicry as "the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is therefore the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which appropriated the Other as it visualises power" (7). He considers mimicry as the attempt of the colonized to be accepted by imitating the dress, behavior, speech, and lifestyle of the colonizers. It will be essential in the analysis of how Zimbabweans imitate western mannerisms like modes of dressing, manner of speaking and rituals during church services conducted by Prophet Revelations Bitchington Mborro, which while displaying aspect of Zimbabweans indigeneity, also borrow from Western religious services. In addition, the study will also use the concept of ambivalence which is advanced by Homi Bhabha.

Apart from Hybridity and mimicry, I also used the postcolonial concept of ambivalence as theorised by Bhabha. According to Bhabha (1984). [T]he discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference. The authority of that mode of colonial discourse that I have called mimicry is therefore stricken by an indeterminacy: mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is, thus, the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which "appropriates" the Other as it visualizes power. (126). Ambivalence basically describes the complex mix of attraction and repulsion which forms the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. This study sought to discover Zimbabweans' experiences of ambivalence by Zimbabweans in Zimbabwe and its diaspora by various characters beginning with Darling and her family, friends and neighbours as they interact with people from different backgrounds including ethnic, religious, and national. Post-colonial concepts like ambivalence, hybridity, mimicry and the others were used to analyse Zimbabwe's post-independence/contemporary realities. These realities are experienced by Zimbabweans both locally and in the diaspora.

The child narrative voice's representation of zimbabwe's post-independence realities

In this section, we deliberate on the strategies used by the child narrative voice in *We Need New Names* to represent the social, political and economic realities of post-independence Zimbabwe. I will use narratology and post-colonial theories to present my arguments. Most specifically, I will adopt Homi Bhabha's concepts of ambivalence, hybridity and mimicry together with Gayatri Spivak's concept of the other in post-colonial theory to discuss how the child narrative voice focalizes Zimbabwe's post-independence realities. Ambivalence is a concept advanced by Homi Bhabha to basically describe the complex mix of attraction and repulsion which forms the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. This ambivalence is observed in the diaspora as Darling interacts with people from different nationalities. It is also observed in her home country through the pastor in her church and her grandmother. Hybridity, as discussed earlier refers to the mixture of two different cultures, in this case the Western culture and that of the locals. Mimicry denotes the copying of another person's culture and in most cases it ends up looking ridiculous. I will discuss how the Zimbabweans are mimicking foreign cultures and the effects of this mimicry. Othering refers to the practice of excluding one on the basis of not belonging to a hegemonic group. Othering will be used to discuss social and religious realities in contemporary Zimbabwe. Some of the people considered as other that my study will focus on are the Ndebele, women and non-Christians. Post-colonial issues like exile and migration will also form part of my argument. Post-independence realities that I will foreground as characterising Zimbabwe is include: soaring levels of penury, the AIDS scourge, unemployment, moral decadence, and foreign invasion. Through Darling and her friends, the post-independence experiences of the Zimbabwean populace willbe analysed. To begin with, I will discuss the social realities in post-independent Zimbabwe as focalized by Darling and the other child narrators in *We Need New Names.* This will be followed by the discussion on political realities and to sum it up, the economic realities.

The social realities I intend to discuss include the AIDS scourge, stigma associated with AIDS, and suicide. To begin with I will discuss AIDS as a social reality in post-independent Zimbabwe. Darling's father comes back home from South Africa suffering from AIDS. She recounts,

> Father comes home after many years of forgetting us, of not sending us money, of not loving us, not visiting us, not anything us, and parks in the shack, unable to move, unable to talk properly, unable to anything, vomiting and vomiting and vomiting, Jesus, just vomiting and defecating on himself, and it smelling like something dead in there, dead and rotting, his body a black, terrible sick. (89)

Darling tells of the current state her bedridden father is in, after abandoning them for many years. The AIDS scourge is considerably a contentious issue in Zimbabwe because of the havoc it wreaked. Its spread can be attributed to the frequent border crossing that led to increased levels of immorality, as evident through Darling's father. In *We Need New Names*, Darling's father is one of the people who go crosses borders when he goes to South Africa to seek employment, only to disappear without a word and come back bed ridden. Moreover, the government's negligence towards the citizens' healthcare during Robert Mugabe's reign largely contributed to the spread of the virus. Musongah (2012) observes that,

> Mugabe's lack of appropriating funds to healthcare has also resulted in Zimbabwe suffering from a pandemic of AIDS and only over the last decade has there been a decrease in people suffering from AIDS. Research has shown that "the estimated number of adults (15–49years) living with HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe increased from 10,000 in 1984 to 1,710,000 in 1997 and 1998, thereafter decreasing to 1,391, 397 in 2005. (556)

The number of people affected by the AIDS pandemic as pointed out by Musongah above are immense. This is a clear indicator that the scourge is a national disaster. Tough economic times which have necessitated migration and break-up of families, consequently extra-marital affairs could be blamed for escalating the rates of infection in Zimbabwe as evident in *We Need New Names*. Darling's father, a graduate, insists on migrating to South Africa in search of a job.

Although the narrator does not overtly declare how her father got infected, we draw the conclusion that he gets infected in South Africa because Darling intimates that he returns home bedridden. In the novel, Darling reminisces about his reaction having remained jobless even after graduating from the university. In anger, he exclaims that: "[y]ou don't get it, do you? Is this what I went to university for?" (92). We therefore conclude that his pursuit for a job and better life as an immigrant in a foreign country leads to him getting infected with the HIV virus.

