

Reading Place/Space in Postcolonial Narrative: Geocriticism in the Postcolonial Context in Elizabeth Nunez's *Prospero's Daughter* and Tsitsi Dangarembga's *The Book of Not*

By

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Abstract

Literary studies have often accorded an important position to place. This is the physical setting of narrative which is one of the main literary elements. The advent of postcolonial studies witnessed an increased interest in place within literary studies. This is because, far from just constituting the setting of the events, it now played a political role. Place in postcolonial studies continues to constitute a vexed question given the ways colonialism intruded into the lands of the colonized; seizing and transforming the lands as well as displacing the indigenes. Geocriticism, for its part, is a reading practice which is specifically concerned with the treatment of place in literature. Given the involvement of postcolonial studies with questions of place and geocriticism's focus on place, this paper is interested in merging the two approaches. The paper, therefore, forges a nexus between the political preoccupation with place of postcolonial rhetoric and the geocritical outlook of place within literary texts. The aim is to conceive a definition of postcolonial geocriticism while simultaneously experimenting its application to Nunez's *Prospero's Daughter* and Dangarembga's *The Book of Not*. The main contention of this paper is that in postcolonial narratives, the interest in place and space encapsulates the myriad abuses and excesses of the colonial undertaking. Since Geocriticism is the theory that is particularly based on the literary study of place/space, it becomes interesting to experiment with it within the context of postcolonial theory to imagine ways in which place can be adequately and effectively theorized within postcolonial studies. Through this sustained attention to place, the paper creates room for a postcolonial version of literary geography.

Keywords: *Place/space, Geocriticism, postcolonialism, literary geography, postcolonial geocriticism*

Introduction

The question of place or space continues to occupy an important position in literary studies. Place in literary studies usually falls under the aspect of setting and constitutes a major element in the understanding, analysis and interpretation of texts. Within the study of literature setting is defined as the place where the actions of the text occur. But the interest in space and place are more and more moving beyond setting. The advent of green writing for example

and the related Ecocriticism brought an added importance to place, where it ceased to merely designate the physical setting of the actions of characters, to serve more as an opportunity to ascertain human actions and activities and interactions with the natural environment. Within postcolonial theory, this question has been central and this is in part because of the ways colonialism encroached upon and transformed indigenous terrains. Thus Andrew Teverson and Sara Upstone (2011) in the introduction to *Postcolonial Spaces* indicate that “the idea that place plays a significant role in how one defines one’s own identity and, equally, how that identity is defined by others is continually foregrounded in postcolonial studies” (2). Postcolonial studies has among many things examined the ways the colonial enterprise led to the seizure of indigenous lands by the colonisers, and this calls for a theorization specific to this feature of colonialism. Teverson and Upstone cite Edward Soja whose work was foundational to the privileging of spatial theory to postcolonial studies. This paper seeks to build upon this idea to propose another dimension in the theorization of place in postcolonial studies. This I propose to do through forging a nexus between two literary theories so as to provide the appropriate framework for conceptualizing this vexed question of space/place within the postcolonial context. These theories are geocriticism and postcolonial theory. The question of place occupies an important position in postcolonial criticism (Ashcroft, 2001) while Geocriticism is interested in the treatment of place in literature (Westphal, 2007). In a general sense, people define themselves in relation to a place¹¹². Within postcolonial literatures, the issue of place takes on a more crucial significance. This is because of the displacement that accompanied the colonial incursions. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin in *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) have noted that “A major feature of post-colonial literatures is the concern with place [...]” (8). Many of the formerly colonized societies of the world saw their lands usurped¹¹³ by the colonizers as many more experienced their removal to the outskirts of their own lands¹¹⁴. Thus, in postcolonial fiction, writers and critics alike have accorded significant space to the treatment of this issue. Ashcroft et al have further intimated that:

The dialectic of place and displacement is always a feature of post-colonial societies whether these have been created by a process of settlement, intervention, or a mixture of the two. Beyond their historical and cultural differences, place, displacement, and a pervasive concern with the myths of identity and authenticity are a feature common to all post-colonial literatures in english. (9)

Given the importance both postcolonialism and geocriticism lend to the

¹¹² American critic Lawrence Buell has noted that “there cannot be an *is* without a *where*”. This underscores the idea that human existence always depends on some physical space.

