



## Globalization and Identity Transformation in NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*: A Postcolonial Study

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### Abstract

This paper explores the theme of globalization and identity transformation in NoViolet Bulawayo's novel, *We Need New Names*, (2013) from a postcolonial perspective. It delves into the impact of globalization on personal and collective identities, primarily focusing on the experiences of the protagonist, Darling, as she navigates the complexities of cultural displacement, assimilation, and the search for new identities in an interconnected world. Drawing upon postcolonial theory, the paper analyzes the effects of globalization on the characters' sense of self, the erosion of traditional values, and the formation of alternative identities. By examining Bulawayo's work through a postcolonial lens, this paper aims to contribute to an understanding of the intricate relationship between globalization and identity in contemporary literature. Postcolonialism aims to combat the effects of colonialism on cultures. It is concerned with how the world can move towards a place of mutual respect. Hence, postcolonialism pays attention to globalization. Globalization is the process of interaction and integration among individuals, governments, and companies worldwide. Moreover, it leads to the emergence of digital migrant novels that use technology in the text(s). The African Bulawayo (1981- ) takes digital media as a serious topic in *We Need New Names* to shed light on the Africans' suffering and/or problems in Africa and America. Thus, the paper's main aim is to show how the African Bulawayo handles the theme of globalization and its impact on Africans in *We Need New Names*, the digital novel. As a result, this paper has reached three findings: (1) New technology interacts with the lives of Africans either as citizens of their homeland or as migrants in the host lands. (2) Bulawayo displays the problematic role of new technology in the lives of Africans. (3) Globalization proves that new technology has an impact on a person's identity.

### Keywords:

Globalization, Identity Transformation, Postcolonial Perspective, NoViolet Bulawayo, *We Need New Names*.

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## العولمة وتحول الهوية في رواية "نحتاج أسماء جديدة" لنوفاليت بولاويو: من منظور ما بعد الاستعمار الملخص

تستكشف هذه الدراسة موضوع العولمة وتحول الهوية في رواية نوفاليت بولاويو "نحتاج أسماء جديدة" (2013) من منظور ما بعد الاستعمار حيث تتعمق الورقة البحثية في تأثير العولمة على الهويات الشخصية والجماعية، مع التركيز بشكل أساسي على تجارب البطلة، دارلينج، وهي تنتقل في تعقيدات الانتقال الثقافي والاندماج والبحث عن هويات جديدة في عالم مترابط. بالاستعانة بنظرية ما بعد الاستعمار، تحلل الورقة البحثية آثار العولمة على الشخصية والاندماج الثقافي، وتؤكد على تلاشي القيم التقليدية وتشكل الهويات البديلة. من خلال دراسة عمل بولاويو من خلال منظور ما بعد الاستعمار، تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى المساهمة في فهم العلاقة المعقدة بين العولمة والهوية في الأدب المعاصر. ان الهدف الرئيس لما بعد الاستعمار هو مكافحة آثار الاستعمار على الثقافات. ومن ثم ، فإن ما بعد الاستعمار يهتم بظاهرة العولمة. تعرف العولمة بأنها عملية التكامل والتفاعل بين الأفراد والحكومات والشركات في جميع أنحاء العالم. علاوة على ذلك ، تؤدي العولمة إلى ظهور روايات المهاجرين الرقمية التي تستخدم التكنولوجيا في النص كما في رواية "نحن بحاجة الى أسماء جديدة". تتخذ الكاتبة بولاويو الوسائط الرقمية كموضوع لإلقاء الضوء على معاناة أو مشاكل المهاجرين في أفريقيا وأمريكا. نتيجة لذلك ، توصلت هذه الدراسة إلى ثلاث نتائج: (١) تتفاعل التكنولوجيا الجديدة مع الحياة اليومية للأفارقة إما كمواطنين في وطنهم أو كمهاجرين في الأراضي المضيفة (أمريكا). (٢) يعرض الكاتبة بولاويو الدور الإشكالي للتكنولوجيا في حياة الأفارقة. (٣) تثبت العولمة أن التكنولوجيا الجديدة لها تأثير على هوية الشخص. وبالتالي ، فإن الهدف الرئيسي من هذه الدراسة هو إظهار كيفية تعامل بولاويو مع فكرة العولمة وتأثيرها على المهاجرين في رواية "نحتاج أسماء جديدة".

الكلمات الرئيسية: العولمة، تحول الهوية، منظور ما بعد الاستعمار، نوفاليت بولاويو، التكنولوجيا ،

نحتاج أسماء جديدة

The purpose of this paper is to explore the intersection of globalization and postcolonialism in literature, with a particular focus on Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013). This study is divided into two main parts, theoretical and practical. Theoretically, the paper focuses on globalization and the consequences of globalization. Practically, it shows how the African NoViolet Bulawayo (1981- ) handles the theme of globalization and its impact on the immigrants in *We Need New Names* The paper will analyze *We Need New Names* from a postcolonial perspective. So, the main aim of this study is to show how globalization affects Africans in the homeland and host land.