Another social reality in contemporary Zimbabwe is the stigma associated with AIDS. In the novel, the characters express fear over AIDS, so much so that they dare not mention its name publicly. When Darling's father comes back from South Africa ailing from AIDS-related symptoms, she is psychologically affected as she is forced to reduce her playtime to attend to him. She also fears being stigmatised if her friends find out what her father is suffering from. She therefore tries to hide it from them. When they force themselves into her house, Darling is uncomfortable. Her unease is evident in her confession as follows: "I am careful not to look anyone in the face because I don't want them to see the shame in my eyes, and I also don't want to see the laughter in theirs" (101). This declaration betrays Darling's chagrin due to her father's health condition. Fitzpatrick (2015)posits that:

> Bulawayo's use of names also correlates with the topic of AIDS in the novel as Darling and others refer to the disease as, "The Sickness". The use of 'The Sickness" in conjunction with AIDS signifies the very real taboo that surrounds AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa as well as Bulawayo calling attention to the taboo of AIDS by using a euphemism through a child's voice to demonstrate the social anxiety some hold in Zimbabwe when it comes to AIDS (8)

It is only the children who are daring enough to mention the name AIDS. Her friends, who are aware of the scourge in their country and how it affects their people, express a degree of sensitivity that the adults sometimes lack. This level of compassion comes out in Godknow's concession to Darling that "It's [her] father in there. He has the Sickness, [they] know" (99). Stina also tells Darling that there is "no use hiding the AIDS […]" (ibid).Thereafter, Darling confesses that when Godknows "mentions the Sickness by name, [she] feel[s] a shortness of breath" (ibid). Her inability to immediately accept empathy from the friends whom she expected to stigmatise her father and her is reflected in her body language as "[She] look[s] around to see if there are other people within earshot" listening to their conversation (100). It is obvious that Darling is embarrassed because of her father's state. The reluctance to accept AIDS as a social reality in Zimbabwe as represented in the novel is probably because the syndrome is considered a taboo and therefore nobody wants to be associated with it. Darling's description of her ailing father reveals the desperation in her to see him get better, and not to appear as the "bones" as she now refers to him.

> We don't speak. We just peer in the tired light at the long bundles of bones, at the shrunken head, at the wavy hair, most of it fallen off, at the face that is all points and edges from bones jutting out, the pinkish reddish lips, the ugly sores, the skin sticking to the bone like somebody ironed it on, the hands and feet like claws. (101)

The imagery in Darling's description above is striking as it brings to mind the picture of an individual on his deathbed. That Darling has to witness her father's deteriorating health is disturbing on many levels. Her friends are aware of that her father will soon die and they discuss his afterlife. As the children talk about the disease, they call it "the sickness", signifying the suspicion that shrouds those who suffer from it. Therefore, AIDS is a social reality wreaking havoc in Zimbabwe even though the people are afraid of openly discussing it, thus opting to give it alternative names. It has spread as a result of the high levels of immorality brought about by migration and cultural hybridity. Suicide is also a social reality in contemporary Zimbabwe. One of the reasons that push people to commit suicide as represented in the novel is discovery that one has contracted the HIV virus. Darling recalls one such girl who committed suicide because she had discovered that she had the disease. She comments, "[d]eath is not like that, it is final, like that girl hanging in a tree because as we later found out in a letter in her pocket, she had the [s]ickness and thought it was better to just get it over with and kill herself"(102). The adults, however, shy from discussing the scourge. It is something that can only be discussed in hushed whispers. Musongah (2012) suggests that the silence surrounding AIDS is due to it being considered"a cultural taboo"thus it is often referred to by"euphemisms, metaphors and colloquial expressions" (556). The children are aware of the challenges which the AIDS scourge is causing in their country. Darling observes that a person is supposed to live life to the fullest and grow old like her grandmother, Mother of Bones. Unfortunately the lives of young people have been cut short by the scourge which seems to sweep the population mercilessly. Darling hence says that:

> And when you know maths like me you can figure out the ages of the buried and see that they died young, their lives short like those of house mice […]it's that sickness that is killing them. Nobody can cure it so it just does as it pleases-killing, killing killing, like a madman hacking unripe sugarcane with a machete. (133)

In the above excerpt, Darling compares AIDS to a madman hacking unripe sugarcane to stress on the turmoil caused by the disease. It is a reality which the Zimbabweans have had to contend with for a long period. It is therefore not surprising that the young girl committed suicide upon discovering that she was infected with the HIV virus. Religious practises have also produced a host of social reality in Zimbabwe. Darling gives a first-hand account of the exploitation that the Zimbabweans have been subjected to by religious leaders. The local religious leaders have mimicked religious figures prevalent in Western Christian narratives in a bid to impress their congregation. The church members arrive in church "trying to look like angels in their flowing robes that have now lost their whiteness" (31). The arrival of the clergy is also accompanied by spectacle so that he is noticed by all. To Darling, this is just a charade. She says,

> [t]he Evangelists and Prophet Revelations Bitchington Mborro arrive after everybody, like chief baboons. They look like something else with the colourful crosses emblazoned on their robes, their long sticks with the hooks at the ends, their bald heads glimmering in the sun, the long beards; you can just tell that they are trying to copy the style of those men in the Bible. (32-33)

As Darling sits in church waiting for the service to begin, she already gives us a picture of adults pretending to be what they are not. The exploitative tendencies of these religious leaders, as symbolised byProphet Revelations Bitchington Mborro, render their performance a mockery of the values they pretend to profess. They resort to dubious means of minting money from their unsuspecting flock in the guise of prayer requests, claiming to ward off evil spirits and prosperity gospel. Their congregation, who are burdened with many problems easily get swayed by their cunning words and fall into their pastors' traps. For instance, Prophet Revelations Bitchington Mborro, the pastor in Darling's church, demands for five hundred U.S dollars so that he can pray for Darling's father when he returns home from South Africa. While they all know that Darling's father is suffering from an incurable disease, the prophet nevertheless capitalises on their desperation to mint money out of them. He claims that a bad spirit has got into Darling's father and that is what is "making him all bony and sick and taking his strength away" (98-99). Amongst other demands, the prophet also asks to be paid five hundred U.S dollars for him to cleanse Darling's father. He gives an option of Euros if the dollars are unavailable. In recognition of the economic influence on religion, Smith (1965) says that:

> Self-interest motivates clergy just as it does secular producers; that market forces constrain churches just as they constrain secular firms; and that the benefits of competition, the burdens of monopoly, and the hazards of government regulation are as real for religion as for any other sector of the economy. (24)

This self-interest that Smith describes is what motivates the clergy to prey on their flock, and pastor Bitchington is no exception. Smith's assessment above is testament to the pastor in Darling's church, who takes advantage of his congregation to amass wealth. As the offertory bowl is passed round, a member of the congregation begins singing "[b]lessed are the [g]ivers" (36). The text presents religion as a practice that is dogmatically enforced on the masses in post-independence times. For instance, Darling is coerced into accompanying her grandmother to church during Easter against her wishes. She comments, "I don't like going to church because I don't really see why I have to sit in the hot sun on that mountain and listen to boring songs and meaningless prayers and strange verses when I could be doing important things with my friends"(19-20). Despite the fact that she is a child, Darling is still able to question the essence of practising a religion she knows little of or cares about. Christianity, a Western culture introduced in Zimbabwe by Western missionaries, is alien to Darling. While contemporary Zimbabweans adopt some aspects of the new religion and combine with their own resulting into religious hybridity. The children do not understand the logic behind going to church but still do it because the adults like Darling's grandmother dictate so. Darling's ignorance about Christianity is revealed in the following thoughts that pervade her mind:

> Jesus Christ died on this day, which is why I have to be out here washing with cold water like this.[…] After I finish and dress, me and Mother of Bones will head off to her church. She says it's the least we can do because we are all dirty sinners and we are the ones for whom Jesus Christ gave his life, but what I know is that I myself wasn't there when it all happened, so how can I be a sinner? (19)

The innocence of a child forced to subscribe to a religion she knows nothing about is clearly evident. Her innocence is brought out when she states that she was not born when people committed sins, thereby should not be punished by being forced to go to church for the sinner's sake. Given a choice, Darling would rather go and play with her friends. Unfortunately because she is a child, she is not supposed to question any decision made by an adult. Religion, Christianity in particular, is an effect of colonisation. Religious hybridity has thus been achieved by Mother of Bones and other members of Prophet Revelations Bitchington Mborro when they sing African religious songs during their church services. Their modes of dancing are also Africanised. Darling comments, " [a]ll of them are on their feet now, singing and shuffling and swaying, singing and shuffling and swaying, like maybe they have caught the spirit, but if they have, then it skipped me"(33). The narrator portrays the Christianity practiced in Zimbabwe as lacking the ethical foundations that one would expect. The emptiness of its gestures are reminiscent in two observations. The first one is that in the novel, Jesus is portrayed as having blue eyes. The idea of Jesus being white is imposed on the locals through simulations of Jesus in images that grace Christian documents. The grown-ups do not question why Jesus is white. This might be because they also agree with the whites or they are also ignorant. For the children, it is still a mystery. Darling confesses to having painted the eyes of Jesus in the portrait brown so that he looks like everyone else. This earned her a whooping from her grandmother that she was unable to sit for two days. Upon seeing Jesus' picture Darling observes, "[a]fter the curtain comes the calendar; it's old but Mother of Bones keeps it since it has Jesus Christ on it. He has women's hair and is smiling shyly, his head tilted a bit to the side; you can tell he really wanted to look nice in the picture"(23). A Jesus who is not African leaves Darling confused as to why she should worship him. Her confusion infers that their going to church could be motivated by other issues other than delivery from sins. She believes that she is not a sinner and therefore during confession time she does not move forward to confess. Surprisingly, it is only women who go to confess.

Therefore, one is left wondering why only women are 'sinners'. Darling narrates, "I think of what I would say if I were to stand up right now, among the confessors, but then I realize I have no sins. Prophet Revelations Bitchington Mborro goes around touching each of the sinners-there's seven of them-on the forehead with his stick, and then sprinkles them with holy water before they confess" (37). According to Darling's description of the confession session above, it is evident that their prophet is mimicking the Roman Catholic practice of confession and the Father sprinkling holy water to the congregation during mass. Prophet Revelations Bitchington Mborro however does his confession in a humorous way. The secrecy of confession is not adhered to and as a result, the "sinners" end up being condemned by the congregation in undertones. Darling satirises the confession session through humour by recounting an anecdote about Simangele, a woman who confessed to have visited Vodloza the local healer to prevent her husband from being snatched. During her confession, someone sitting near Darling reacts, "[m]nnnc, serves you right, you think your kaka doesn't stink" (37). Further, it is humorous that Darling is a petty thief, but to her, that is not a sin. Religious hybridity has arisen because of the impoverished state of the Paradise dwellers. They seek refuge in religion and for people like their pastor/prophet it is a source of income. This corresponds with Okot's inquiry as quoted by Stirrat (1992) that "since Christianity was incomprehensible for the colonized, why did they go to the church? He [Okot]

responds that the colonized did not go to church for salvation from sin. In fact, he [ibid] believes they had no option, because the only way to wealth and power was through the church and these are the most important attractions of church for the African people" (367). Secondly, the narrator portrays the prophet as a semi-literate individual who takes advantage of his congregation. Similarly, the members of his church are gullible individuals who easily succumb to the prophet's machinations. They are illiterate and are therefore unable to challenge the prophet since they may not have grounds on which to challenge him. They are therefore forced to follow his sermons keenly and do as he commands them to do. To Darling, the prophet is a joker who exploits his congregation's ignorance. She remarks, "Prophet Revelations Bitchington doesn't spend much time on the Bible, maybe because he is afraid of running into a big word he won't know how to pronounce" (36). Darling is able to observe the prophet's body language and conclude that he is semi-literate and that is why he hardly refers to the Bible.

One effect of colonisation was the introduction of formal education and with it came religion. The colonised readily accepted Christianity and this led to most of them abandoning their cultural ways of worship, which were considered inferior. This can be termed as an aspect of Othering since the religion from the west was considered superior to that of the locals. It is perhaps the reason why the congregation in Darling's church is too engrossed in their pastor's charade and cannot question him. Marandi and Shadpour (2011) observe that the coloniser presupposed that the colonizers were heathen because they did not subscribe to a mainstream religion i.e. Christianity and that they just relied on mere superstition in the name of religion (2). Their sentiments can be considered valid from Darling's observations concerning her church. The people who go to Prophet Revelations Bitchington Mborro's church consider the traditional healer, Vodloza as a pagan and even condemn those who seek his services. Darling comments, "[w]e are waiting for Prophet Revelations Bitchington Mborro to pounce on Simangele for going to see a pagan, which is how he refers to Vodloza when we hear a woman's scream from down the mountain"(36). Darling, who is an intradiegetic narrator in this case as she forms part of the congregation, gives an account of the sexual abuse that goes on in her church. Their pastor is called Prophet Revelations Bitchington Mborro. Ngoshi (2016) observes, "The last part of his name, when spelt without the double "r", is the Shona word for the phallus. The prophet's obscene name is thus symbolic of the vulgarity of his religious authority. The vulgar nature of the prophet's practices manifests in his exaggerated behaviours" (5). The self-proclaimed prophet sexually abuses a woman in full view of his congregation, in the name of exorcising the demons in her. None of the members seem to notice, or perhaps pretend not to see anything wrong with this apart from Darling. She is sad the woman's clothes and new knickers will get dirty.