¹¹³ Societies such as Zimbabwe experienced the usurpation of their most fertile lands by the British colonizers which has remained a bone of contention till present day, especially due to President’s Mugabe’s relocation of these lands to black Zimbabweans.

¹¹⁴ The colonial incursion into countries like South Africa, Australia, Canada witnessed the displacement of the indigenous population to the outskirts of the country with some being held in reservation camps.

question of place, this paper is interested in looking at the ways both theories collude in this regard. Westphal (2011) in the Foreword to *Geocritical Explorations* has underlined that “a geocritical approach should be particularly helpful in postcolonial and globalization studies as well” (xv). Some work has already been done in this regard and this is especially Teverson and Upstone’s work cited above whose aim is to “bridge the gulf apparent in much existing postcolonial theory and criticism between textual analysis and the exciting and dynamic to postcolonial thought being made in the field of geography” (5). They justify their bend by indicating that

This appetite for dialogue between postcolonial and geographical studies has been apparent since at least the 1980s, when scholars working on the spatial contours of the postcolonial experience began to express the desire for a more specific theorization of their discipline. (9)

It is to address this appetite therefore that I seek to experiment how well a postcolonial variant of geocriticism might be conceptualized. This will especially focus its application to Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *The Book of Not* and Elizabeth Nunez’s *Prospero’s Daughter*.

Both novels are set in societies that experienced some of the worst forms of colonial displacement: Trinidad (*Prospero’s Daughter*) and Zimbabwe (*The Book of Not*). This essay will therefore examine the mindset and the politics at play that resulted in the displacement of individuals from places that are rightfully theirs and will further illustrate how this constitutes part of the colonialist representation that fostered and consolidated the domination of the colonized.

Conceptual Definitions

Two terms that will be defined in this study for better clarity are: postcolonialism and geocriticism. Geocriticism is a reading practice involved with the representation of geographical or imaginary spaces in literature. Its two main proponents are Bertrand Westphal whose *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces* introduced the term to academia and Robert T. Tally Jr. who translated Westphal’s text from the French and with whom he has been collaborating in the development of geocriticism. In his introduction to *Geocritical Explorations*, Tally Jr. (2011) underlines that “geocriticism explores, seeks, surveys, digs into, reads, and writes a place” (2). This shows that it is involved with minute and detail description of a place. Its focus is on the ways a place is described. He adds that “the primary goal of geocriticism is to promote the active exploration of real and imaginary spaces” (1). Tally in the translator’s preface to Westphal’s *Geocriticism* holds that “geocriticism allows us to emphasize the ways that literature interacts with the world” (x)., adding that “geocriticism attempts to understand the real and fictional spaces that we inhabit, cross through, imagine, survey, modify, celebrate, disparage and on and on in an infinite variety” (x). He further explains the growing interest in space in literature as follows:

In recent years, space – along with such related concepts or practices as spatiality, mapping, topography, deterritoriaization, and so forth – has become a key term for literary and cultural studies. The nineteenth century had been dominated by a discourse of time, history and teleological development (following the Hegelian tradition) and by a modernist aesthetic that enshrined the temporal, especially with respect to individual psychology [...]. But after the Second World War, space began to reassert itself in critical theory, rivaling if not overtaking time. (IX)

Westphal, therefore intimates that “geocriticism requires an interdisciplinary approach” (30) and also that “to say that the study of literature and space is interdisciplinary amounts to a truism” (32). He further underscores that “literature is already playing the game: texts have always looked at geography and at the ways of representing human spaces” (32). This emphasizes the idea that geocriticism is mostly about the representation of geographical spaces in literature. Westphal thus continues thus:

It is doubtless unnecessary to point out the linkages between literature and geography or geography and literature. If it is the nature of geography to probe the potential of human spaces, it is also in the nature of literature to touch on space, because all literature is in space, regardless of its thematic developments. (33)

This point here underlines the “natural” relationship between geography and literature which has only recently been theorized. This is what geocriticism is all about. Westphal holds that one of the major elements of geocriticism is a geocentered approach by which it is the place and not the work which is interpreted. He notes that “geocriticism tends to favour a geocentered approach, which places *place* at the center of the debate” (113).

Postcolonialism or postcolonial theory for its part is a reading practice which involves uncovering the artefacts of colonialism. It is a response to the practice of colonialism and its enduring legacies in the lives of the colonized. It therefore seeks through literature to underline some of the material realities of colonialism, many of which are still alive today. One of the leading exponents of postcolonial studies Bill Ashcroft (2001), considers it to be the “discourse of the colonized” (12), adding that it is “a range of discursive practices and struggles which formulate “ways of contending with various specific forms of colonial oppression” (12). Henry Schwarz (2005) in his introduction to *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies* defines it as “the radical philosophy that interrogates both the past history and ongoing legacies of European colonialism in order to undo them” (4), adding that “postcolonial studies questions the violence that has often accompanied cultural interaction and attempts to frame explanations of it as well as to provide alternate models of accommodation or getting along” (5). Ashcroft et al (2007) define postcolonialism as dealing “with the effects of colonization on cultures and societies” (168). It is that critical stance against colonialism and its lasting effects. Ato Quayson (2005) holds that postcolonialism designates a critical practice that is highly eclectic and difficult to define. He nonetheless proffers the following working definition

of postcolonialism as involving a “studied engagement with the experience of colonialism and its past and present effects” (93). Thus it follows that an examination of postcolonial nationalism which naturally engage in a critical study of the nationalism and eventual nation-states formation of formerly colonized regions of the world; specifically colonized by Britain and as conceptualized in fictional works.

Conceptualising and Theorising Postcolonial Geocriticism

The question of place and space constitutes an important facet of colonialism especially when disturbing issues like the Zimbabwean land crisis come to mind and when such problems can very easily be traced back to the colonial past of that country. John McLeod (2007) has noted in the introduction to *The Routledge Companion to Postcolonial Studies* that

Colonialism was so often a matter of terrain: seizing lands, attacking and disenfranchising the existing inhabitants of those lands, and changing the function, prior purpose and meanings of now-colonized terrain. (112)

A good case in point is the still troubling colonization of Australia by Britain. When the British explorer and emissary of King George III landed in this territory, he immediately claimed it for and named it as the property of the British Crown including Tahiti, the North and South Islands of New Zealand, and the land mass he called New South Wales (Brittan, 2007:72). The British considered Australia to be *terra nullius* meaning ‘land belonging to one’ and therefore available for seizure and settlement. The British were however persuaded to arrive this conclusion through the journal entries of Captian Cook, who found the “material minimalism” of the Aborigines so amazing that he quickly concluded that ‘the people of Australia had no idea of traffic, no acquaintance with or interest in the principles of trade, and that they were by extension without culture or coherent social structure (Brittans:72/73). Alice Brittan thus adds that ‘in a matter of few sentences, Cook demoted the aboriginal peoples of Australia to the status of animals. As ‘animals’ then, the British crown and parliament felt that they could claim no ownership to the land. This coupled with the fact that they did not cultivate the land which in the late seventeenth century had been established by the British philosopher John Locke as the main criterion for land ownership. Brittan further notes that

The judgment that Australia was terra nullius meant not only that the British could claim legal sovereignty over the entire continent, effectively declaring that crown as the new and undisputed owner, but also that they did not need to negotiate any formal treaties with the Aborigines. Why would one make a deal with people who never held title to the land in the first place? (73)

