

# Broken by Her Country of Broken Things: Memory, Resistance, and Politics of Time in NoViolet Bulawayo's *Glory* (2022)

ANIQUA MANAWAR and MUHAMMAD KAMRAN FIAZ

**Abstract:** This article presents a reading of NoViolet Bulawayo's novel *Glory* (2022) in the light of indigenous temporality and structural and administrative violence in the transition from pre-colonial to colonial, and then to postcolonial times in an imaginary African land. The study argues that structures of neocolonial violence and active erasure create a pseudo-temporality in the people of the ex postcolonies. It seeks to explore the idea of time in the postcolony, the distortion of communal past by the colonisers, the imposition of an invented past, present and future on the subjects, and the multitude's resistance to and rejection of this imposed time in an African society. The novel depicts the patterns of violence in the postcolony. The indigenous population in the novel seeks to build for them a just future. Historical consciousness of suffering and pain of the ancestors is the starting point of liberating self. Remembering and memorialising the ancestors who suffered is the first step towards it. The study gives us a key to understanding parallel democracy that decolonised nations should aim at, keeping in view the damage caused by the invader's view of progress (Western concept of development with neocolonialism) and democracy (a colonial byproduct).

**Keywords:** postcolony, resistance literature, power struggle, indigeneity, temporality, neocolonialism

## Introduction

Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past. — George Orwell, 1984

NoViolet Bulawayo's name is well-known among Anglophone African writers since her debut novel. She published her second novel *Glory* in 2022, after the critically acclaimed *We Need New Names* (2013). Both novels were shortlisted for the Booker Prize and won high praise from critics and readers. The novels tell of economic and political turmoil in her home country Zimbabwe and the attendant predicaments of the inhabitants. There is an element of melancholy

**Aniqua Manawar** is a PhD scholar of English at Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Pakistan. Her research interests are place and spatiality in the perspective of South Asian literature.

**Muhammad Kamran Fiaz** is a PhD scholar of political science at Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Pakistan. He is interested in decolonisation, modernity, democracy, resistance, and the selfhood of societies.

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ambivalence towards the homeland, butchered by the oppression of colonization followed by the despotic rule of Robert Mugabe and his accomplices.

*Glory* bears resemblance to several Orwell novels: *Animal Farm* as it is a political allegory with animal characters, and *1984* because the ruler of Jidada has the immortality and omnipresence of a Big Brother. It begins in the twilight of the forty-year oppressive rule of the Old Horse, a representation of Robert Mugabe, following his dethroning and replacement with another autocratic regime. Depicting the travails of living under a ruthless and corrupt ruler and depending on the generosity of the imperialistic world powers—who would not miss an opportunity of squeezing the rich African land dry of its resources—it traces the rule of violence and injustice preceding the people's awakening to end on an optimistic note. The novel draws from Zimbabwean folktales and a rich storytelling tradition. Critics have praised her spellbinding, stylistic prose.<sup>1</sup> She utilizes multiple narrative voices, including: a third person omniscient narrator; oral history; and Twitter threads indicating people's increasing dependence on social media for political expression in the time of suppression of dissent.<sup>2</sup> Despite its experimental narrative techniques, the book does not feel disjointed.<sup>3</sup> The protagonist is a goat named Destiny, a self-exiled dissident with a family history of violence and torture at the hands of the regime during the *Gukurahundi* (a genocide carried out by the Mugabe regime from 1982 to 1987).

This article presents a postcolonial temporal reading of *Glory* highlighting the significance of collective resistance in the face of the pseudo-temporality imposed by rulers. It argues that people of the postcolony have been recolonized, forcing them to pendulum between past and present in "a bloody historical cycle."<sup>4</sup> The dictator fixes them in a simulacrum within which past, present, and future are controlled by the power structure, hence stunting the growth of the people (development of the society) while severing their relation with a collective history and identity. It constructs a false sense of identity and widens the gulf between the 'representors' and the 'representatives'.

This article accounts for the tools and techniques that politicians in the postcolony use for manipulating people's sense of time to inject them with a false temporality as well as the strategies and techniques used for hurling them into the past, driving their thoughts to a dreamt of future or glory. It will also highlight ways in which the persecuted populace of these autocratic rulers—through sporadic, yet continual resistance—can disrupt the cyclical temporal existence imposed on them. Any analysis of the postcolony involves looking into a convoluted sociopolitical reality and its varied implications. The study displays the nonlinear, noncoherent, and entangled nature of social reality and the subject's idea of the present in the postcolony. Mbembe claims that current scholarship should study 'time-as-lived' in the African continent.<sup>5</sup> Building on this idea, we argue that the time postcolonial subjects experience is not their own, rather one imposed by rulers along with the vestiges of the colonial perception of time. It is not until the people take time in their own hands that they will be truly liberated.