> Then Prophet Revelations Bitchington Mborro raises both his hands for everyone to be quiet. He points his stick at the pretty woman and commands the demon inside her to get the hell out in the name of Jesus, his exact words, and in his most loudest voice […] when nothing happens, he wipes his forehead with the back of his sleeve, throws the stick to the side, and leaps onto the woman like maybe he is Hulkogen, squashing her mountains beneath him. Prophet Revelations Bitchington Mborro prays for the woman like that, pinning her down and calling to Jesus and screaming Bible verses. He places his hands on her stomach, on her thighs, then he puts his hand on her thing and starts rubbing and praying hard for it, like there's something wrong with it… (40)

It is rather obvious from the above description, that no exorcism is taking place. The woman is stripped of her dignity when she is carried by men up the mountain, her dress flying exposing her nakedness. Her screams to be left alone are ignored. Darling seems to be the only person who pities her and feels embarrassed by the whole scenario. She says of the woman, "The pretty woman just looks like a rag now, the prettiness gone, her strength gone. I'm careful not to look at her face anymore because I don't want her to find me looking at her when she is like this" (40). Darling's description of the pastor's act of "exorcism" is a ridicule of his immoral actions. It is obvious from Darling's description that the pastor is manipulating his congregation into believing that he is actually exorcising demons when the reality is that he is sexually abusing the woman. Darling keenly observes his face and even comments that "[h]is face is alight, glowing" (ibid). As the new religion permeates the Zimbabwean culture, which can be termed as religious hybridity, with it come the challenges that Darling focalizes above. Darling's friend, Chipo, is another victim of sexual abuse. She was raped by her grandfather and feels she cannot talk about this reality. Though only eleven years old, Chipo is pregnant and obviously traumatised because she never talks about her pregnancy. Her friends are thus left guessing how or who got her pregnant. Chipo cannot keep up with her friends' pace anymore and they have to keep slowing down for her sake. Bastard wonders when she will give birth because he is tired of having to wait for her all along. The pregnancy of their friend amazes the children. They innocently discuss it amongst themselves.

> She'll have it one day, I say, speaking for Chipo because she doesn't talk anymore. She is not mute-mute; it's just that when her stomach started showing, she stopped talking. But she still plays with us and does everything else and if she really, really needs to say something she'll use her hands (2-3).

Chipo is definitely stressed because of her current status. Unlike the adults in Paradise, the white woman in Budapest is perturbed by Chipo's pregnancy. Darling describes her reaction upon seeing Chipo, "[h]ow old are you? The woman asks Chipo, looking at her stomach like she has never seen anybody pregnant" (7). She is definitely shocked that such a young child could be pregnant, but from Darling's observation, it is not something shocking, perhaps because child pregnancy is a common thing in her neighbourhood. The cause of Chipo's pregnancy is revealed later during the church service when the prophet sexually abuses the "possessed" woman. As soon as the prophet begins "exorcising" demons from the "possessed" lady, Chipo reacts.

> He did that, that's what he did", Chipo says, shaking my arm like she wants to break it off. This is the first time that Chipo is talking, like maybe she has received the Holy Spirit or something […] "He did that, my grandfather, I was from playing 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" […] I watch her

> and she has this look I have never seen before, this look of pain (40-41).

The truth is unravelled; the eleven year old was sexually abused by her grandfather, a person who is expected to protect her from harm. She does not openly talk about it because she does not understand that she was raped. Children are treated as subalterns in Darling's community and this could be the reason why she ends up being raped yet no action is taken from the people concerned. The struggles that the people who live in Paradise go through have reduced their vigilance such that their children are left to run wild. This perhaps explains why Chipo's pregnancy and rape as well as the children's theft do not seem to bother the adults. Surprisingly, the adults do not seem perturbed by the reckless movements of the children as they go to Budapest to steal guavas. Darling comments, "[g]etting out of Paradise is not so hard since the mothers are busy with hair and talk, which is the only thing they do. They just glance at us when we file past the shacks and then look away. We don't have to worry about the men under the jacaranda either since their eyes never lift from the draughts" (1-2). Darling and her friends are free to explore any area within and beyond their neighbourhood because the adults have 'forgotten' their responsibilities. Schools have also been shut as Godknows explains to the security guard in Budapest. This gives the children time to get into any sort of mischief because they are idle. ZANU-PF's reign in Zimbabwe led to an economic meltdown since most people lost their jobs. This reality is discussed by Mpofu and Sylod (2016) who state that economic hardships in Zimbabwe were the major cause of skilled personnel leaving the country for greener pastures(109). Joblessness thus resulted into idleness and irresponsibility among parents. Although Christianity attempts to overshadow all aspects of Zimbabwean society, traditional practices still survive. For instance, even with the introduction of Christianity in Zimbabwe, traditional healers still exist. Darling and her grandmother pass a healer's house that has a sign post outside which states that he can fix a host of problems, ranging from bad luck, poverty, whoring spouses to things disappearing in one's house. The sign post is written in broken English. Part of it reads, "VODLOZA, BESTEST HEALER IN ALL OF THIS PARADISE AND BEYOND WILL PROPER FIX ALL THESE PROBLEMSOME THINGS THAT YOU MAY ENCOUNTER IN YOUR LIFE"(27). Darling observes that there is a crowd of people lining up outside Vodloza's house waiting to be attended to. Mother of Bones does not greet them loudly but prefers to wave because it is a healer's place. As a Christian, she is not expected to visit traditional healers. However, Mother of Bones is ambivalent in the sense that when Darling is almost leaving for America, her mother takes her to Vodloza, yet Mother of Bones does not protest. Darling reminisces, "[a] few days before I left Mother took me to Vodloza, who made me smoke from a guard, and I sneezed and sneezed and he smiled and said, [t]he ancestors are your angels, they will bear you to America" (150). Mother of Bones allows her grand-daughter to visit the healer so that she could be protected from any harm while in America. Mother of Bones repulses traditional healers yet she still allows them to interact with her family.