So having succeeded in trumping up pretexts, the British moved on the seize lands rightfully belonging to the Aborigines. By denying them their humanity and imposing their interpretation and understanding of land ownership, the British succeeded in taking over these lands to serve their purpose. They failed to see how lands could mean different things to different people and cultures and also that the whole question of land ownership varies from one culture to

another. In their belief that the British culture and ways of thinking are superior and universal, they dismiss local and indigenous ties to the land and proceed with the seizure and settlement of indigenous lands. This has defined British colonialism throughout the ages and even if the extent varied from settler to other colonies, the problematic of land still remained because to exert control over another territory means claiming some measure of ownership over it. The conflicting and oppositional views of land are nowhere better illustrated as in the differing views the Aborigines and the Maoris on the one hand and the British on the other had of land:

The Aborigines and the Maori inhabited richly symbolic and cultural worlds, but they did not write words as Europeans did, and although they operated sophisticated exchange systems, their economies were not governed by the principles of modern capitalism. The Aborigines for example, found abhorrent and plainly incomprehensible the idea that land could be treated as private property, to be bought and sold or even to be owned in the first place. Land was sacred, indivisibly connected to physical, imaginative and spiritual life, no more a commodity for sale than a parent or a child. (Brittan;74)

Given that at the moment of colonization, the British were convinced of the superiority of their culture, legal system etc. they disregarded such indigenous views of the land and in seizing these lands, they tampered in serious ways with the local myths and mores of indigenous peoples, leading as it were not only to physical but to cultural displacement as well.

Although the British did not consider the other regions they colonized as *terra nullius*, the same mindset is seen at work by which they considered their colonies as generally inferior if not sub-humans who could be relegated to the peripheries of their lands. It is as such that the seizure and settlement of land has been a central feature of British colonialism. These lands which they invaded and settled eventually served to highlight the dichotomous relationship between the British colonizers and the colonized. This is seen in division of lands for habitation between the indigenes and the British colonizers representing the perceptions the British had of themselves as superior beings. Thus British colonialism has been characterized by the British occupying the largest and the most fertile lands while the colonized were pushed to the fringes of the society. In the case of Zimbabwe for example, by the time the country attained independence, the white settler farmers controlled eighty percent of the lands although they constituted the minority, while the African Zimbabwean farmers held about 15 percent. Given this troubling state of affairs, how have postcolonial writers of fiction who have been passionately engaged with narrating the colonial experience captured the land issue in their creative oeuvres?

The interest in the subject of land in postcolonial literature therefore is explained by the fact that colonialism involved not only control over peoples but over territories as well. In the specific case of British colonialism, which is what is of interest in this study, it is a known fact that the British Empire laid claim to more than ninety territories in Africa, Asia, Europe, North America,

the Caribbean, Australasia and the Pacific. Thus C.L. Innes (2007) has noted that “the issue of place names runs through the history of every colonized and postcolonial country, often involving the name of the country itself” (72). She further quotes Edward Said who points out, “if there is anything that radically distinguishes the imagination of anti-imperialism, it is the primacy of the geographical in it” (72). This interest in the names of place comes on the heels of European colonizers renaming territories they seized or conquered. This renaming practically dismisses the various indigenous inscriptions on place. It is a form of dispossession and deterritorialization whereby by naming place, the colonizers are indeed claiming place for themselves. A glaring example is present-day Zimbabwe which had been named Rhodesia in honour of military conquest by Cecil Rhodes. This is a mark of ownership because the power to name place is the power over place.

The manner in which postcolonial writers engage the narrative of space or place differs from other writers in the sense that they problematize place. Place within postcolonial literature refers not just to the setting, in fact it hardly refers to this; rather it testifies to some of the myriad abuses and material realities of colonization. More especially, the narration of place within postcolonial literature is a narration of the displacement of indigenous populations which was a central trait of European colonialism. The fact that the Europeans displaced communities when they made their incursions into different regions means that postcolonial writers cannot but accord an important place to this in their writings. So narrating place for postcolonial writers is not merely a question of examining the role of place in literature, but it is a means of uncovering one of the ways the colonial encounter affected the colonized.