Globalization and postcolonialism are two interconnected phenomena that have greatly influenced various aspects of society, including literature. Globalization refers to the increasing interconnectedness and interdependence of countries through the exchange of goods, information, and ideas on a global scale. It has led to the compression of time and space, facilitating the movement of people, capital, and cultural products across borders (namely, Gary J. Wells, 2001; Stephen Magu, 2015). Postcolonialism, on the other hand, examines the historical, cultural, and political legacies of colonialism and imperialism. It seeks to challenge and deconstruct the power dynamics between colonizers and colonized, while giving voice to marginalized communities and their experiences of oppression, identity formation, and cultural hybridity (e.g., Benita Parry, 1987; Vijay Mishra, and Bob Hodge, 2005).

The significance of studying the intersection of globalization and postcolonialism in literature lies in its ability to shed light on the complex dynamics that emerge when different cultures and ideologies collide. Literature, as a powerful medium of expression, provides a platform for authors to explore and confront the challenges and opportunities presented by globalization and postcolonialism. Through literary analysis, we can gain insights into the multifaceted ways in which these forces shape individual and collective identities, foster cultural exchange, and perpetuate or challenge power imbalances.

In the realm of literature, globalization and postcolonialism have given rise to a diverse body of work that reflects the experiences and perspectives of writers from various cultural backgrounds. Writers engage with these themes in different ways, exploring issues such as diaspora, hybridity, displacement, cultural assimilation, and the negotiation of identities in a globalized world (e.g., Amar Acheraiou, 2011; Lesley Feracho, 2017).

Postcolonial literature emerged as a response to the historical injustices and inequalities resulting from colonial rule. It encompasses works produced by authors from former colonies, addressing themes of decolonization, cultural reclamation, and the critique of colonial discourse. These texts often challenge dominant narratives and offer alternative perspectives on history, power, and identity.

Globalization has influenced literature by expanding the range of voices and narratives represented in literary works. Writers now have access to a broader audience and can draw inspiration from diverse cultural traditions. This has led to the emergence of transnational literature, which reflects the interconnectedness of the contemporary world and explores the complexities of cultural exchange and adaptation (Elie Cohen, 2000; Lowell Matthews, and Bharat Thakkar, 2012).

Postcolonialism is a reaction to the cultural legacy of imperialism and colonialism. B. Ashcroft *et al.* state that postcolonialism deals with “the effects of colonialization on culture and societies” (*Post-Colonial Studies* 168). Postcolonialism is concerned with how the colonizer (the western) has a great influence on every aspect of the life of the colonized (the eastern). After the colonial period, the colonizer's thoughts dominated the world's culture, marginalizing and excluding the colonizer's culture. The colonizer is seen as superior; while the colonized is seen as the other and inferior.

Postcolonial literature investigates the clash between two cultures, and one of them empowers itself as being superior to the other. It excludes most works that represent American or British viewpoints; rather postcolonial literature focuses on works from colonized cultures in Africa, South America, Australia, and other societies and places that are dominated by European philosophical, political, and cultural traditions (Helen Tiffin, 1987; P. Childs and Patrick Williams , 1997). In literary criticism, postcolonial criticism pays attention to the issues of cultural differences in a literary text (Eli Sorensen, 2007; Elabdin Zein and Eiman O. 2009). It examines other cultures in literature. Moreover, postcolonial criticism is related to the exploration of the postcolonial society.

Hence, postcolonialism and globalization are connected. From the history of development, the colonial history of the West is the root of the development of postcolonialism. Despite the end of colonialism, the power of western imperialism remains. The circulation of people and goods among different countries and regions is proceeding at an unprecedented speed, forming many globalized phenomena at political, economic, and cultural levels. Hence, postcolonialism pays attention to globalization, regarding the impact of colonial rule, in the past, on the culture of the colonizer. In other words, the significance of globalization lies in its representation of the global power relation structure. How local societies respond to the influence and pressure of globalization is similar to how colonized societies respond to the role of imperialism (Patrick Wolfe, 1997; David Slater, 1998).

Mostly significant, globalization is the process of interaction and integration among individuals, governments, and companies worldwide. According to Martin Middeke *et al.*, “globalization means a high level of interrelatedness in terms of diversified economic, cultural, social, or ecological structures” (167). So, globalization's impact has been far-reaching. Globalization refers to the integration of different areas of the world. In 2000, the International Monetary Fund, an international financial institution, defines four aspects that comprise globalization: Capital and investment, trade and transactions, exchange of knowledge, and migration and movement of people.

In addition, globalization is a world revolution that creeps across continents, including Africa. It is a revolution of a human being as a whole. As a result, no country or people can remain without the effect of globalization. In North America and Europe, globalization goes back five generations. In Africa, globalization has paved its way for a few decades. Without psychological or physical preparation, globalization has invaded Africa, as a process called postmodernity. It aims to conquer nature with its western politics, culture, schools, science, technology, and other new methods. Roland Robertson (1938-2022), a theorist of globalization, realizes that globalization is characterized by a money economy, neo-liberal capitalism, and individualism with these western methods (28).

Thus, globalization challenges the way that traditional African persons live in their communities. As a result, new types of identity begin to appear because a person feels threatened by the emergence of a new society. People also experience instabilities because of the increasing flowing of technology, services, and communication. Therefore, people have to adapt and adjust to new situations and places. In an increasingly globalized world, culture becomes a serious topic because it is the carrier of globalization, and it has an impact on a person's identity.