## Politics of Time

Time and temporality are important areas of conflict/contest in contemporary theory and politics. The control of time gains importance in postcolonial societies as they possess a triple-layered history of precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial times. Ahmed draws a comparison of

pre-colonial and postcolonial societies beginning with the presence of a “fractured and “emasculated” past in these transitional societies.<sup>6</sup> The past is prevented from overwhelming subjects and from “assuring the continuity of communal lives” by the new world of capitalism, technology, and industry. However, it exists as a potent force because “the tyranny of contemporary Third World life” coerces the people to find solace in the memory of a glorious past. The other alternative is angry protest and the two may intermingle at times. It is, however, notable that these are essentially existential hopes caused by contemporary crises. They are not of the past, but of a wistful longing to return to the idealized world that will rid the subject of contemporary squalor and wretchedness.

Orientalist portrayals of Indians represented them as regressive because their conception of time is devoid of a linear flow of events. The attempts of early Indologists to draw a chronological history of India were thwarted because of a lack of distinction between myth and history in Indian philosophy and folklore. It automatically led to a regressive view of time. Because time ran in circles, there could be no dialectical change or progress. It was assumed that cyclic and linear times were opposed and mutually exclusive. As this view was projected by western scholars, they presented it as in opposition to the western concept of time. By doing this, western scholars may engage in an undue simplification of the diversity and complexity of Indian temporal philosophies. Native temporal consciousness was, on the contrary, based on this interminably recurring cycle of time. Thapar, however, proposes the argument that “cyclic time does not preclude other categories of time.” There is no sharp demarcation between linear and cyclic times and the intervening area has “a range of mediatory positions” in which the two may coexist or overlap.<sup>7</sup> There are similar explanations for how westerners perceive the African view of time. To Mbembe, no temporality exists exclusively in a given age, rather several temporalities coexist so that “different forms of absence become mixed together.” This time is the “time of entanglement.”<sup>8</sup> Mbembe ascribed to Biblical stories that western view of time as linear and moving towards progress with eventual culmination in the apocalypse.

Similarly, a study of temporal and spatial notions of the indigenous peoples explains that they are either placed into the past or are “inserted into a present” not of their own choosing or making.<sup>9</sup> There is a need to counter this “amnesic” view that presents the natives as “anachronisms” in the present. It is argued that there is a need of reconceptualising and narrating the present to make it more inclusive and “an examination of the principles, procedures, inclinations, and orientations that constitute settler time as a particular way of narrating, conceptualising, and experiencing temporality.” As in Einstein’s notion of time, time is not “neutral, universal, and inherently shared.” One’s temporality depends on the frame of reference, time of reference being one’s position as well as relative motion. But the accounts of relativity repudiate the fixity or mutuality of the present. Emphasis on indigenous ways of perception and experience of time brings out their resistance against settler temporal imperatives.<sup>10</sup>

Innerarity contends that time, along with space, has become the center stage of global politics, as politics controls spatial as well as temporal aspects of human life and work.<sup>11</sup> “The control of time is power,” Innerarity states. The advent of technology and gadgets has shifted the control of time and rhythms of daily life from nature to human hands, therefore the connection between time and power has become strengthened. He goes on to claim that “the

center of human conflicts has shifted from space to time." Hence, the autocratic and hegemonic ambitions of governments are manifested in controlling people's temporal resources, "taking time away from other people, [and] controlling the temporal hegemony of time." This creates a conflict of interest in diverse temporal aspects of social life, from daily activities to national economic and political interests. It allows the formation of a center-periphery dynamic, with marginalized communities placed on the periphery of the temporal sphere by a "discriminatory acceleration" of progress making it difficult for everyone to keep up with. In an interesting study on Foucault and the temporality of resistance, Lilja points out how Foucault's theorizing of time interlinks time, power, and resistance.<sup>12</sup> Resistance has its own patterns of temporality, e.g. instant resistance or prolonged resistance. Different forms of resistance offer visions of alternate or utopian temporalities and future. Resistance can manifest in many forms depending on the nature and rigidity of the circumstances, for instance through body, memory, storytelling, and remembrance "to renegotiate the dialogue about human limitations."<sup>13</sup> Time could also be used as a means of resistance.