Moral decadence is another social issue which the Zimbabweans in the novel contend with. Darling and her friends focalize social evils like family break-up, infidelity, prostitution and illegal abortions in their society. Infidelity in marriages is presented through Darling's mother and MaDumane's husband. Darling's father leaves for South Africa and abandons his family. Her mother works as a trader at the border. She engages in an extra marital affair with an unnamed man. Darling, being the focalizer of the events that unfold in their tin shack house, intensifies the effect of infidelity on children like her as through her experiences we are able to sympathise with children undergoing same challenges like her. She narrates thus:

> Now there is a very soft tap on the door. It's that man again. I don't know his name but I know it's him and nobody else because he always knocks five times […]I don't even know his name, but I know that I don't like him. He never asks after me, like I'm just a country that is far away. He also never brings us anything. All he does is just come in the dark like a ghost and leap onto the bed with mother. (63-64)

Darling has expectations about this man who comes to see her mother. Severally as she walks around in Paradise, she tries to find her father in the men there. Lack of paternal love affects her psychologically, mostly because she had a close knit family before the demolitions. She comments:

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

Darling thus expects her mother's lover to take the place of her absentee father and carry out the fatherly duties but unfortunately, this is not the case. The man comes at night when they imagine she is asleep and leaves in the wee hours of the morning "like something too terrible to be seen in the light" (64). Darling abhors him. It is not surprising that the man involved is intentionally unnamed and his identity kept hidden. Perhaps this is so because he is symbolic of the other people engaging in extra-marital affairs. In the traditional culture, a woman was expected to stay in the rural area and safeguard her husband's land. This trend however changed with the interaction of the whites. Urban centres were set up and rural-urban migration became the norm, leading to infidelity. Mashiri (1998) observes, "[i]n the village women remained faithful to their husbands. It was hard to do otherwise when surrounded by the men's family. In town women were better placed than they had ever been when it came to escaping marital control. Adultery was therefore on the increase" (2). Darling lives with her mother in a shanty in town. The shanty is composed of tin houses clumped together. Occupants of these houses are not related but have been brought together by a common predicament. People therefore live their lives not minding what goes on in other people's houses. In reference to Mashiri's view that the rural setup curtailed infidelity especially in women, this town-dwelling gives them some sort of freedom. Women were treated as subalterns and therefore decision making and job seeking were left to the males. Darling's abode in a crowded slum is perhaps the reason why her mother practises infidelity without her mother-in-law, Mother of Bones, noticing. Prostitution is another sign of moral decadence in the text that mostly affects young girls.

It has arisen from cultural hybridity. Darling and her friends watch as some young girls who are skimpily dressed walk out of a tent in "Shanghai" followed by fat Mangena whose belt is unbuckled. Darling narrates,

> We are still standing there when out walk these two black girls in skinny jeans and weaves and heels. We forget about fat Mangena and watch them twist past us [...] They twist past the Caterpillars, past the mountains of gravel, twist past the groups of men who stop working and stare at the girls until they eventually get out of Shanghai and disappear behind the bend near the main road. (45)

Darling and her friends are not too naïve to figure out the reason as to why the girls have gone to see Mangena in his tent. The foreman happens to be Chinese. He is in charge of the mall being constructed and by extension has the economic means to lure young desperate girls like the ones Darling and her friends see. The young girls seem least concerned by their actions and just "twist" past the children (ibid). The girls' dress code is a mimic of what the Europeans wear. Cultural mimicry has therefore pushed the girls into adopting Western mannerisms that have corrupted their culture. The young girls engage in illicit sexual encounters with Fat Mangena without feeling ashamed. The girls cat-walk past Darling and her friends and this leaves the children perplexed. Additionally, the closure of schools and poverty has equally rendered the people jobless and idle, leading to such social evils. Irresponsible sexual behaviour amongst the youth and children can also be attributed to the fact that the execrable housing in Paradise denies the adults their privacy. This is observed by Ngoshi (2016) who avers, "[t]he living conditions of the people of Paradise are deplorable and there is no privacy, hence children can bear witness to the sexual lives of adults" (10). The children are exposed to the sexual escapades of their parents and they equally want to try out the same. Darling and her friends enact sexual scenes when they get a chance of entering one of the White people's houses in Budapest. She narrates,

> Let's do the adult thing, Sbho says and we giggle[…]We look at each other shy-like, like we are seeing one another for the first time. Then Bastard gets on top of Sbho. Then Godknows moves over but I push him away, because I want Stina, not chapped-buttocks Godknows, to get on top of me. Stina climbs on me and lies still and we all giggle and giggle. (127)

The children innocently imitate what they see adults doing. Their moral fabric is thus destroyed due to the indecent expose they are getting as observed by Ngoshi above. Moral decadence is not just an issue in Zimbabwe, but it also affects Darling while in America. Darling suffers a culture clash. All the African children there are mimicking the American culture in terms of dressing, talking, eating, etc. Watching of pornography is popular among the youth. Darling and her new friends Kristal and Marina hide in Aunt Fostalina's basement to watch pornography. She says,

> [w]e've been watching the flicks in alphabetic order so we're not all over the place. So far we've seen amateur; we've seen anal, which was plain disgusting; we've seen Asian, which was respectful; we've seen big tits and blond and blow job; we've seen bondage, which was creepy; we've seen creampie and cumshot which were both nasty; we've seen double penetration, which was scary; we've seen ebony, which made us embarrassed; we've seen facials, which was dirty; we've seen fetish which was strange[…]Today we are watching MILF, and since it's Kristal's turn, she makes a pic and clicks on play. (200)

Darling and her new friends are aware that watching pornography is unethical and this is why they choose to hide in Aunt Fostalina's basement to watch it. Moral decadence in children is as a sign of failure of parents and to some extent the government. Children when left on their own devices especially in an amoral set-up can be devious, just like Darling and her friends, both in Zimbabwe and America. Contemporary Zimbabwe is also characterised by high levels of illiteracy. In the novel, semi-illiteracy is rampant, more so among the adults. Darling keenly observes that the pastor in her church, Prophet Revelations Bitchington Mborro intentionally avoids reading from the Bible and when he does, he reads poorly. She concludes thus, "[n]ow Prophet Revelations Bitchington Mborro reads from his English Bible even though he sounds like a grade one-reading. If he went to school, you can tell from the way he reads that he must have been just a dunderhead at it, even Godknows can read better" (36). The congregation do not have Bibles perhaps because they are also semi-illiterate. Moreover, the signpost outside the church has wrongly spelled words that are semantically ambiguous. It is only Darling who notices this since she is educated. The signpost reads, "HOLY CHARIOT CHURCH OF CHRIST-IT DOSNT GO BACKWARDS, IT DOESN'T GO SIDEWAYS, IT DOESN'T GO FORWARDS"(30). Education, just like religion is one of the effects of colonization which were used by the imperial forces to create cultural hegemony. Education was an ideological tool which the coloniser used to dominate over the colonised. Those who acquired the white man's education were more privileged than those who did not. Loomba (2001) as cited by Marandi and Shadpour (2011) observes that,

> The imperial power uses different ideological instruments to control the colonized peoples indirectly. Based on Althusser's theory, ideological instruments make people accept the power of the ruling class and create people who are willing to be dominated. Education, religion, media are some of these ideological instruments which have a great influence on the lives of people (1).