Thus this perspective of narrating space in postcolonial literature is what I suggest to refer to as postcolonial geocriticism. I propose then as a definition for postcolonial geocriticism as the engaged involvement in postcolonial writings with the question of place and space as a terrain of colonial tension which conceptualizes the physical dispossession of the colonized of their lands and the displacement which was a hallmark of European colonialism. It is a critical reading practice that is interested in uncovering engagements with the questions of deterritorialization, dispossession and displacement in postcolonial literature. It considers the response of postcolonial writers to the specific problematic of place in their writings. Postcolonial geocriticism seeks or should seek to read, uncover, decipher the metaphors of space and place in literary productions from formerly colonized regions of the world which specifically underline it as a site of struggle and colonial control and domination. Postcolonial geocriticism can thus be summarized as the critical practice which consists of addressing the questions of space and place in postcolonial writings with the view to highlighting the various ways or methods by which writers approach the subject.

Ashcroft et al (2005) in their discussions of place in postcolonial criticism underscore that ‘place and displacement are crucial features of postcolonial discourse’ (345), adding that “by ‘place’ we do not simply mean ‘landscape’

[...], rather 'place' in post-colonial societies is a complex interaction of language, history and environment" (345). Although this paper builds upon and draws from their thesis, in this paper I am more interested in the particular question of physical space, its invasion, its seizure, the physical displacement of the indigenes and settlement. This is because although land crisis continues to constitute a central issue in formerly colonized societies, it has not been adequately independently theorized within postcolonial criticism without recourse to the 'investment of culture in the construction of place' (Ashcroft et al: 345). That is why still in reference to the Aborigines, Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra (2005) underline that "Aborigines today, the issue of issues is land rights" (359). This could be extended to Zimbabwe as well where the land issue has constituted a major issue on post-independent Zimbabwe.

A Postcolonial Geocritical Reading of Elizabeth Nunez's *Prospero's Daughter* and Tsitsi Dangarembga's *The Book of Not*

My postcolonial Geocritical reading of Nunez's *Prospero's Daughter* will basically address how well she metaphorizes the questions of colonial invasion, seizure and settlement of lands belonging to the colonized. In this regard, the house Carlos's parents bequeath to him metonymically represents Trinidad. Carlos then could be read as the indigenous owners of the land while Dr Gardner the British fugitive represents the colonizers. Their encounter and the subsequent tensions that ensue from this, dramatize the colonial encounter in all its facets and in this, the question of land plays a crucial role. This is brought out early in the novel when Nunez in a historical allusion makes known that the question of land is of significance in her novel. This is when she explains how the Island of Chacachacare where most of the action is set came to have its name. She explains how the imported slaves from Africa had been mercilessly overworked by the slave masters such that Chacachacare was turned into a thriving cotton plantation; "one so successful that the Amerindians who were summarily chased off the Island [...] named the Island Chacachacare" (17). This underlines the question of place and displacement which as we have seen before is a central feature in postcolonial literature and which Nunez also gives sustained attention to. The chasing off of the Amerindians from the Island bespeaks the displacement that she will handle in her novel. This comes early enough when Mumsford is sent to investigate the alleged attempted rape of Virginia, Dr Gardner's daughter by Carlos. When he is taking Carlos away, he states placidly to Mumsford in reference to Dr Gardner; "my mother [...] was blue-eyed, but she was not a hag. She was beautiful. The house was hers. He stole it from me" (67). This statement underscores the seizure of indigenous lands by the colonizers. Carlos's mother here could be read as the ancestors who left lands to their descendants which lands were however taken over by the invading colonizers. This point is well elucidated by Carlos as follows:

The house we lived in was my mother's house. She left it to me when she died, but Gardner used his cunning to chat me out of it. He appeared one morning, after a terrible rainstorm, with his daughter, Virginia. I was six then. I lived with