Despite the recurring patterns of violence and oppression, characters in Bulawayo's novel unceasingly challenge the status quo, often at great personal risk. The novel is signified by its depiction of people's resistance to the patterns of tyranny that limit their access to units of time. There are also episodes of disturbance in this cyclical pattern of violence. Resistance is manifested through protests, voting, and remembering the past. The return of Destiny to Jidada is a sign to revisit and renegotiate the past even in the times of horrific precedents. Remembrance is how Destiny "remembers how, with their votes—and her very first vote—the citizens demanded change, called for a better Jidada, a New Jidada."<sup>14</sup> The elections are symbolized with the arrival of spring, creating the space for resistance, where people can hope to dismantle the shackles of regime.

### **Resistance in the Postcolony**

Following the independence of many erstwhile colonies, the administrative apparatus of exploitation lingered on. The local masters were new to power, perpetuating and fortifying the legacy of systematic oppression, marginalization, and corruption at different levels. Resistance, with the realization that the struggle against colonial master's stooges who belong to the very land they got independence for, is the real and tough path towards decolonization.<sup>15</sup> Resistance provided a space of meaningful existence to move forward and struggle toward a future based on egalitarian socio-political structures that coalesced with cultural identity patterns. The brutal inhumane structural silencing of the people made them conscious to mold their existential patterns into a loud resistance.<sup>16</sup> The resistance does not necessarily invoke active participation. Societies with authoritarian regimes working on new colonial agendas of capitalist corporate sector greed are dispossessing the local communities of their pride, identity, resources and traditions on the pretext of modernity and cultural transformation.<sup>17</sup> In such societies, existence itself is a protest and resistance is the only way to exist and survive. The survival and existence of a culture relies on the ground of its roots.<sup>18</sup>

Musing on contemporary discourse pertaining to Africa and the issue of race in today's world, Mbembe claims that "Europe is no longer the center of gravity of the world."<sup>19</sup> This reshaping of discourses has its significant implications and consequences and it "presents

dangers—for critical thought.” He deplores the inadequacy of modern Eurocentric critical theory to understand Africa. The African subject is painted as an exotic exhibit at best and a brute at worst. African society is viewed, as opposed to the sophisticated and progressive modern societies of the west, as traditional and simplistic, their dominant traits being: (i) facticity (existing temporally and spatially in the immediate, without any ideological foundations), and arbitrariness, (emphasis on myths and fable as constitutive and defining epistemologies) (ii) custom and tradition as the driving force instead of change and (iii) supremacy of persons or entities as individuals. He explains how western scholarship has given Africa a ‘negative interpretation’ i.e. it is what the west is not. It possesses no attributes of its own but always possesses a lesser, negative, demeaned, and corrupted version of western qualities. In short, the African subject is relegated to a place of non-being or nothingness. Similarly, Majid is of the view that postcolonial theory, instead of representing the subject, “interpellates the non-Western cultures” which are solidified into Eurocentric frame of consciousness.<sup>20</sup> Mbembe argues that contemporary theory does not show Africa possessing a “complex order, rich in unexpected turns, meander[ing] and chang[ing] course.”<sup>21</sup> African society is incomplete and unstable, which does not necessarily lead to disintegration and chaos in the absence of a center. The African subject is not the product of dominant discourses and representations and economic structure, as social theory suggests, but is also a “reflexive subject” who “engages in meaningful acts” of doing, seeing, hearing, tasting, feeling and touching and “socially produced and objectified practices.” The result of viewing African societies from a western vantage point is that the African subject and African society and economy appear “as the sign of a lack” and that in contemporary theory “we know nearly everything that African states, societies, and economies are not, we still know absolutely nothing about what they actually are.” Therefore, Africa must be seen in its “multiplicity and simultaneities, its presence and absences.” Mbembe and Chabal & Deloz reject a dichotomous view of African society as divided between the ruler and the ruled, the elite and the poor. They posit that a relationship between these classes is unavoidable.<sup>22</sup>

### **State of Exclusion: Jidada with a -da and Another -da**

A state working to keep its elite in the position of privilege creates a system of segregation as seen in *Glory*. This system works on ideological and economic levels to keep the upper class abreast with the pace of the world, while keeping the lower classes behind. From the very beginning of the novel, Bulawayo sets up a narrative that emphasizes Jidada, the fictional country where the novel is set, as a state of exclusion and segregation. Mbembe defines the postcolony as “a given historical trajectory—that of societies recently emerging from the experience of colonisation and the violence which the colonial experience involves,” identifying violence, bequeathed to it by the Empire, as a key element in its structure. It is “a state of exception” and segregation, functioning on a complex system of walls and bridges between its population based on political affiliation, class, caste, race, and gender etc.<sup>23</sup> The segregation is not only on social and spatial fronts, but also on temporal fronts. This is a conscious strategy to keep the ruling elite one step ahead on the social ladder as well as in development progress.