As noted above by Loomba, education being an aftermath of colonisation has created different groups of people i.e. the ruling and the governed. This mimicry of the Bible characters by the prophet as observed by Darling presents religious hybridity. The prophet is better placed compared to his congregation in the sense that unlike they who are illiterate, he can read a few words. Further, Vodloza, the traditional healer has a signpost outside his shack advertising his services. The signpost is written in sub-standard English, an indicator that whoever wrote it is not very conversant with the language. Part of it reads, "VODLOZA, BESTEST HEALER IN ALL OF THIS PARADISE AND BEEYOND WILL PROPER FIX ALL THESE PROBLEMSOME THINGS […] NONESENSEFUL PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE ETC. ETC" (27). Education has thus been used to separate the Other from the dominant. People like Mother of Bones and other members of the Holy Chariot Church of Christ who are illiterate are under the mercies of their pastor/prophet, who uses his scanty education to exploit them. Apart from social realities, Darling

and her friends also focalize political realities in post-independent Zimbabwe. These realities are post-colonial disillusionment and autocratic leadership. Firstly, I will discuss disillusionment as brought out in the novel. The credibility of Zimbabwe's elections has been disputed several times. This was especially during Robert Mugabe's reign as president. The Shona government intentionally undermined the opposition which was composed of the Ndebele. Mugabe intended to make Zimbabwe a one-party state and for this reason, he dealt with the opposition wing of the government in a very crude manner Muvingi (2008) acknowledges this when he states that, "[t]here were many fairly indicators of the unfolding disaster, including Mugabe's early attempts to declare the country a one-party state and institute a lifelong term of presidency" (2). In the novel, the bulldozing of the houses belonging to the Ndebele is one of the unfair actions the government metes out on the opposition. The people end up as paupers, having lost all their property. They are condemned to living in tin shacks in the slum since they have nowhere else to go to. Darling captures in narration the disillusionment brought about by this harsh treatment from the ruling government. She says that "[t]here were those who appeared speechless, without words, and for a long while they walked around in silence, like returning to the dead. […] They shouldn't have done this to us, no, they shouldn't have. Salilwelilizwe leli, we fought to liberate this country" (75). The events narrated by Darling are a symbol of post-independence disillusionment Huma (1990) says that the African novel reflects:

> social and political realities of the post-independence era in which the colonizer has been replaced by a political elite. African literature of the past two decades have transformed the theme of disillusionment. Where the colonizer was once the sole object of criticism, now African technocrats, cadres and government officials are depicted exploiting the masses they had promised to uplift. (85)

The above proclamation by Huma is true in reference to the Zimbabwe which Darling and her friends live in. Bulldozers flatten the houses of Darling's parents and other people in their neighbourhood. This situation forces them to move to Paradise to start life from scratch. Darling remembers the adults' reaction following the disappointment, "[w]hat, but aren't you a pauper now? Aren't these black people evil for bulldozing your home and leaving you with nothing now?"(ibid).Being in the opposition is a disadvantage since one is treated as a subaltern thereby losing the previleges that arise from being a citizen in Zimbabwe. According to Darling, post-independence disillusionment is deeply entrenched in the people especially after they are betrayed by the same government they help put in place. As the adults go to bury Bornfree, an activist killed for expressing his dissatisfaction with the government, Darling observes

> [t]he people of paradise don't make any sounds. There is this big black silence, like they are watching something holy. But we can see, in the eyes of the adults, the rage. It is quiet but it is there. Still, what is rage when it is kept in like a heart, like blood, when you do not do anything with it, when you do not use it to hit, or even yell? Such rage is nothing, it does not count. It is just a big, terrible dog with no teeth. (143)

Darling expects a counter reaction from the adults concerning Bornfee's extrajudicial killing. To her, keeping silent yet they were enraged was not a solution. She expects the adults to unite and fight against the hegemonic practises advanced towards them, the subalterns, by the Shona government. Autocratic leadership is another political-reality that has contributed to the crises represented in the novel. Despite its complexity, this situation does not escape the keen eyes of Darling. It appears that freedom from the "thieves" who tried to steal her country did little to resolve the dictatorship problem in Zimbabwe (75). They have an old president who has clung to power and all who try to oppose him are killed. Darling narrates,

> In the days right after the voting, Paradise didn't sleep. The adults stayed up for many nights, dizzy and restless with expectation,[…] and talk about how they would live the new lives that were waiting for them.[…] They talked like that, stayed up night after night and waited for the change that was near. Waited and waited and waited. But then the waiting did not end and the change did not happen. And then those men came for Bornfreee. That did it, that made the adults stop talking about change. (134-135)

From Darling's observations above, we come to terms with the high-handedness that characterised the autocratic rule in Zimbabwe during Mugabe's reign. His quest to make Zimbabwe a one party state i.e. make ZANU-PF as the only party as noted by Muvingi (2008) turned him into a dictator. Those who suffered most were the opposition which majorly composed of the Ndebele. Resultantly, many lives were lost in the fight for democracy in Zimbabwe.