One of the outcomes of cultural globalization is hybridization. According to Georgette Wang and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, "globalization has brought about nothing more than the hybridization of hybrid cultures" (176). So, with the rise of postcolonialism, the term hybridity has become a new facet of global culture. Postcolonial literature examines the ways in which individuals and communities negotiate their identities in a world shaped by colonial encounters. It explores the process of cultural hybridity, where diverse cultural traditions merge and transform into new forms of identity. Hence, Homi Bhabha (1949- ), an Indian English critical theorist, coins two concepts related to each other: Mimicry and hybrid identity. Mimicry occurs when a colonized person imitates the culture of the colonizing power. A person copies the other person who is in power because he/she hopes to have access to that same power him/herself. Moreover, a member of a colonized society imitates the politics, cultural altitude, dress, or language of the colonizer. Therefore, the colonized adopts the cultural habits, values, and assumptions of the colonizer. Rather, the colonized intentionally hide their identity. In addition, the immigrants are left confused by their cultural encounter with the domination of foreign culture.

As a result, a colonized person is likely to have a hybrid identity, between his/her origin and his/her new identity. Ashcroft *et al.* point out that hybridity "refers to the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone

produced by colonization” (*Post-Colonial Studies* 108). Moreover, it also refers to a state where persons or groups belong to more than one culture. Hybrid identity refers to an identity that is a mixture of more than one identity. As a result, Stuart Hall, a British Marxist sociologist, states that identity is “a production which is never complete always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation” (392). Hall means that identity is a matter of belonging to the past and the future.

In addition, the concept of ‘cross-culturalism’ is central to hybridity theory. Bhabha argues that hybridity is more than just mixing different identities or essences. Instead, it is the complexity that arises when the experience of being alive disrupts the portrayal of complete and fixed lives (*Nation and Narration* 314). Hybridity implies that there is a connection between one's own identity and the identities of others. Kwame Appiah, a novelist and cultural theorist, supports this idea by suggesting that the concept of hybridity proposes that the "other" is already a part of oneself (qt. in Kevin Hutchings' *Nations of Identity* 8). Hybridity brings two cultures together, offering the possibility of a third way or third space.

Bhabha coins the Third Space. It refers to the gap between conflict cultures. The third space is a sort of “in-between space”. According to Bhabha, the production of meaning “requires that these two places [self and other] be mobilized in the passage through a Third Space, which represents both the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot “in itself” be conscious” (*The Location of Culture* 36). So, Bhabha means that new identities are formed and reformed.

Therefore, hybridity is a type of negotiation, culturally and politically, between the colonized and colonizer. So, the colonized people are the victims of the colonial system. Bhabha explains that hybridity involves challenging the assumptions of colonial identity by repeating the discriminatory effects of that identity. It disrupts the imitative or self-centered demands of colonial power while also implicating its identifications in subversive strategies that redirect the attention of the marginalized towards the dominant power. Bhabha further describes the colonial hybrid as existing in an ambiguous space where the exercise of power takes place within the realm of desire, resulting in objects that are both subject to discipline and capable of dissemination. In Bhabha's metaphor, this situation can be likened to a negative transparency (*Nation and Narration* 154). The clash between the East and the West may lead to fading identity of a colonized person. Fading identity may be a direct result of cultural hybridity. It also may lead to an identity crisis. A colonized person is torn between two selves: The first one is clear in his/her skin color, language, and habits; while the other self is represented in his/her adoption of a new identity.

The political goal of hybridity is to transform the existing power structures. It enables the establishment of intercultural communication. It is obvious that the two cultures: Colonized and colonizer cannot interact by applying absolute superiority on the side of one culture. Bhabha states that “[h]ybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the pure and original identity of authority)” (*Nation and Narration* 145).

Another outcome of cultural globalization is diaspora. Diaspora always has been the main issue in migration literature. It is related to the movement of a person far away from his/her own country. Most people migrate or travel to another country to get a better life and fulfill their requirements and demands; they look for prosperity and comfort. Diaspora is related to the experience faced by a person who travels from one place to another one. In addition, it sheds light on all difficulties a person has. A person who lives in the diaspora is in a dual state that creates confusion. He/she suffers from a sense of alienation. Hemanth M. Rao points out that “diaspora is about the creation of new identities in a new cultural area” (2321).

The cause of identity crisis is diaspora. Ashcroft *et al.* argue that one of the defining characteristics of globalization in the current era is the remarkable and rapid movement of people around the world. They emphasize that diaspora encompasses more than just geographical dispersal; it also involves complex issues related to identity, memory, and the concept of home that arise from such displacement. Diaspora refers to the involuntary relocation of individuals from their original homelands to new lands (*The Empire Writes Back* 217-218). Additionally, George Marangoly points out that the term "diaspora" has expanded in recent years to encompass situations beyond the experiences of Jewish people outside their Jewish homeland. Marangoly acknowledges that the 19th and 20th centuries saw significant events leading to the exodus of millions of expatriate individuals from their homes, marked by varying degrees of violence and hope (179-180). So, the diaspora maintains a vision and memory of the immigrants' homeland. Immigrants feel they are not accepted in the host land.