Lucinda, my mother's house-keeper, and her daughter, Ariana who was nine at the time. (105)

This is an apt representation of the seizure of lands by the colonizers. Furthermore the intimate description of place which is a characteristic of geocriticism can also be seen in the way Carlos describes the house. This then is read as symbolic of the lands which the colonizers found irresistibly attractive and proceeded with taking over. Carlos's description of the house is so similar to the kind of description Mumsford gives of the Trinidadian landscape. Mumsford underlines that it is this attractiveness which had pulled individuals like him to the Island. So in spite of his general disgust for Trinidad, Mumsford cannot help but admire the startling beauty of its landscapes:

And if the sunset was God's sign, Mumsford thought, looking around him, then this place, this particular spot, was His paradise. Not for the first time since he had come to live in Trinidad was he forced to admit that there were some compensations, that besides the social advantages, sometime the landscape pleasantly surprised, sometimes it was reward enough. In front of him was a breathtaking panorama of shapes and colors tumbling down the hillside and spreading across green plains to the sea. [...]. At its border the blue sea glistened, bloodied by the sunset. (83)

This in depth description of the geographical landscape is a tenet of geocriticism. However, within postcolonial geocriticism, such a description of the beauty of indigenous terrains serves as a source of attraction to the colonizers who subsequently claimed these lands for themselves. Thus postcolonial geocriticism intervenes when it reads such descriptions of the land as revealing its treasures and resources for the benefit of the colonizers. The land, although belonging to the indigenes, becomes more rewarding to the colonizers than to the colonized who are the real owners. In metaphorizing this aspect, Nunez shows how Carlos' vast and appealing house causes Dr Gardner to take over it. So he gets more reward from Carlos' house than Carlos. Carlos recollects:

It was a big house. It had many rooms: a drawing room, a dining room, a large kitchen, and four bedrooms. I had my own room, Ariana and her mother slept in another, and we used the other two bedrooms to store things or to play games when the sun was too hot to go outside, or when it rained. (106)

This presentation illustrates the ways in which the colonized utilized their lands, symbolized by the house prior to the colonial invasion. It is when a storm causes a huge chennette tree to split and a part falls against the side of the house and breaks into Carlos' bedroom wall that Gardner appears with promises of a solution. In the typical manner of the colonizers offering solutions to both real and imagined problems of the colonies, which is usually more a less a pretext for settlement, so does Gardner implore Carlos, Lucinda and Ariana "that hole cannot stay that way. And your roof needs fixing. I can repair them both [...] I would make the house like new. I would clean up the mud, sweep up the leaves, clean the yard" (109). His cajoling words eventually win over Lucinda who over Carlos' protests caves in and offers Dr. Gardner room and board. This

constitutes colonial invasion of the lands of the colonized. Very much like the colonized, once Dr Gardner is accepted into the house he begins transforming the entire environment to suit his taste and purpose. He shows complete disregard for the relationship that Carlos has with the environment, house and furniture as he met them and moves on to completely overhaul this. He begins by sawing off the branches of the chennette fruit tree, over the pitiable cries and protests of Carlos. He claims to be cutting off the branches to prevent the other half of the tree from falling with the next wind. However, Dr Gardner starts claiming ownership of the house and its environs when one considers his next actions:

But he did not stop with the branches. The next morning he hollered out to a fisherman who was passing in his boat across the bay, close to our shore, and he offered him money to help him saw off the trunk. The next day [...], he attacked the chataigne tree [] when they were done, not a single one of the trees my father had planted was left standing: not the coconut tree, the breadfruit tree, the chataigne tree, or the avocado tree, and not one of the fruit trees, neither the plum, orange, grapefruit, sapodilla soursop nor the two mango trees that were in the yard. (110/111)

