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Research Paper

Power Dynamics and Post-independence Disillusionment: A Discursive Study of No Violet Bulawayo's Glory

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Struggle for independence integrates people as it heads on with an invariably common interest, but if independence, in post-independence situation, falls into the hands of a dictator, then it inevitably leads to bifurcation, disintegration, chauvinism and compartmentalization of the whole nation. NoViolet Bulawayo's Glory, popularly known as African Animal Farm, intertextualizes history with fiction, and offers an acerbic narrative of nearly four decades of political dictatorship of an Old Horse in a fictional African country, Jidada with a -da and another -da, a metaphorical critique of Robert Mugabe's tyrannical autocracy in Zimbabwe. This allegorical novel portrays the Old Horse's aspiration for endless

and absolute power and his overthrow in a military coup which also fails to ensure justice for all. But power, as Michel Foucault suggests, is proscriptive, concerned more with imposing limits on its subjects. Power which united the people of Jidada in the past during their struggle for freedom against the colonizers and helped them bring independence, subsequently, leads them to disintegration, dividing them between binaries- centre/margin, liberators/traitors, being/non-being. But it, inherently constitutive of knowledge, leads to the rise of awareness among people and makes them aspire for the paradigmatic shift of the oppressive power-structure. True, power-shifting is open ended and it generates hope, though it does not ascertain the attainment of the specific objective. This paper, in context of Bulawayo's Glory, seeks to pursue the research question- why cannot even independence bring all the countrymen on a single platform of solidarity and equality? The paper will borrow the theoretical framework from Michel Foucault's concept of power and knowledge to carry out the study.

Keywords: Power, Hegemony, Knowability, Satire, Compartmentalization.



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1. INTRODUCTION

For the African authors writing is invariably daunting, and the most likely reason behind it is that African literature is mostly political and engaged with its historical realities. In this connection, Dominic Thomas in his essay "New Voices, Emerging Themes" rightly claims, "... writing itself remains a dangerous activity;

dissenting African authors continue to be challenged, intimidated and silenced by the leaders of the sovereign nations who have demonstrated little tolerance for oppositional discourse" (228). The nationalistic feelings emerging during the post-independence period are constantly being challenged by the disillusionment emanated out of the political

failure and the premature death of democracy due to the local political leaders' inherent subjugation to the colonial legacy and the imperialist enterprises of the Western capitalist countries. NoViolet Bulawayo, a Zimbabwean female author, presently living in the USA bravely addresses the issue of the political failure and the rise of autocracy in a fictional African country, which may metaphorically represent Zimbabwe under the dictatorship of Robert Mugabe.

Shatto Arthur Gakwandi in his book titled The Novel and Contemporary Experience in Africa claims that "[A]ll twentieth century intellectual movements in Africa have been in one way or another, associated with nationalism" Nationalism and modern African literature go hand in hand and reciprocate each other in different situations. Colonial African literature was basically about cultural conflict and the natives' response to the colonial hegemony. But even after independence of all African countries, co-existence of modern Africa and its chronic colonial legacy is still causing restlessness in the political, economic and cultural life. Africa, in the words of Aime Cesaire, is "developing under the peculiar influence of a colonial, semi-colonial or paracolonial situation" (193). This peculiarity is still inspiring African authors to write about political issues, and in the same vein, NoViolet Bullawayo, in response to the political realities of Zimbabwe has produced the acerbic novel *Glory*. Specifically, in response to the fall of Robert Mugabe's four decade long dictatorship in Zimbabwe, NoViolet writes *Glory* which is widely recognized as African Animal Farm for its bitter satire on the political evils.