While in America, Darling reveals that they always dreaded calls from home for they always bore bad news. Dictatorship was real and its effects were felt by those in the opposition. Darling reports, "[l]ike last week, Aunt Fostalina's friend MaDumane called to say her husband, who works for the newspaper, had been taken by the police in the middle of the night for the things he had written. The police banged on the door, and the husband had gone to look and they seized him like that, wearing nothing but shorts. He has not been seen or heard from since" (203). The report concerning MaDumane's husband is an indicator of high handedness from the dominant class. The Ndebele, who happen to be the non-dominant class in this case, have been oppressed by the ruling class mainly composed of the Shona. The third reality presented in the text is economic disparities. Paradise is the name of the settlement where Darling, the protagonist in *We Need New Names* and her friends live. Despite the place having such a name, it is far from what anyone would associate paradise with. The occupants of Paradise live in abject poverty. This is characterized by their deplorable housing, clothing and feeding habits. We learn of these tough and pitiable conditions of the slum-dwellers through Darling who remarks that:

> Paradise is all tin and stretches out in the sun like a wet sheepskin nailed on the ground to dry; the shacks are the muddy colour of dirty puddles after the rains. The shacks themselves are terrible but from up here, they seem much better, almost beautiful even, it's like I'm looking at a painting. (34)

Their homes, as described by Darling, are mere tin shacks. Darling ironically compares the slum to a beautiful painting. As the Other, families from Paradise cannot afford decent housing. Darling and her friends are suffering from serious

hunger pangs and the guavas from the city next to theirs, Budapest, remain to be their soul recourse.

> We are on our way to Budapest […] even though mother would kill me dead if she found out; we are just going. 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. (1)

They confidently march there to pick the fruits. Budapest as it appears in the novel, is a suburb/dwelling down the road from Paradise where wealthy white people live. It has well-manicured lawns, imported cars, and beautiful homes. Darling observes, "Budapest is big, big houses with satellite dishes on the roofs and neat gravelled yards or trimmed lawns […] the big trees heavy with fruit that's waiting for us since nobody around here seems to know what to do with it" (5).

The sincerity in the words of the ten-year old Darling is poignant. She marvels at the beauty in Budapest and wonders how the occupants of the town would let such food go to waste. The children have been forced into thievery because of the lack of food in their homes. They steal guavas daily from different houses in Budapest to quell their hunger pangs. When during one of their usual escapades to Budapest, they see a white woman is eating a doughnut Throw it away, Darling exclaims that they have never seen anyone throw food, even if it is "a thing" (ibid). Darling swallows saliva as the woman swallows the food in her mouth. The children's desperation for real food is heightened on their way back home, when they come across the corpse of a girl who hanged herself. Ironically, the children do not take off. One of them, Bastard, suggests that they can get the woman's shoes since they are still new and sell them then buy bread. They children are delighted at the thought and run back to the bush, "the dizzying smell of Lobels bread" all around them (18).

Indigence goes beyond lack of food. It stretches to lack of proper clothing. When Darling and her grandmother, Mother of Bones are walking to church, she comments that her grandmother is wearing mismatched shoes ;a flat green shoe and a red tennis shoe with a white lace, but this doesn't mean that "she's crazy" (26). Darling is barefoot because her shoes no longer fit and the new ones she was brought are torn. She also observes the torn shorts of one of her friends, "I look at Godknows shorts, torn at the back, at his buttocks peeping like strange eyes through the dirty white fabric" (13). They depend on NGOs for help in terms of food and clothing. The children are playing when they see the NGO lorry approaching them. They get excited because they know that it is a sign of good things. Darling is however hurt by the man who keeps taking their photos. She comments, "[t]hey don't care that we are embarrassed by our dirty and torn clothing, that we prefer they didn't do it; they just take the pictures anyway, take and take" (52). It is saddening that the children feel uncomfortable about their photos being taken when they are dirty and in rags. The adults, however, do not seem to find anything wrong with their actions. The children only tolerate it because of the free food, clothing and toys that they will be given afterwards.

Another economic reality that Zimbabweans experience is the high level of inflation. The Zimbabwean dollar has lost value and this forces them to use the American dollar. Darling is cognizant of the fact that the Zimbabwean dollar is useless. When her grandmother complains about being unable to use her bags of money, Darling introspectively thinks to herself, "[i]'ts old money, Mother of Bones, it's useless now, don't you even get it? You just have to throw it away or use it to make fire like everybody else. Now they say we'll start using American money, I say, but to myself so Mother of Bones doesn't hear" (25). According to Shoaib (2010), inflation is the increase in the level of prices and economic growth, usually referred to as the gross domestic product (GDP), measuring the market values of a country's final goods in a specified period. He further observes that inflation reduces the purchasing power of money and in turn the prices of commodities skyrocket. This leaves the poor people in a quandary because they may not be able to afford even the most basic commodities like food. The IMF at the conclusion of its staff mission to Zimbabwein 2009 stated that Zimbabwe recorded high levels of inflation, with 113.5% in 2004, followed by 32.9%, 72%, and 156.9% during the period 2006 to 2008. Darling might not be aware of the term inflation, but she recognises its effects in her country. They are forced to abandon the Zimbabwean Dollar for the U.S Dollar, since their currency has lost value. Her grandmother, Mother of Bones, has so many of the Zimbabwean Dollars but they are useless. Darling listens silently as her grandmother complains: "Why anyone would want me to throw away my suitcase of money is all I want to know and I mean money not bricks[…] What I don't understand is how this very money that I have in lumps cannot even buy a grain of salt…"(24). Darling is aware that her grandmother would need to get the US Dollar to purchase anything but because she is afraid of confronting her grandmother, so she decides to keep silent. Inflation rates in Zimbabwe soared, impoverishing the locals even more. Even Vodloza, the herbalist does not accept payment in Zimbabwean Dollars. His signpost reads "PLEASE PAYMENT IN FOREX ONLY" (27).

Maternal mortality is also an economic reality that gnaws at Darling's community in contemporary Zimbabwe. Nosizi, a young girl dies when giving birth. The children decide to "get rid of Chipo's stomach" (78). They assign each other roles basing on the medical series they have watched on television (ER). Darling recounts,

> 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. We heard the women talking yesterday about Nosizi, that short light-skinned girl who took over MaDumanes's husband when MaDumane went to Namibia to be a housemaid. Nosizi is dead now, from giving birth. It kills like that. (ibid)

Darling and her friends want to rescue their friend from death. In their innocence, they are unaware of maternal mortality, which refers to the death of a woman while pregnant or within forty-two days of termination of pregnancy. Nosizi's death could have resulted from health complications, age or even lack of proper health facilities. Ngwenya (2018) reports that "[a]ccording to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), although Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) FOR Zimbabwe has declined from960 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2010 to 2014, it is still unacceptably high." Darling and her friends collect small stones, rocks, a rusted clothes hanger, twisted metal cup, urine and half of a man's brown leather belt to conduct the exercise. Luckily, Motherlove shows up before

any damage is done. The children are left to take up adult roles because of the negligence of their parents. Post-colonial disillusionment which has engulfed the country has shifted the focus of the adults from the children to politics. Resultantly, children are experimenting on issues too weighty for their age. The children, being subalterns, have strategically essentialised themselves so that they solve their problems since the adults seem least concerned.