The elites of Jidada enjoy the immense privilege of being in the inner circle of the Father of the Nation. The symbolic opening chapter lays out the pattern of segregation the state follows.

The ruling elite and the common public are gathered at the Independence Day ceremony, with the elite seated on raised platforms. "The rich and the poor do not play together."<sup>24</sup> The nobility possess riches and rights denied to the ordinary citizens. The text glorifies the Old Horse and pushes the public to the boundary by silencing their voices. We hear only from the leaders and the only dissenting display by the women is brutally crushed. The gulf between the two classes is emphasized by the introduction of the Jidada Defenders with their arsenal reinforces the authoritarian nature of the regime. Their "violent, morbid" nature discourages dissent. The grand entrance of The Father of the Nation with hyperbolic titles ("Ruler whose reign is longer than the nine life spans of a hundred cats") further emphasizes his absolute power.

The regime doles out its largesse to a certain faction to keep them satisfied, hence creating a class of people that keeps the edifice from complete collapse and yet looking for its own survival in the precarious system. For example, a university is ordered to award the Old Horse's young wife Marvellous the highest possible degree and she is given a doctorate "before you could say diss, for dissertation."<sup>25</sup> There are conflicting emotions among the people about this rampant corruption. When Marvellous usurps people's land and the people relent because "where [else] was she going to farm? In the air? On a tree? Inside her mansion?"<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, there is a quiet discontent and resentment brewing among people, indicated in the interactions happening on covert social media and cyber spaces.

Violence and persecution are essential components of states based on segregation. The state exercises its right of violence to maintain its existence. In the postcolony, there is a "banality of power."<sup>27</sup> The people of Jidada are mostly silent because they have developed an agreement with the State. Their voices are suppressed but they have their own private means of individual expression. For example, social media is their space of protest. It is "the Other country" with different rules and no oppression. The blunt violence employed by the State to crush any rebellion silences them. At the Independence Day celebration, "cows moored, cats meowed, sheep bleated, bulls bellowed, ducks quacked, donkeys brayed, goats bleated, horses neighed, pigs grunted, chickens clucked, peacocks screamed, and geese cackled."<sup>28</sup> They can produce a loud, excited cacophony but no articulate, legible words until they organise their dissent into a systematic, collective force. When the Father of the Nation is finally ousted from power, a nameless person representing the common people of Jidada speaks. She regrets the people's excessive deliberation, dilatoriness, and powerlessness, yet they celebrate.

Policing in Jidada is elaborate and pervasive, keeping a check on people's private and public lives. The imprint of the Old Horse's face on shirts and banners made his presence an abstract idea. He was a presence in his absence, invoking fear and caution in people. "His beady eyes were watching the children of the nations from every possible place and from every direction and from everywhere in the Country."<sup>29</sup> The ubiquitous father is like a god watching his children and punishing them when anyone crosses a line. The multitudes are paralyzed in this oppressed state. Awaited dreams of liberation from colonial forces were thwarted by the Father of the Nation. The multitudes struggle but have no representation in the affairs of their motherland even after supposed liberation. The postcolony perpetuates and develops an elaborate system of signs, symbols and images, a fetish meant to institutionalize and legitimize its rule. As any departure from or challenge to them can result in violence, the citizens develop their own system of ideas and signs which can serve as a trail to trace state violence. The

celebrations of Jidadan Independence Day are a show of power, a means to reinforce the mechanism of signs in people's minds, an exhibition of the power dynamics of the country. An interesting sign is the image of the Horse on the shirts every state official is wearing. They appear in public with their ruler's face stamped on their apparel. Despite the scorching heat and the suffocation caused by it, the crowd wears the regalia.

The colonizers left nations impoverished at the time of their departure. It was to the benefits of the colonial masters to leave these nations in a state of shallow slogans and few resources. Because it is only then that these nations will be dragged into the neocolonial structure of aid and development.<sup>30</sup> The Savior of the Nation in *Glory*—on a mission of “liberating Jidada all over again”—cannot help going to the West because “the New Dispensation wouldn't quite happen without the West's money.”<sup>31</sup> To lure the West into aiding Jidada, which will eventually fill the bank accounts of the nobility, the party uses catch phrases like liberty, equality, and female freedom, despite the fact that Jidada's socio-political culture is patriarchal at its core. The political system of Jidada is what Marvellous calls a patriarchal organism. She muses on the androcentric power structure, serving only the men's interests. To be in power, one had to possess a fine set of testicles. The resentment around her imminent rule is partly because she is a woman.