It is worth mentioning that diaspora is a combination of emotions and feelings connected with the homeland and the new place of settlement. William Safran defines diasporas as “expatriate minority communities that are dispersed from an original center to at least two peripheral places that maintain a memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland that believe they are not-and perhaps cannot be fully accepted by their host country” ( 83).

As a result, the immigrants face the trauma of diaspora. They also suffer from trauma in exile. Trauma is derived from a sense of loss; the loss of the homeland and identity. Moreover, an immigrant suffers from generation conflicts, double

consciousness, and a sense of rootlessness. In this regard, hybridity and diaspora are interconnected terms; the two terms relate to people who leave their homeland and move to the host land, bringing with them their culture and traditions. The immigrants mix these customs and cultures with the new culture of the host land.

Moreover, the impact of globalization on literature is several. Globalization leads to the emergence of world literature. Moreover, this change affects most literary works. So, globalization is linked to technology, and it has an impact on most black American or British writers. According to American writer Caren Irr, globalization gives rise to a genre called "digital migrant novels"(1). These novels rely on technology, such as blogs or the Internet, to depict the impact of globalization on immigrants. Irr argues that these new migrant novels are based on the idea of a decentralized media system, rather than traditional broadcasting or narrowcasting approaches. Irr uses the metaphor of "the router" to explain how the narrator in these novels acts as a filter and processor within an overwhelming multisensory system. Instead of looking inward or backward in a romantic sense, the narrator as a router is distributed across the system. Irr further explains that even if these new works do not directly focus on digital media, they adopt the organizational principles of digital media systems, thereby redefining the fundamental elements of migrant fiction(27-28). Irr means that the writer(s) of the new migrant novel take(s) digital media and technology as a serious topic to shed light on the suffering and /or the problems of immigrants. Hence, the technology used by the writer(s) has an impact on the main character(s) of their works.

Many novelists use digital technology in their novels such as Teju Cole's *Open City* (2011), Chimamanda Adichie's *Americanah* (2013), and NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013). Hence, the second part of the paper focuses on Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013). The main aim of this part is to show how Bulawayo handles the theme of globalization and the use of technology in her digital novel.

Additionally, the African writer NoViolet Bulawayo (1981- ) uses a pen name she constructs from the name of her mother, Violet, and the word 'No' means 'with' in Zimbabwe. For the name of Bulawayo, it is the name of the writer's home city in Zimbabwe. In 2014, a New African Magazine cites Bulawayo as one of the 100 most influential Africans. She has won many notable awards, such as Man Booker Prize shortlist and Caine Prize for African Writing. Bulawayo has written three novels such as *We Need New Names* (2013), *Country Country* (2020), and *Glory* (2022).

The paper selects Bulawayo because of her awareness of modern generations. Moreover, her works shed light on the suffering of black people in the homeland and host land. At the same time, among Bulawayo's three novels, the researcher picks up *We Need New Names* (2013) because the writer uses digital technology to show how globalization shapes the personality of the main character(s) in the

novel. *We Need New Names* by NoViolet Bulawayo is a compelling novel that provides a unique perspective on the impact of globalization and postcolonialism. The story follows the protagonist, Darling, a young girl from Zimbabwe, as she navigates the challenges of growing up in a rapidly changing world.

The novel explores themes of cultural identity, displacement, and the effects of globalization on marginalized communities. Through the eyes of Darling, we witness the tensions between the allure of the Western world and the longing for a connection to her homeland. Bulawayo's vivid and evocative prose captures the complexity of Darling's experiences, highlighting the ways in which globalization shapes her understanding of self and her place in the world.

*We Need New Names* offers a rich and nuanced exploration of the effects of globalization and postcolonialism on individual lives and communities. By selecting this novel as the primary text for analysis, this paper aims to delve into the ways in which the characters in the novel negotiate their identities and navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by globalization and postcolonialism. Through a close examination of the text, we can gain valuable insights into the broader dynamics at play in a globalized and postcolonial world. Thus, this paper seeks to explore the intersection of globalization and postcolonialism in literature, with a focus on *We Need New Names*. By examining the novel's themes, characters, and narrative techniques, we aim to deepen our understanding of how literature engages with these complex phenomena and their impact on individual and collective identities.

*We Need New Names* tells a story of a ten-year-old protagonist, Darling. She lives in Zimbabwe, Africa, and she decides to escape from Zimbabwe to America, where her Aunt, Fostaline, lives, looking for the American dream. The novel is divided into two parts: Pre-immigration and post-immigration. The first part of the novel focuses on Darling's life and suffering in Zimbabwe; while the second part sheds light on Darling as a black immigrant in American society.

The novel tackles many issues such as the political problems and poverty in Zimbabwe; which force many Africans to escape to the West, the suffering of the immigrants in America, and, finally, how technology shapes the identity of black people pre-immigration and post-immigration.

Globalization has had a profound impact on Zimbabwean society, reshaping its economic, political, and cultural landscape. Economic globalization, characterized by the liberalization of trade and the integration of national economies into the global market, has had both positive and negative consequences for Zimbabwe. Globalization has brought economic opportunities and increased access to information and technology. It has allowed for the flow of capital, foreign investment, and the expansion of industries. However, these benefits have not been evenly distributed, leading to economic disparities and inequalities within the country.