Actually, African novels emerge "as an object of critical enquiry and to highlight the construction, through its reception, of a field of production knowledge organized particular issue domains" (Garuba 243). African authors of the colonial generation, such as Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Wole Soyinka, Ben Okri, Tayeb Salih, Farah Nuruddin and many other seminal litterateurs write addressing mostly the political issues encompassing colonial and postcolonial situations. Even the authors of the post-independence generation are still vehemently addressing political issues, specifically the failure of post-independence leadership, premature death of democracy, dictatorship of the power-structure, unbridled corruption, corrosive colonial legacy

which is gnawing every possibility of economic and political advancement of the African countries. Actually, "There is now more emphasis on everyday practice and the body, especially the degree to which it [Africa] feels pain" (Eze 35). In this connection, NoViolet Bulawayo who belongs to the post-independence generation of the African authors, addresses the dystopia of a fictional African country which is engulfed in the corrosive abuse of power, dictatorship, political failure and above all, the failure of the hope of the people who once struggled and gained freedom under the leadership of an Old Horse who rules the country unbeaten for nearly four decades. NoViolet turns into the voice of the post-independence Africa. As any text, according to Foucault, may be historical or literary, is "a complex field of discourse", Bulawayo's *Glory* requires the study of the political situations of African countries as (co)text (Foucault 423). Glory's frontiers are not clear-cut as it has been intertextualized with the tradition. history, culture, politics and belief system of postcolonial African society. Regarding a book's epistemic range, Michel Foucault in his Archeology of Knowledge claims:

> The frontiers of a book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines, and the last full stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network. And this network of references is not the same in the case of mathematical treatise. a textual commentary, a historical account, and an episode in a novel cycle; the unity of the book, even in the sense of a group of relations, cannot be regarded as identical in each case. (423)

In this connection, it is found that NoViolet Bulawayo's Glory, modeled on George Orwell's Animal Farm allegorically satirizes dictatorship of an Old Horse who rules a fictional African country metaphorically referring to Zimbabwe. Orwell lashes the whip of satire on the back of the fatal limitations of socialism which gets lurid after the Russian Revolution and especially during the reign of Joseph Stalin. Similarly, *Glory* lashes on the Old Horse who represents Robert Mugabe, and who turns Zimbabwe into a one party dominated nation dividing the people into and non-entities or liberators nobodies.

Persecution, disappearing, nepotism, corruption and oppression of the opposition party-members become common mechanisms of the powerstructure in this fictitious country. Glory addresses all these evils very bravely and leaves a powerful message that oppressive rule will continue in a country as long as its people will let it go on. True, for posing resistances, people need to develop consciousness that usually emerges out of complicity with their own history which will help them develop their own ideals essential to define themselves and also define the power-structure in whose network they choose to stay. But the people's dependence on the colonial legacy which acts as a block to the development process of their own power-structure leads them to corruption and greed which contribute to the birth of the dictators like the Old Horse. In this connection, B. M' Baye asserts that colonial exploitation, accounts for the drastic poverty and lack of manufactures in the continent. It created an unequal system of power relations between Europeans and Africans, forcing the latter to rush headlong to Western ideals and policies that do nothing but increase corruption and greed in the continent.

In such an atmosphere of corruption and greed, the germination of hope appears to be ephemeral. The novel ends with a flickering hope of democracy though it sounds like a far cry as after the fall of the dictator his Vice President, a part of the same framework of corrupt powerstructure is made the President in Charge by the army which brings about a coup in the midst of the utter disillusion of the people. The narrative of the novel thus metaphorically refers to the postcolonial situation of almost all the African countries where due to the failure of democracy army, through coup, frequently comes to power and shaking hands with the previous colonizing forces creates an oppressive power-structure and controls and constructs knowledge, ideas and ideals to impose upon the people with a view to eternalizing their hegemony.

Now, at this point, it relevantly appears to be essential to reflect on the nature and behavior of power. Actually, power controls and modifies knowledge and thought-process. It defines and even constructs relationships between individuals, institutions, and even between individuals and institutions. It is dispersal and rhizomatic in nature and entangles everybody and every institution in its invincible network that can never

be broken through. It has the immense capability to create even truth and knowledge and hack human brain. Michel Foucault suggests, power is "proscriptive, concerned more with imposing limits on its subjects" (Wolfreys et al. 68). Power inherently intends to exercise its hegemony upon the subjects for recognition that it is power and it can create, re-create and delete. Power works through negotiation, coercion and recognition. When these dynamics fail there emerges a revolution, a rooted change in the powerstructure. This discourse of power is the main theme of NoViolet Bulawayo's *Glory* which depicts the fall of the dictatorship of the Old Horse in the land of the animals Jidada, a country with a -da and another-da and the hope of democracy sinking into disillusionment. Actually, the over confidence resonates from two da's with the name of the country ironically the hollowness caused by the premature death of democracy and utter corruption.