The ruler takes the place of god, following them becomes an act of worship. However unwilling the populace is to prostrate before him, they have no other choice. The dictator is the father not only figuratively but also literally as he has fathered a great number of his people. This points to his licentious behaviour and the liberties he took with women. The appearance of the Sisters of the Disappeared, a group of women whose relatives have been killed, abducted, or simply disappeared, appear on stage naked as a sign of protest. They are removed hastily but the damage has been done. The holy ceremony has been disrupted by a sacrilegious sight. After they are led out by the police, Marvellous harangues the audience about female virtue and the damage done to the countrymen by wayward women. This shows the layered apparatus of exclusion and exception at work. Not only have the women been made outcasts because of the pariah status of their relatives, but also because they are diverging from the set codes of morality and urging others to follow them. This also shows how the common people use the tactic of the obscene and taboo as a sign of protest, as highlighted by Mbembe in “Aesthetics of Vulgarly.”<sup>32</sup> When their voices are silenced and their complaints go unheard, they use alternative methods of drawing attention.

### **Pseudo-temporality**

Time in a postcolony, as Mbembe states, is, firstly, non-linear. It is an interlinking of past, present and future.<sup>33</sup> The three may coexist or one may change into the other. Mbembe describes commandment as a system of dominance and authority to control people for absolute submission in the postcolonial states. It's a structural relationship between rulers and subjects based on arbitrariness in the postcolony. Rested on a distorted notion of right and a reaffirmation of power through violence, it is perpetrated through institutions via symbolic and performative acts of sovereignty.<sup>34</sup> The novel's first chapter reveals the pattern of time in which both the commandment and the population of Jidada can relive the past and imagine the future. The ruling class has ability to invoke the past at will. The Father of the Nation not only has

vivid visions of the past glory, he infuses his listeners with his reveries of bygone days, reincarnating through his words and memory “the land of milk and honey,” and the “promised land.”<sup>35</sup> It is at once an allusion to national as well as religious narratives. The Father of the Nation embodies the past of the nation. The nation is reminded of it through his person. However, apart from igniting the flames of the past in the present, the future is taking place simultaneously. Dr Sweet Mother, Marvellous, the vice president, and his revolutionary cronies are striving towards a future of their choice. Their future is one of friendly relations with the west as well as China. Both these powers hold potential for bringing a flood of foreign money, thereby enriching the capitalist elite of Jidada.

Secondly, time in a postcolony is made up of disturbances. The novel mentions of a bloodied history beginning with the War of Liberation and Jidada saw many upheavals. Political turmoil is brewing as the story starts and is intensified into a full-scale crisis with the fall of the Old Horse. Tuvius Delight, former vice president and subsequent ruler of Jidada, usurps the Old Horse's position, making promises of the “New Dispensation” which will free Jidadans from the despotic and corrupt system inherited from the colonizers. Tuvy turns out to be a populist leader, cashing in on the emotions of the masses. However, Tuvy's rule turns out to be worse than that of the Old Horse. The Horse was under the delusion that he was serving his people and that his people loved him, while Tuvy's rule is blatantly corrupt and oppressive. Levy has pointed out the cyclical structure of the novel's events.<sup>36</sup> From the revolution of 1983 to the revolution of 2019, it's a story of unending misery and little hope.

Thirdly, time in the postcolony is not irreversible. The political landscape of Jidada is undergoing what can be called a revolution of the revolution. Tuvy wants to save the Revolution from the Revolution. Hence, the present in Jidada is interlocked with the past and the future as a struggle within a struggle. The regime's time is cyclic, therefore static. Old Horse asserts that he will never go away. There is a sense of permanence and immutability, not subject to normal laws of passing time. The Old Horse's reign is “longer than the nine life spans of a hundred cats” and he is “the longest serving leader in a continent of long-serving leaders.”<sup>37</sup> The Jidadans recall him ruling the land for as long as they can remember and so do their grandparents. However, when the coup removes him and the new ruler supplants him, the new ruler's policies are even more brutal and oppressive. The continual persecution of citizens is permanent.

As Innerarity points out, power means regulating people's daily life rhythms. In *Glory*, standing and waiting is an event.<sup>38</sup> The novel begins with a state ceremony which the Old Horse has to address, but is late in arriving. Everyone is crowded in sweltering heat under the sun, wearing multiple layers of the party regalia, waiting, so disgruntled that “they could have razed the whole of Jidada with their frustration.”<sup>39</sup> When some start to leave complaining about “having work and things to do, about places to go,” attracting a sizable crowd with them, they are stalled by dogs “armed with batons, ropes, clubs, tear-gas canisters, shields, guns.” The sight of these made the dissenters retrace their steps with their “miserable tails between their legs.”<sup>40</sup> The ceremony goes for hours on end, with each leader using the same populist rhetoric, which people have listened to for decades. The Old Horse's speech is protracted by his senility and proclivity to daydream. The masses chant slogans and cheer their leaders, but inwardly are tired and frustrated.