Globalization has also had cultural implications for Zimbabwe. The influx of Western media, consumer goods, and popular culture has influenced local traditions and values. This cultural exchange has resulted in both the adoption of new practices and the erosion of traditional cultural norms. The dominance of Western cultural products and ideologies has led to concerns about cultural homogenization and the marginalization of indigenous cultures.

The narrator of the novel is Darling who represents the voice of black people in Zimbabwe and America. She tells her story from the first-person point of view. Bulawayo aims to give the reader(s) a front seat to the incidents of the story. In this way, the incidents of the novel are told through the lens of a child, Darling, allowing the author to influence the reader(s).

Darling spends her childhood dreaming of going to America. She disowns her country Zimbabwe because of poverty, political issues, and a lack of employment. For example, the paramilitary police demolish Zimbabweans' houses. So, Zimbabweans are victims of their government, and they feel disappointed. Although Zimbabweans always fight for Zimbabwe's liberation and freedom, nothing has changed. In the colonial era, the white people, for example, drive Zimbabweans away from their land, putting them in the reserves. However, the government does the same thing in the postcolonial era. Concerning this point, one of the Zimbabwean victims says: "Those were evil white people who came to steal our homeland and made us [Zimbabweans] paupers in our country" (54). Another one sees that "these black people evil for bulldozing your home and leaving you with nothing now" (54).

As a result, children are aware of their suffering; they do not enjoy a healthy childhood. Their government, for example, fails to create a better life for them. So, they hope to leave Zimbabwe. For those children, America is a utopia. Hence, Darling, who represents the voice of African children, begins to imagine another country and world distinguished from her own. She begins to imagine that she will go one day to Budapest (America). For Darling, "this place [America] is not like Paradise [Zimbabwe], it's like being in a different country altogether. A nice country where people who not like us [black people] live" (10). It is clear that Paradise ironically represents Zimbabwe. Darling dreams of living in America where "big houses with satellite dishes [...] neat graveled yards or trimmed lawns [...] tall fences[...] Dura walls [...] the flowers [...] big trees heavy with fruit" (10). She adds: "In Budapest [America], there are guavas to steal [...]. I'd rather die for guavas" (8). This statement is a strong evidence of Darling's poverty.

Darling hopes to transcend Zimbabwe to live in America. She says: "[I]f I lived in Budapest [America] I would wash my body, comb my hair nicely to show I was a real person living in a real place" (12). For Darling, Zimbabwe is not a real place. Moreover, when her friends tell her that they will stop stealing guavas when they grow up, she tells them that she does not worry about stealing guavas

because “[she] will be living in America with [her] Aunt Fostaline [and] [she] will eat real food and doing [*sic*] better things than stealing” (14). Darling wants to travel to America because Zimbabwe is a terrible place of hunger.

Bulawayo reveals that the reason America is a land of dreams and opportunities is due to the influence of globalization and social media. Technology plays a major role in affecting and changing the identity of many Africans in the homeland and host land. Computer and/or TV are major tools for globalization. Darling’s identity begins to change before traveling to America because she watches an American medical drama on television. Her identity begins to change pre-immigration due to the impact of the American drama, *Emergency Room*. For example, after watching the American medical drama, Darling and her friends begin to mimic the American doctors in the American drama. Darling says: “In order to do this right, we need new names [American names]. I am Dr. Bullet [an actress], she is beautiful, and you are Dr. Roz [an actor], he is tall” (58). The American names represent the American identity. In Zimbabwe, Darling is influenced by American culture. She, for instance, has learned the American accent from American songs, movies, and games. Darling attempts to create an identity for herself.

The American medical drama has an impact on most children in Zimbabwe. For Darling and her friends, America is ingrained in their subconscious. Hence, globalization affects those African children in a local environment. African children exist in a double environment: Zimbabwe and America. Hence, one can transmit between the two environments electronically. As a result, a person accepts the unreal issues because of TV, computer, and technology; they are tools for identity transformation. Robertson states that “globalization encourages or involves homogenization, as opposed to heterogenization, and universalization, as opposed to particularization, are [*sic*] crucial, as well as complex” (12). So, it can be said that the girls’ African identities are no longer pure because they have been influenced by globalization.

Therefore, Darling’s Aunt sends her a visit visa to America. Transnationalism is a form of globalization. Linda Basch *et al.* identify transnationalism as “the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (8). Basch *et al.* add: “We call these processes transnationalism to emphasize that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders. Immigrants who develop and maintain multiple relationships—familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political—that span borders we call ‘transmigrants’” (8). This statement confirms that transnationalism creates a degree of connection between societies, people, and communities across borders. It is clear that Darling’s Aunt, who is considered a

transmigrant, maintains her relationship with her family and roots in the homeland.

Then, when Darling travels to America, she finds out that she has a false impression of America because of technology. She says: "This place doesn't look like my America, doesn't even look real" (103). She means that real America does not look like America in her imagination. The west is unknown to Darling and her ideas about life in America are misguided, leaving her unprepared for real life in America. For example, Darling experiences racism in America. Bulawayo uses snow as a symbol of racism. Darling states that there is "snow on the leafless trees, snow on the cars, snow on the roads, snow on the yards, snow on the roofs [...]. Snow covering everything like sand" (101). She adds: "Coldness that makes like it wants to kill you, like it's telling you, with its snow that you [immigrant] should go back where you come from" (101). Darling means that she is refused in America because of her blackness.