The novel opens with a huge Independence Day rally in the Jidada Square where the Father of the Nation, the Old Horse and his wife Sweet Doctor Mother, a Donkey are addressing the animals representing the citizens of the country. It is an animal land, unlike the animal farm as depicted by George Orwell in *The Animal Farm*. While delivering speech in the Jidada Square in presence of a huge congregation of the animals, Tuvi, the Vice President, another old horse, even older than the President, distinguishes the people in power from those out of power in the following words:

... the donkey and her useless followers hadn't fought in the Liberation War, hadn't in fact done anything for Jidada struggle, not even serve the Liberators drinking water, and this made them nobodies, ciphers, absolute non-entities. (26-27)

He calls his own party the 'Party of Power', a 'Revolutionary Party'. He eulogizes his party and claims, "even the sticks and stones knew that the only credential that'd ever matter for and to the party was the gun" (26). Gun implicates the hardware of power what is legitimately preserved, and if necessary, used by the power-structure that stratifies the society in terms of 'power' and 'out of power'. This compartmentalizing disposition on the part of the power-structure marginalizes a segment of people out of power, and thus liberty does not appeal every individual with equal

meaning. Thus, it is conspicuous that power has the capability to transform human beings into knowable-"that is, controllable "subjects"" (Taylor 303). The disposition of eliminating opposition or counter discourse is inherent in colonial legacy. This task of silencing and making inactive becomes easier for the oppressive hegemony because, "counter discourse cannot ultimately offer 'genuine revolution ... since its engagement with the hegemonic discourse it is attacking involves it in a complicit relationship with such discourse" (Thiem 62). Hegemonic discourse deliberately accommodates the emerging counter discourse to a certain extent and creates a space of negotiation. Because of being accommodated by the hegemonic power-structure, counter discourse gets weakened and loses its impetus to a great extent to fight it back. Hence, the coup that deposes the Old Horse cannot ensure democracy in Jidada. Even the goat called Destiny after nearly one decade that dramatically appears in the scene with a flickering hope of stability and justice in the country, fails to sustain it any longer and the country is left into the quicksand of disillusionment and hopelessness.

Also, NoViolet Bulawayo's Glory presents a scathing excursion into the power game. Absolute power corrupts absolutely - this maxim can be justified after being acquainted with the narrative of the power game played by the father of the nation. Old Horse who takes resort to every sort of evil means, i.e., killing, torturing, persecuting, threatening and exiling ironically assumes the title of the 'Father of the Nation'. The narrative of this fiction also deconstructs the paradox that independence connects. Before independence when people struggle for it, they may considerably come to a single platform of solidarity. But after independence people get divided if the power goes to the hands of a dictator. For ensuring absolute power there always works a deliberate politics. It divides the people into liberators and nonliberators. The forcefully branded non-liberators are called nobodies, ciphers and absolute nonentities. All these are done only to ensure and concretize absolute power.

As the narrative moves on, it is found that jidada, the fictional country is led by an old Horse who is mostly controlled by his ambitious wife Dr. Sweet Mother whose "[P]ursuit of glory throws the seat of power into a general state of disorder, it also splits up the party of power itself into numerous factions" (45). Her talk is like a vomit.