The same pattern is seen on streets and in houses. In the chapter “Queuenation,” Bulawayo describes in detail how people’s daily lives are disrupted by having to stand in long queues for petrol and food items. Their hopes of a better future are dashed to the ground when Tuvy’s government levies further taxes on commodities that are already in short supply. They realize that they were “standing exactly where they’d stood a decade before” during the inflation crisis of Old Horse’s government.<sup>41</sup> The people have learnt “biblical levels of patience” from years of experience of standing and waiting.<sup>42</sup> Their bodies have grown accustomed to “the posture of waiting” and now assume it mechanically. They are sitting, squatting, and sleeping, “disoriented and quiet and haunted by the trauma of previous queues.”<sup>43</sup> This also highlights the cyclical and repetitive nature of people’s misery to which they are condemned by successive governments. In the following chapters, Bulawayo describes how power outages upset people’s daily chores and day-to-day activities by regulating the hours they can expect electricity and gas.

The commandment forces Jidada into mediaeval times. It is a violent form of government which people are expected to live with for an indefinite period of time.<sup>44</sup> It is a sort of pseudo-temporality that can be imposed by the ruler or the colonized or can be assumed by the subject as an escape from the contemporary. The two are interchangeable as there exists a ‘connivance’ or ‘conviviality’ between the ruler and the ruled. It is a compromise or complicity in which the subjects allow the ruler to hold them captive in exchange for some trinkets. Another manifestation of this phenomenon is in the ways people “guide, deceive, and toy with power” without giving in or taking the offensive.<sup>45</sup> The same can be said of their sense of temporality. It is also the people who push their own temporality on the rulers. Their time is warped by the people’s visions and dreams.

In Jidada, the wistful longing and dreams of an indefinite time in the past (pre-colonial and colonial) mingle with the dreams of the future. This longing and dreams germinate from the misery of the postcolonial present, repeating a pendulum motion for their invented past which results in lack of any cohesive public ideology. People, in their wretchedness, wish for the colonial times to return, when the white man ruled but there was some modicum of order in the land. Then they reminisce about the long-lost indigenous times. Their feelings towards them are ambiguous, as that time was also rife with disorder and war. However, the concept and mechanism of power was not as centric and suffocating as after liberation, for people were able to maintain communal ties and self-sufficiency, they lived a comparatively freer life than under the present autocratic regime. The toppling of the Old Horse’s regime gives them hope, but that is soon shattered when the usurper turns out to be worse and more violent than the old one. And yet “it is easier to rise against a white oppressor than an oppressor who looks like your mother’s child.”<sup>46</sup> This myopic vision and asymmetry with the present leave Jidadans in a tunnel for a long time from which escape is impossible.

### **Indigenous Temporalities and Memories as Forms of Resistance**

Riffet Abbas, well-known author in the Seraiki language of Pakistan, when asked where indigenous time strikes, rejoined that indigenous time is struck on *dhol* (drum) or local instruments.<sup>47</sup> Time is inextricably linked to the indigenous identity and must be reclaimed by the people trying to gain freedom. Time becomes a symbol of resistance. There are various ways

in which resistance can be used for regaining control of time. Counter-conducts offer possibilities of a 'final time' which will put an end to the indefinite governmentality of the state. For Foucault, it is "an end of time, a major rupture, where a new timeless phase will start without the time of politics of the state."<sup>48</sup>

The dreams of a promised utopian land are impossible to realize because of the violence and injustice entrenched in the system. In their delusion, people think their oppressor is their saviour. But their slow progress towards dissent, their silent but seething discontent does not mean complete acquiescence. "Time saunters, drags, crawls, but it's a way to move, after all, running isn't always arriving."<sup>49</sup> In the second part of the story, when Destiny returns after years of self-exile, she connects the links of her past and her forefathers with the present. Her arrival and realization coincide with the movement of rebellion going on in the country. The people have realized that to gain true freedom, they must reconnect with their indigenous roots and work collectively towards building a future. Destiny, the banished goat who returns to Jidada, plays a significant role. Goats are seen as a "questioning animal," the spirit of inquisitiveness and inquiry of their selves become the "destiny" of Jidadans.<sup>50</sup>