Thus, Darling has an unrealistic and false image of America due to TV. Darling expresses her sadness by saying: "[W]e [Immigrants] live here in America, which I found strange because when I was at home [Zimbabwe] I heard that everything in America was better" (127). In Zimbabwe, Darling sees that America is a land of dreams, where she can buy a house and a car.

It is worth mentioning that globalization and diaspora are related. Darling suffers from the trauma of diaspora in America because she feels alienation. According to Robin Cohen, a social scientist working in the fields of globalization, the diaspora has many features such as "victim labour, trade, imperial and cultural" (x). Cohen means that the diaspora has some of these features. Robin Cohen adds that there are other common features of diaspora such as a "troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance at the least or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group; [and] a sense of empathy and solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement" (26). Hence, it is clear that these previous features define diaspora. In other words, diaspora is a cultural production that is created by globalization. Thus, Darling has a troubled relationship with American society because she feels that she is refused.

Then, Darling misses her old friends and wants to return to the homeland. She says: "[T]his here [America] is not my country. I don't know whose it is" (101). Nevertheless, her cousin tells her "this is America" (101). Her cousin means that she should adapt to American society. Yun Ling asserts: "They [immigrants] negotiate the relationship between past and present, memory and forgetting to construct a new identity so that they can gradually work through the trauma and strive for a better future" (142).

It seems that Darling wants to have the old and new home at once. For Darling, the past reminds her of poverty as well as her friends and family.

However, America offers all kinds of food. So, she wants to stay in America just for that reason. She says: “[W]e [Zimbabweans] wouldn’t be having enough food, which is why I will stand being in America dealing with the snow [racism]” (105). This statement confirms that Darling has to deal with racism. Many Africans, especially Zimbabweans, crave food because they suffer from poverty in their homeland. Therefore, they have to stay in America for food. Darling says: “We [Africans] ate like pigs, like wolves, like dignitaries; we ate like vultures, like stray dogs, like monsters; we ate like kings. We ate for all our past hunger, for our parents and [...] relatives and friends who were still back there [...] eating for those who could not be with us to eat for themselves” (159). These lines highlight the suffering of Zimbabweans; they suffer from poverty in their homeland. The novelist, Bulawayo, uses food as a symbol of poverty in Zimbabwe. Some Zimbabweans are forced to leave their home looking for food in the host land. In this way, poverty also makes them give up their identity to live.

Darling begins to look at herself through the eyes of white people. She feels that her identity is divided into many parts, making it impossible and/or difficult to obtain a unified identity. She suffers from double consciousness. Darling attempts to reconcile the two cultures, Zimbabwean and American, which compose her identity. She sees Zimbabwe, her homeland, where she belongs; and America as a new place where she can discover herself. Darling begins to understand the misconceptions about minorities in America.

Hybridity is a feature of social interaction resulting from globalization, which in turn has an impact on cultural identity. Wang and Yueh-yu Yeh state: “Hybridization has become part of an ongoing trend in cultural production, with both the globalization and localization of the culture industry. Hybridization, however, is not merely the mixing, blending and synthesizing of different elements that ultimately form a culturally faceless whole” (175). Hybridity defines identity crisis. Darling experiences hybridity, diaspora, and displacement.

As a result, Darling decides to adapt to American society. She also tries to overcome her homesickness by contacting her friends and family via phone calls and Skype. Darling wonders about the power of technology by saying: “Time dissolves like we are in a movie scene and I have entered the telephone and traveled through the lines to go home. I’ve never left, I’m ten again” (138). New technology enables Darling to communicate with her friends and family via electronic spaces that play a major role in saving time and reducing distance. Moreover, she can keep track of what is happening in Zimbabwe and feel part of the community via the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), the national broadcaster of the United Kingdom. Richard Applebaum and William Robinson recognize how “the pace of social change and transformation worldwide seems to have quickened dramatically in the latter decades of the twentieth century, and

that this social change is related to deepening connections among peoples and countries around the world” (xiv).

Also, Darling begins to adapt to American society by speaking the American accent; she learns it through the movies. Darling says: “I have decided the best way to deal with it all is to sound American, and the TV has taught me just how to do it. It’s pretty easy; all you have to do is watch *Dora the Explorer*, *The Simpsons*, *SpongeBob*, *Scooby-Doo*, [...]and so on, just listening and imitating the accents” (130). So, Darling’s identity has been shaped via technology.

Darling's experiences in the United States can serve as a representative example of the challenges faced by individuals in a globalized world. As she navigates a new cultural environment, Darling encounters various obstacles to assimilation. These challenges may include language barriers, cultural differences, and discrimination or stereotyping based on her background. Darling may find herself caught between her Zimbabwean cultural heritage and the expectations and norms of Western society. She may experience a sense of alienation and a longing for connection to her roots, while simultaneously feeling pressure to conform to Western ideals and behaviors.