Additionally, harsh economic times have created a competitive environment that is not governed by ethics. Therefore, it is probable that the prophet takes advantage of the people mainly because of the hard economic times. When Darling's father comes back from South Africa suffering from AIDS, the prophet capitalizes on Mother of Bones' naivety and claims that Darling's father has been infested with a spirit that is causing him to look like that. Darling recounts, "In addition, Propher Revelations Bitchington Mborro says he will need five hundred U.S. dollars as payment, and if there are no U.S. dollars, euros will do" (99). This annoys Darling's mother who storms out of the house. Her grandmother resorts to fasting and praying since she cannot afford the cost of treatment. It is therefore evident that religious exploitation is a major concern in the text. This exploitation is propagated by the "spiritual leaders" who are taking advantage of their vulnerable followers. They are what Berman and Iannaccone (1999) call Extreme Sectarian groups. They observe that, "Extremist sectarian groups are high-powered religions rooted in separation from and tension with the broader society. Their heavy demands make it possible to offer unusually great benefits to potential members, particularly those at the margins of society" (20). In view of this, religion can be misused to disadvantaged the vulnerable in their society, just as Darling observes. They live in abject poverty but when they go to church, they are coerced into giving and made to feel like the greatest sinners there lived. Religious hybridity has propelled the Zimbabweans to inject Christian beliefs to their culture, as evidenced by the prophet and Darling's grandmother. The profess Christianity yet still want to engage in ritual cleansing. In conclusion, poverty is an economic reality in post-independent Zimbabwe. It is rampant in the low class citizens who happen to form the largest percentage of the population**.**

Foreign invasion is also another consequence of the tough economic times that the Zimbabweans have to live with. The foreigners come in the name of investors and end up taking advantage of the locals. In *We Need New Names*, this invasion is openly ridiculed by Darling and her friends. A Chinese company has been given a tender to construct a mall. The children have nicknamed the place Shanghai. They are irked by the presence of the Chinese in the area since they have turned their playing ground into something else. The malnourished labourers in the site are juxtaposed with the fat Chinese foreman who goes ordering the labourers around. He talks to the children in Chinese but they chide him. They have nicknamed him " Fat Mangena" (45).

Ngoshi (2016) observes that, "[t]he isiNdebele name, Mangena, which the children use to refer to the Chinese boss here, loosely translates to one who enters or intrudes" (12). Darling and her friends therefore view him as an invader, thus brand him the name. As they walk away from the site, Darling says,

> We are booing and yelling when we are walking out of Shanghai. If it weren't for the noisy machines, the Chinese would hear us telling them to leave our and go and build wherever they come from, that we don't need their kaka mall, that they are not even our friends. We are still yelling when we pass the black men but the one with the muscles steps out to meet us like the Chinese made him a perfect and blocks our way with his giant body.[..] China is a red devil looking for people to eat so that it can look fat and strong. Now we just have to decide if it actually breaks into people's homes or just ambushes them in the forest. (47) The children may not be in a position to explain the negative effects of foreign investors in a country, but their reaction as pointed above explains their scepticism about the Chinese presence in Zimbabwe. The Chinese went to invest in Zimbabwe under Mugabe's Look East Policy. Youde (2007) observes that,

> > China's fast-growing economy undoubtedly needs the resources and raw materials available in African states in order to sustain its growth. In addition, much of its trade on the continent focuses on countries with which, for political or economic reasons, many Western states refuse to trade. China and these African states serve as important economic lifelines for each other. (2)

Zimbabwe had been sanctioned by the European Union due to violation of human rights and therefore this paved way for China to invest. Darling and her friends are not aware of the government's ties with China, but from their observations, they know that the Chinese presence is doing more harm than good.

In this section, I have discussed the Zimbabwean post-independence realities which the child narrative voice(s) has focalized in *We Need New Names.* This includes the social, political and economic realities. I have discussed how Bulawayo has espoused these realities through Darling and her friends Chipo, Stina, Bastard, Godknows and Sbho who are homodiegetic narrators. Their presence in the fictional world created gives them a credible voice on the matters discussed, since they experience them first-hand. Exposition of these realities has also been made possible through stylistic features such as child plays, dialogues, satire, humour, imagery and irony. The children have been rendered as subalterns in their community since the adults have totally ignored them. As they learn to navigate their daily challenges, they have managed to strategically essentialise themselves so as to survive the hard times.

Conclusion

In line with the objective of this study, the researcher set out to analyse, interpret and discuss the child narrator's presentation of Zimbabwe's post-independent and contemporary histories, identities and realities in NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013). The analysis was done using Homi Bhabha's post-colonial concepts of ambivalence, hybridity and mimicry. Spivak's concepts of strategic essentialism, subaltern and the other were also used. Aspects of narratology like the narrator and focalization enabled me to classify the narrators as intradiegetic and homodiegetic. They are also the focalizers of the narrative. Through use of styles like child play, dialogue, vivid descriptions, humour and satire, Bulawayo manages to express the various thematic concerns. In conclusion, it is argued that Bulawayo has succeeded in shaping and re-shaping

the history of Zimbabwe. Using the child narrators, she has castigated the hegemonic practices advanced by the ruling Shona government. The children's naiveties have been capitalized on to view serious issues from a humorous/interesting angle, yet still send the message home. Bulawayo has used the innocence of the child to make them question things an adult cannot, for instance Darling's confusion about Jesus' race. The child narrative voice has successfully given an authentic account of suppressed and untold (hi) stories of Zimbabwe and their contemporary realities and identities. Bulawayo presents the child as a frank being who readily speaks their mind. Darling and her friends' sharp criticism of serious issues is a pointer to the fact that they are affected by these experiences.

Recommendations

Based on the critical analysis of the narrative child voice on Zimbabwe's Post-Independence Realities in NoViolet Bulawayo's Novel, *We Need New Names* findings, the following recommendation was made: Firstly, the literary scholars should venture more into child narrators and discuss not only troubled childhoods but also the milestones independent countries have achieved. Secondly, the literary scholars should also use child narrators in their stories to debate on the scientific inventions and how these affect the young generations.

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