The populace of Jidada adopts several modes of counter-conduct and covert resistance. It is more conspicuous in the smaller communities in which precolonial ways and beliefs are still practiced. Community and collective resistance by preserving the memories of the dead is a means of defiance in the face of authority. Bulawayo has said that in her novels, the characters "evoke the community because we really don't live our lives as individuals."<sup>51</sup> The use of the plural first person 'we' and 'us' in the novel represents the collective thoughts of Jidadans. These are the instances when the countryfolk sound most united. On the day of general elections, the united hopes and the silent rage of all Jidadans are reflected in the narrative. They voice anger at watching the trending video of George Floyd's death, calling him their black brother. By an unnamed spiritual force, the people are led to the house of the Duchess, a priestess known to have communication with the ancestors. From the ambience of her house to the manner of her prayer, all break spatial and temporal boundaries as well as colonial stereotypes. Her crossing the threshold of the present to commune with the dead and her ability to predict the weather is her way of escaping the constraints the religious dogma puts on her. She is connecting with her ancestral roots and summoning the energy they provide. Her garden is full of red butterflies, a symbol of freedom and resistance. She dances to the beat of the drum and her lithe body looks "a whole century younger."<sup>52</sup> People sing traditional songs—a masquerade of the dead is carried out. The spirits rise and speak. It is temporal chaos, as opposed to the timeline the state would like to propagate. Past, present, and future coexist in a nonlinear fashion.

For Bulawayo, the act of remembrance is a potent force to keep tradition alive. By remembering, by communing with the dead, a person keeps alive the history that the rulers seek to erase. As in her prior novel, the protagonist is unable to physically visit her home, but her memory of it functions as a bridge to cross borders allowing her to "just go [there] in [her] head."<sup>53</sup> Remembering the victims of the regime's brutality becomes an act of resilience and resistance for the people. The novel's protagonist—Destiny—embodies the land's children whose future was shattered by oppression, but they still have the power to reclaim their future if they meet their past, their ancestral legacy. Destiny's act of returning to her ancestral village is

a symbolic return to the remains of the dead, of whom she has no memory but whom she must mourn. These are the violent deaths whose perpetrators are on the seat of power.

What can be one's relationship with the home where one's life did not matter? "A kind of home, yes, but also a ruin. A place of slaughter. Of massacre. Of devastation and despair. Of blood and tears. Of disruption. Of the annihilation of families and family lines."<sup>54</sup> This ambivalent relationship with the homeland, where Destiny was born but where her life was threatened, forms the basis of her abandoning all caution and becoming a dissident. Remembering is also a way of reinstating the individual sense of past, present, and future. The commandment has taken hold of the people's temporalities and instilled in them false memories, stole their visions of the future and given them instead a future that serves no one but the Commandment. Their present in continual pain and suffering, their existence meaningless. Hussain powerfully depicts the wistful longings of the battered people in the following excerpt, "[i]f a city is destroyed, the sufferings of those who lived there are forgotten at the same time. The tragedy of this war-stricken time is that our sufferings don't manage to turn into memories."<sup>55</sup>

The collective effort of remembering the dead against erasure, an event named Remembrance, emphasizes remembering and retaining their names in the postcolony, the names which their ruler could not change after almost four decades of obliteration of individual identities. That's an amazing relief for them. The governing style has consisted of creating and propagating false identities and manoeuvring historical facts of the past to lure people into chauvinism that supports the leader's egoism. When Destiny iterates the story of her ancestors to the protesting crowd, her invocation of the past, the beat of her drum upsets the status quo, the beat of oppression. The police react instantly but now the people will not be silenced. By this time, Destiny has learned not to be afraid and "[rise] above the past... [and dream] the future."<sup>56</sup> She reads from the book — "in that voice that was full of the dead" — she has written about the murder of her ancestors.<sup>57</sup> She is shot dead by the army but the silence imposed on her is only like "the inside of a seed."<sup>58</sup>

Bulawayo's work explores many forms of resistance in the inhumanely exploited society of Zimbabwe. The struggle for equal fundamental rights and true representation has become a shared journey of the people. The protest for identity and rightful place in society relies on this vibrant culture of resistance. Totalitarian regimes and its proponents did not just embark on following the violent policies of stifling social and political development. They held the reigns of the government and saw an opportunity to believe in everything assisting their power-hungry selves. The people breathe and live resistance in the postcolony. By laying claim to their lives, private and social, gaining self-expression and freedom through their own culture, they can regain their temporal orientation and create their own realities. *Glory* is a comprehensive study in violence and policing prevalent in the postcolony. It also highlights the economic oppression of the people by their own rulers in the wake of their personal greed and gain. By usurping the right of individual expression and self-assertion, by thwarting their hopes for a future, subjecting them to utter hopelessness, and warping their orientation of time, the rulers ensure their perpetual rule.