The challenges and contradictions faced by Darling in reconciling her cultural heritage with Western influences reflect larger tensions in a globalized world. On one hand, Darling may value and want to preserve her Zimbabwean cultural identity, including traditions, values, and language. However, she may also feel the need to adapt to Western cultural norms in order to fit into her new environment and access opportunities. This reconciliation process can create internal conflicts as Darling negotiates between her authentic self and the expectations placed upon her. She may experience a sense of cultural dislocation, as her experiences and surroundings challenge her preconceived notions of identity and belonging.

In response to assimilation pressures, individuals like Darling may form alternative identities that allow them to navigate between their cultural heritage and the demands of a globalized world. These alternative identities can be seen as a strategy for self-preservation, adaptation, and resistance. Darling may explore the creation of hybrid identities that blend elements of her Zimbabwean heritage with influences from Western culture. This process of cultural fusion allows her to maintain a connection to her roots while embracing aspects of her new environment.

Alternative identities can also manifest acts of cultural resistance, where individuals assert their unique cultural perspectives and challenge dominant narratives. Darling may actively seek out communities or spaces that embrace and celebrate her cultural heritage, forming networks of support and identity affirmation. Furthermore, individuals in a globalized world may engage in identity

fluidity, adopting different personas or codeswitching between cultural contexts as a means of survival and social navigation. This adaptability allows them to navigate diverse social spaces while preserving aspects of their authentic selves.

The experiences of characters like Darling in a globalized world highlight the challenges and contradictions faced in reconciling cultural heritage and Western influences. The process of assimilation involves navigating cultural tensions, forming alternative identities, and finding ways to preserve one's authentic self while adapting to new cultural environments. The formation of hybrid identities, acts of resistance, and identity fluidity can serve as strategies for individuals to navigate these complexities and assert their cultural agency in a globalized world.

*We Need New Names* provides a window through which to see the lives of immigrants in American society. In other words, Darling represents the voice of immigrants in America. Darling's Aunt, for example, does not provide her with a roadmap in America. Darling says that her Aunt "leaves her alone and does not force or beat me up like perhaps mother [...] would if I was not doing what they wanted" (108). Her Aunt does not spend enough time with Darling. So, Darling begins to access the Internet. For Darling, the Internet and television are her sources of information. Her relationship with technology is negative. Vilasini Roy sees Darling as: "[A] receiver- someone who relies heavily on the Internet and social media for information and communication; but does not contribute to the online community or question the cultural cues it provides" (8). Bulawayo shows how the Internet is a tool for parallel education and/or parallel parenting. Suffice to say that the Internet removes the need for parenting or physical communication. Darling says: "When our children were old enough and we told them about our country, they did not beg us for stories of the land we had left behind. They went to their computers and Googled and Googled [*sic*] and Googled. When they got off, they looked at us with something between pity and horror and said, Jeez, you really come from there [poor countries]?" (165) This statement proves that the third generation of immigrants loses connection with their homeland due to false information available on the Internet.

Moreover, Bulawayo depicts America as a land of moral decay; especially, when the parents are always working and have no any time for family. Darling becomes a child with loose morals. This is one of the negative effects and aspects of living in American society. She begins to mimic Americans. For example, Darling accesses online applications without any adult supervision. In Africa, on the contrary, an African girl gets pieces of information from her mother who acts as a guide in order to prevent embarrassment. Bulawayo displays the role that the new electronic space plays in changing one's identity. In America, Darling gets any information from the Internet, which shapes her identity. She experiences a cultural transition due to her access to online

applications. For example, Darling says when she talks to her mother, “[she] start[s] to call her [Darling’s mother] crazy but [she] hold[s] it and tell [herself] that it is one of the American things [she doesn’t] want to do [...]. On TV, [...] [she’s] seen these kids calling their mothers crazy and bitches and whores. [She’s] practiced the words, but [she] know[s] [she] ’ll never say them aloud to [her] mother or any other adult” (137). Darling’s new identity is shaped via technology. She begins to simulate Americans. Bulawayo asserts that it is difficult to raise (a) child/children in American society.

Moreover, *We Need New Names* reflects the lives of immigrants in America. Darling feels sadness in America because America is not a land of dreams and/or opportunities. She suffers from the diaspora. Darling says: “[T]he jobs we [immigrants] worked, Jesus- Jesus- Jesus, the jobs we worked. Low-paying jobs. Backbreaking jobs. Jobs that gnawed at the bones of our dignity, devoured the meat, tongued the marrow. We took scalding irons and ironed our pride flat. We cleaned toilets” (162). These lines reflect the suffering of immigrants in America; they work in dangerous conditions and lose their lives.

Darling, for instance, works from the tenth grade: “when I’m not cleaning the toilets am bagging groceries. I’m bent over a big cart like this, sorting out bottles and cans” (167). Darling is not happy in America. She also shows that; every two weeks, the immigrants send money back home via Western Union and Money Gram, American multinational financial services companies. They also buy clothes and food for their family in the homeland. Darling says: “Our extended families sent requests and we worked, worked like donkeys, worked like slaves, worked like madmen. When we hesitated, they said, You [*sic*] are in America where everybody has money, we see it all on TV, please don’t deny us. Madoda, Vakomana, how we worked!” (162). So, the misconception of America as a land of opportunities and dreams goes back to social media and relatives living in America. Relatives are not honest about the suffering that they go through to save money.