She verbally attacks whomever she assumes to be a threat to power. She is a donkey with a PhD which she is awarded by a university whom she influences illegally. Even the vice-president Tuvy, who literally refers to Robert Mugabe's Vice-President Emerson Mnangagwa falls victim to the conspiracy of Dr. Sweet Mother. Tuvy is involved in a fatal car accident, though narrowly escapes death. As Tuvy has some hope, as Dr. Sweet Mother senses, to be the president of the state in future, he falls victim to conspiracy and finally he is forced to flee to South Africa for saving his life. Anybody in line to rule next is not safe in Iidada, a country with a -da and another -da. These da's remind the readers of T. S. Eliot's borrowing the three da's from the *Upanishad* and incorporating them into his "The Waste Land", putting emphasis on the practice of these three da's, that is, 'datta', 'dayadvam' and 'damiyata' by the Waste-landers for the regeneration of hope and spiritual vitality essential for making the world a better and habitable place which will ensure coexistence of all diverse communities of people on a singular platform of fellow feeling and humanity. On the other hand, the name of the fictional country with a -da and another -da sounds quite ironical as there exists no practice of fellow-feeling and coexistence, but only conspiracy and persecution.

While such conspiracy, killing, persecution and tyranny are going on, the average animals do not pose any protest or resistance. No outcry from any corner of the society is raised against all these injustices. Jolijo, an accomplice of Tuvy, out of wonder, questions. "Didn't they know that if they didn't stop this injustice today, tomorrow it was their turn? That none of them was safe until they were all safe?" (56) In such a precarious situation, General Judas Goodness Reza's name comes to Tuvy's mind. But he believes none except the pitbull who, as he assumes, can give him defense against conspiracy as Napoleon in the *Animal Farm* cannot take Snowball in his confidence and ultimately banishes him.

A nexus exists among the army personnel—General Talent Ndiza, General Musa Moya, a stout boerboel with enormous eyes, General Saint Zhon, an arrogant German Shepherd, General Lovemore Shava, a serene faced pit-bull. Every dog of this gang of defenders puts on uniform with the imprint of the face of the Father of the Nation. In such a paradoxical atmosphere of belief and disbelief when Tuvy flees to South Africa, a

sanitized military coup takes place and the Father of the Nation is deposed. True, power inherently tends to turn itself into an absolute force. It tolerates no resistance and no opponent. Hence, truly Jidada gradually turns into a country of one party, the party in power. The Old Horse, the Father of the Nation, enjoyed uncontested power for forty years. Even after his being dethroned Tuvy, like Napoleon in Orwell's *Animal Farm* turns into an epitome of absolute power.

Furthermore, power is constructed by the ingredients of consent and coercion. When arguments fail coercion is enforced. Fascism, as it does not believe in consent or convincing, applies force terribly to create panic among the people. The Father of the Nation, being insisted by Dr. Sweet Mother and her future circle, has formed an elite squad of dogs:

...whose loyalty sprang first from blood because in Jidada with a –da and another –da, blood was everything. Or, failing that, they advised he enlists a Guard made up of Zombie Cheetahs or Zombie lions with no connections to life except to be of service to him in order that he totally eliminates all and any possibility of disloyalty. The Father of the Nation had never failed to laugh and wave a dismissive hoof at what he considered far-fetched and paranoid suggestions, saying, 'This is jidada, my dogs love me, they will never do anything to me, in fact they'll die for me'. (79-80)

His source of confidence is not the average animals as it is usually found in a democratic country where theoretically people are the source of power. The Father of the Nation uses his army, police and other state apparatuses to persecute the people and continue his autocratic rule.

The old Horse enjoys absolute power, and for perpetuating his power he, like a typical political leader, misuses religion. Sometimes religion is deliberately interpreted as an apparatus to emotionally blackmail the average animals. This is the reason for which it is found, when military coup occurs and the Old Horse is taken into custody of the Army General, he desperately defends himself and his absolute power by referring to God, Who, according to him, appoints him the president of the country. He says to the General of the Army:

Let me tell you, only God, who appointed me, will tell me to rest or retire, not you despicable back-stabbing sons of hyenas! And you may think you're clever but I promise you're in for a surprise! This is Jidada, my very own Jidada with a-da and another-da we're talking about; Just wait and see; you think the children of the nation will accept this? You think Africa will accept this? You think the world will accept this? I know, and you know, and God knows and the sun knows and the land knows and the air knows and the ancestors know, that my animals will never ever stand for this unconstitutional criminality, this travesty, this abomination. (82-83)

The Old Horse hypocritically defends his dictatorship by using his religious ideology, though apparently it is not his practice. He breaks constitution and grabs power illegally. But, ironically he calls coup illegal and unconstitutional.