However, the novel ends on an optimistic note. The people rebel, taking their destinies in their own hands. Their centuries old histories of shared joy and happiness, pain and suffering

serve as an adhesive. The potent force of their ancestral memory is reclaimed. The remembrance of the past and connecting to the roots of their indigenous culture will bestow existential conduits of resistance that will liberate. Ursula K Le Guin stated that “any human power can be resisted and changed by human beings. Resistance and change often begin in art.”<sup>59</sup> Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* grapples with the question: “How to tell a shattered story?” The answer: “By slowly becoming everybody. No. By slowly becoming everything.”<sup>60</sup> Bulawayo's name itself is a loud expression of ‘becoming everything’ for it is the name of the place and the writer. Jidadans feel “robbed, left out of [their] own story.”<sup>61</sup> Her protagonist Destiny narrated her own story and the story of her ancestors because “sometimes stories will raise the dead.”<sup>62</sup>

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Manyika 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Cline 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Kupersmith 2022.

<sup>4</sup> Levy 2022.

- <sup>5</sup> Mbembe 2001.
- <sup>6</sup> Ahmed 1980, pp. 223-224.
- <sup>7</sup> Thapar 1996, p. 9.
- <sup>8</sup> Mbembe 2001, pp. 15-17.
- <sup>9</sup> Rifkin 2017.
- <sup>10</sup> Rifkin 2017, pp. vii-ix.
- <sup>11</sup> Innerarity 2012, pp. 78-79.
- <sup>12</sup> Lilja 2018.
- <sup>13</sup> Fiaz et al. 2023.
- <sup>14</sup> Bulawayo 2022, p. 185
- <sup>15</sup> Yacoubi and Tadié 2010.
- <sup>16</sup> Bennett 2015; Mouradian 2021; Ostler 2019.
- <sup>17</sup> Nandy 2003.
- <sup>18</sup> Atwood 1992, p. 111.
- <sup>19</sup> Mbembe 2017, p. 1.
- <sup>20</sup> Majid 2001.
- <sup>21</sup> Mbembe 2001 pp. 6-9.
- <sup>22</sup> Mbembe 2001; Chabal and Deloz 1999.
- <sup>23</sup> Mbembe 2019.
- <sup>24</sup> Bulawayo 2022, p. 4.
- <sup>25</sup> Bulawayo 2022, p. 41.
- <sup>26</sup> Bulawayo 2022, p. 20.
- <sup>27</sup> Mbembe 2001, p. 102.
- <sup>28</sup> Bulawayo 2022, p. 4.
- <sup>29</sup> Bulawayo 2022, p. 325.
- <sup>30</sup> Nandy 2003.
- <sup>31</sup> Bulawayo 2022, p. 137.
- <sup>32</sup> Mbembe 2001.
- <sup>33</sup> Mbembe 2001.
- <sup>34</sup> Mbembe 2001, p. 25.
- <sup>35</sup> Bulawayo 2022, p. 8.
- <sup>36</sup> Levy 2022.
- <sup>37</sup> Bulawayo 2022, p. 2.
- <sup>38</sup> Innerarity 2012.
- <sup>39</sup> Bulawayo 2022, p. 1.
- <sup>40</sup> Bulawayo 2022, p. 2.
- <sup>41</sup> Bulawayo 2022, p. 285.
- <sup>42</sup> Bulawayo 2022, p. 283.
- <sup>43</sup> Bulawayo 2022, p. 285.
- <sup>44</sup> Lilja 2018.
- <sup>45</sup> Bulawayo 2022, p. 128.

<sup>46</sup> Bulawayo 2022, p. 292.

<sup>47</sup> Abbas 2017.

<sup>48</sup> Lilja 2018, p. 420.

<sup>49</sup> Bulawayo 2022, p. 207.

<sup>50</sup> Roets 2004.

<sup>51</sup> Hartselle 2015.

<sup>52</sup> Bulawayo 2022, p. 209.

<sup>53</sup> Hartselle 2015.

<sup>54</sup> Bulawayo 2022, p. 335.

<sup>55</sup> Hussain 2007, p. 130.

<sup>56</sup> Bulawayo 2022, p. 356.

<sup>57</sup> Bulawayo 2022, p. 358.

<sup>58</sup> Bulawayo 2022, p. 359.

<sup>59</sup> Le Guin 2014.

<sup>60</sup> Roy 2017, p. 436.

<sup>61</sup> Bulawayo 2022, p. 71.

<sup>62</sup> Bulawayo 2022, p. 344.