Although all this suffering, Darling decides to stay in America with her Aunt because the past reminds her of poverty. According to Darling, “leaving everything that makes them [Immigrants] who and what they are, leaving because it is no longer possible to stay. They will never be the same again because you just cannot be the same once you leave behind who and what you are, you just cannot be the same” (99). Darling’s identity is no longer normal because it has been altered. In an interview with Christina Hartselle, Bulawayo expresses her opinion about the immigrants who leave their homeland by stating: “Everyone who leaves their homeland to live in another has to deal with all sorts of adjustments [...] as in Darling’s case, is food. But beyond that, she has a hard time with the harsh [...] winters (when we first meet her, she is indoors and not by choice, but because the cold and the snow have taken over the outside [...])”

(31). Bulawayo adds: “There’s also alienation from the homeland itself, the geographic space, and from family. There is the language barrier that may be dealt with but not totally done away with. And that specific melancholy that may occasionally seize an immigrant because the body and soul remember another space and will crave for it” (31). Hence, environmental change, language, translocation, the issue of melancholy, food, and alienation from family and friends reflect the suffering and problems of migrants. Camille Isaacs states that “[a]s they [female migrants] navigate their emerging selfhood, the girls are forced to forge an identity among several competing subjectivities. The communicative media that bridges their geographic worlds emerges as the material manifestation of these in-between spaces” (178). Isaacs means that female migrants struggle in order to satisfy two different environments. In other words, they suffer from hybridity.

After many years, Darling decides to stay in America because Zimbabwe reminds her of poverty. However, she sees America is not home. Darling says: “[America] is not my country” (101). Therefore, America does not offer any opportunity as she imagines. She feels self-hatred there. Darling represents the voice of immigrants who live between two societies, cultures, ideologies, and traditions that cause their identity crisis, double consciousness, and a sense of rootlessness. Darling feels that she is in the third space or in-between. She has a combination of emotions and feelings that are associated with Zimbabwe and America. So, she suffers from hybridity and diaspora as a result of globalization. She moves to America, bringing her culture and customs. Then, she mixes her culture and customs with the culture of America. Moreover, Darling escapes her home hoping to find a home in America, but she does not find it. She summarizes the reality of all immigrants in the following quotation:

Look at them [Immigrants] leaving in droves despite knowing they will be welcomed with restraint in those strange lands because they do not belong, knowing they will have to sit on one buttock because they must not sit comfortably lest they be asked to rise and leave, knowing they will speak in dampened whispers because they must not let their voices drown those of the owners of the land, knowing they will have to walk on their toes because they must not leave footprints on the new earth lest they be mistaken for those who want to claim the land as theirs. (100)

This statement is strong evidence that immigrants do not belong to America, and they feel powerless.

The title *We Need New Names* suggests that immigrants, in general, and black people, in particular, need new names and homes to obtain new identities. Moreover, many migrants stay illegally in America. Darling says: “We [immigrants] hide our real names, gave false one when asked [...]. We had paid so much to be in America” (161). Most Africans hide their true identity under the

American one. In addition, when an immigrant gives birth to a child who is granted US citizenship, he/she is given an American name. Darling says: "We did not name our children after our parents, after ourselves; we feared if we did they would not be able to say their own names, that their friends and teachers would not know how to call them. We gave them names that would make them belong in America, names that did not mean anything to us" (164). Black people are rejected in America. So, they give up their names. Giving up their African names means giving up their African identity and becoming Americanized. New names make Africans belong to America. In other words, most Africans cannot keep their ethnicity in the face of Americanization.

To conclude, Bulawayo illustrated how environmental change and exposure to technology affect the lives of immigrants. *We Need New Names* shows how new technology interacts with the lives of Africans either as citizens of their homeland or as migrants in the host lands. Moreover, the writer, Bulawayo, displays the problematic role of new technology in the lives of Africans. So, globalization proves that new technology has an impact on a person's identity.

The exploration of alternative identity formation in response to globalization, as depicted in the novel *We Need New Names*, highlights the complexities and contradictions individuals face in constructing new identities. Through the experiences of characters like Darling, the paper has observed the adoption of new names and personas as a strategy for assimilation, adaptation, and resistance. This process highlights the dynamic nature of identity in a globalized world, where individuals navigate cultural tensions, negotiate multiple identities, and seek agency in shaping their own narratives.

The paper has tackled Darling's experiences in the United States, her struggles with assimilation, and the challenges she faces in reconciling her cultural heritage with Western influences. Moreover, it has analyzed alternative identity formation as a response to globalization, highlighting the adoption of new names and personas as a means of navigating cultural barriers and accessing opportunities. Additionally, the paper has discussed the complexities and contradictions inherent in constructing new identities, including issues of authenticity, cultural preservation, and societal expectations.

Indeed, the study of alternative identity formation in a globalized world has broader implications beyond the context of the novel. It illuminates the experiences of individuals who navigate multiple cultural influences, highlighting the importance of cultural diversity and the need for inclusive societies. Understanding the complexities of constructing new identities can inform discussions on identity politics, multiculturalism, and social integration. It underscores the importance of recognizing and valuing diverse identities and providing spaces for individuals to authentically express themselves.

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