True, when unconstitutional government goes on for a long time and people's hopes are crushed, outburst of mass-resentment becomes inevitable. It is the fate of almost all the African autocratic leaders. Almost in every African country where dictatorship prevails and democracy fails, military coup became inevitable. In the fictional country Jidada, the Old Horse who suppresses the opposition party cruelly for a long time and to whom no other political party can exist except his own is ultimately deposed because of his cruel autocracy, utter corruption, suppression of the opposition, rigging in the general election and intolerance. The narrator of the novel finds out some causes of the military coup in Jadada. According to him:

> Because failure of leadership can change the least of an animal. Because callous governance can change the heart of an animal. Because corruption can change the heart of an animal. Because poverty can change the heart of an animal. Because tyranny can change the least of animal. Because rigged elections can change the least of an animal." (83)

The narrator further diagnoses the cause behind the military coup and the deposition of the dictator in the following words:

"Because crushed hopes, betrayed dreams, the broken promise of independence- all of it – had changed our once patient, loyal hearts so that when the father of the Nation was waiting for us to show the Defenders how much we loved and needed him, to rise up in his name, we instead poured into the streets to help them finish what they had started, yes, tholukuthi to put the nail in the coffin. (83-84)

Jidada was once a colony. But under the leadership of the Old Horse, it again turns into a colony as the people with free thinking or with thoughts different from the Old Horse do not have any chance to come to power. Hence, after the fall of the Old Horse, the members of the opposition party come out to the public streets and embrace the members of the party of the Old Horse. Actually, liberty is powerful enough to bring diverse ideologies together. The narrator says:

Animals wearing the Jidada party regalia and animals wearing the opposition party regalia marched and danced together and the Father of the Nation stared at the spectacle in stack feeling sick, feeling faith, feeling betrayed, because his regimes had spent all those years creating a Jidada wherein it shouldn't have been possible for animals of the opposite parties to ever stand together in the name of one Jidada. (85)

To ensure hegemony upon a people powerstructure usually adopts two strategies- one negotiation and the other coercion. Negotiation ensures consent, and if the dominated party gives consent or recognition to the power-structure, then it can easily continue its dominance and hegemony upon the people. Besides, hegemony goes on side by side with negotiation. On the other hand, dominance believes in the application of power with derision to the people's consent. As a result, hegemony is more effective than dominance. If power goes on through negotiation, it may evade resistance or counter discourse tactfully. But if it goes through coercion, it runs through the risk of being resisted vehemently on the part of the public and deposed. The 'Father of the Nation', that is, the Old Horse adopts coercion to enjoy absolute power upon the animals of Jidada. Hence, when coercion fails he is left with no alternative; rather he is to give in to the protest and expectation of the mass animals. The placards demonstrated in the streets by the animals on the day of military coup expose their rooted resentment and anxiety. A goose walks on the public street with the procession and shows a sign,

"Down with corruption" (86). A goat carries a placard whose sign says, "Leadership is Not Sexually Transmitted' (86). All these words are an outburst of the suppressed desire for democracy among the animals that have been ruled for nearly four decades, having no chance to share the power as it usually occurs in a democratic country. Anyway, seeing this great change in the animals the Old Horse's heart breaks. Those who once loved him much are now giving slogans against him and they no sure loved him. This shift of disposition also refers to the paradigm shift of shifting from an autocratic civil powergovernment to a dictator military government. It is not the triumph of the animals. It is the triumph of some shrewd army officers who, due to the failure of public leadership, intervenes in the government. The most fatal aspect of the dictatorship is that it does not allow any environment congenial for the birth of a leader who can aptly shoulder the nation ahead in future. In this very vacuum of leadership army penetrates itself and confiscates power. Hence, democracy does not visit Jidada even after the Old Horse signs the resignation letter.

However, people are soon frustrated when they find that even the army gets submerged in corruption. People's hopes and resilience end in smoke. In such a situation, while the people are ruthless and desperately searching for a leader who would lead them to an optimistic destination. But at the end, very dramatically a goat called Destiny returns from exile. It claims with emphasis that during the dictatorship it was in exile. Now it has come back to its village. Other animals gather round it. But very soon Destiny frustrates them. She realizes that if anyone who has been in selfimposed exile from a place which is called home-if that home still contains the love of family or community - will surely feel these works right now. Thus, like a typical African novel, Glory ends with an air of illusive optimism.

Actually, *Glory*'s universality and authenticity lie in its unique narrative dedicated to anatomizing power dynamics. During the postcolonial period, political failure has become a common phenomenon in many African countries. *The New Yorker* in its review on May 2, 2022 asserts, "Bulawayo's chronicle of the new government's corruption and the old one's brutality dramatizes Zimbabwean history while also illuminating the challenges of many developing nations". It is undeniable that Africa's

strength is its diversity, and its weakness also lies in its diversity. It has a long, meaningful, rich and variegated tradition and the political success will embrace that very leader who will be able to accommodate the immense diversity of Africa. NoViolet Bulawayo critiques this issue taking resort to allegory, a potential rhetorical device which saves this novel from turning into a political propaganda. The final tone of passimism of the novel is truly justified when it is found that even after Robert Mugabe, during the regime of Emmerson Mnagagwa the US government has sanctioned him, his wife and senior government officials for their alleged involvement in corruption and human rights abuses and confiscated their wealth in the USA. In this way, the novel allegorically opens up the continuous political failure of the fictional African country leading to neo-colonialism. The government after independence from the colonial captivation failed and could not keep pace with the expectations of the local people in Jidada. One of the most potent reasons of this failure is that the independent country cannot form a kind of nation-state, and also, it fails to develop nationhood with the indigenous ingredients of its own culture and way of thinking. The electoral system in Jidada is formed in the format provided by the West. Even human rights, specifically, the rights of the 'femals' are proposed to be preserved because the West loves 'femals'. In this connection, it is necessary to clarify that Jidada is inhabited by animals and their personhood is usually marked by mals and femals indicating masculinity and femininity respectively. After the revolution and the fall of the Old Horse, the President in Charge feels the necessity to return to democracy. Hence, an electoral process is to be followed for implementing this process. Reforms are also felt to be essential in different sectors of the country. Rights of the 'mals' are to be preserved. But the cruel irony is that all these epic tasks are proposed to be done to please the West, the imperialist power which in the name of globalization and multiculturalism is going on with the mission of neo-colonization. The Minister of Business advises Tuvius Delight Shasha in a very farcical way:

> 'So, before they tell you, just go ahead and do it for them, tell them, without being asked, you'll carry out reforms, major reforms, reforms- reforms and not just reforms. Guarantee every kind of rights,

especially femal rights; the West loves femals. Allow for press freedoms. Say yes to national unity, yes to being tolerant to the miserable opposition and such like, whatever they say, just yes it, all of it. And of course, promise an even newer cabinet after the election. A full and proper return to democracy. Free and fair elections. Prosperity for all. An end to all forms of violence, all of it. These are things that give the Westerners orgasm,' the Minister of Business said. (125-126)

Thus, the germ of failure of the post-independence governments of many of the countries like Jidada is lying hidden here. Most of the countries that attained freedom from colonial dominance could not form a stable and durable government based on democracy as they continued the legacy of the previous colonial masters. The conflict and ambivalence that emerge out of the juxtaposition of the colonial legacy and the desire to be free from it leads most of the post-colonial countries to political failure like Jidada.

So, even after liberty Jidada is still struggling against the local oppressive system which inherits the legacy of the former colonizers. Vladimir Lenin's prediction, in this connection, seems to be very relevant. He predicts "that the peoples of the colonies and dependent countries, after waging the struggle for national liberation, will continue to fight against the fetters of the system of exploitation" (Pavlov 384). Due to the subjugation to the colonial legacy these 'fetters of the system of exploitation' are created by the power-structure which controls the thought process of the people with state apparatuses. People will continue to be led by such autocratic power-structure as long as they will let it control them, construct them, deconstruct them and reconstruct them.

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