This is reflective of the ways in which colonialism transformed the landscapes of their colonies. Thus McLeod has underlined that “colonialism transformed place, reorganizing and restructuring the environments it settled [...]” (2). Completely disregarding the peoples’ specific connection and relations to their natural environments, they proceeded with adapting them for their own uses. It is this attitude towards the lands of the colonized that has made the land issue central in postcolonial writings. Andrew Teverson and Sara Upstone (2011) have thus noted that

In the field of postcolonial studies, however, space has always been central. From its beginning, those involved in developing knowledge of colonial and postcolonial discourses have identified space in all its forms as integral to the postcolonial experience. (1)

This is what has made theorization of this urgent. Returning to the novel the, although Dr Gardner claims he is destroying the fruit trees because they attract diseases, he sooner reveals his real purpose when after felling the trees, he announces to the dismay of Carlos and Lucinda that all is set for him to build his garden. This action symbolizes the replacement of indigenous values with the imported ones. He states that his garden will not get diseased like the ones he had “trampled on’ or cut down. For the colonized like Carlos, the land held a special significance for him as well as the fruits and flowers, but for Gardner it was a land of experimentation with plants. Here is a good case of the *multifocalization* which according to Westphal is a fundamental tenet of Geocritical methodology. This within postcolonial studies is not mere viewing, but extends to the multiple perceptions of a place. Thus within postcolonial geocriticism, it constitutes the oppositional perceptions of the colonizer and the colonized of a place. The yard for Carlos is a place for his favourite fruits and flowers such as the ixora, wild poinsettia and the buttercup flowers, while for

Dr Gardner it is a space to carry out experiments which may gain him fame in the world of science. These oppositional perspectives constitute part of the tension that characterizes the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized as regard land.

Worse than these acts of Dr Gardner's is also the fact that he fails to respect his initial promise to repair the house. This indicates that he had simply made the promise so as to gain access into this space. Shortly after this, Lucinda dies and Dr Gardner takes over the house. Carlos recounts 'shortly after she died, Gardner made changes inside the house. When he was done, the house was no longer mine' (115). This is suggestive of the seizure of lands by the colonizer. Gardner through force and cunning has dispossessed Carlos of his house. This dispossession which constituted a major feature of colonialism, here becomes an important concept in postcolonial geocriticism. Land is central in postcolonial studies, in part due to such dispossession that occurred during colonialism.

So after his invasion of the land, follows his seizure of same. Carlos recollects how he burns his mother's bed while obliging him to witness the painful scene, at the end of which he declares triumphantly "she's finished. Nothing in here belongs to her now. All is mine. I am lord of it all" (117). This aptly mirrors the colonizer taking over the lands of the colonized. So whereas geocriticism calls for a geocentered approach to literature, postcolonial geocriticism is more interested in the conception, analysis and interpretation of place and space as terrains of tension between the colonizer and the colonized. It is more interested in a postcolonial geocentered approach by which I mean uncovering how the postcolonial crisis is dramatized in place. Place gains importance as it reflects the troubling relationship between the colonizer and colonized characterized by subjugation, displacement and deprivation. That is why for postcolonial geocriticism, even the domestic space counts so long as it serves as a metaphor for the contentious geographical space. Robert T. Tally Jr. (2013) cites Bachelard who in his concept of place "begins with the house or home, which when conceived, is the fundamental space of human imagination" (Tally Jr., *Spatiality*: 115).

Closely connected to the concept of dispossession is that of deterritorialization, which within postcolonial discourse, consists of the way the colonizer when they arrived new territories, they acted as though these places were uninhabited. This is seen in the ways they completely disregarded cultural inscriptions, natural boundaries and indigenous systems of governance which they casually brushed aside. The transformations they brought to these lands also constitute part of this. It is this attitude, of Dr Gardner's that prompts Carlos' remark that "our house, before Dr Gardner came and claimed he was going to save us and bring us out of the dark ages was not without modern facilities" (121). What Carlos's statement implies is that, the colonized was not lost prior to the arrival of the colonizer. Such attitude is explained by the colonial mentality explained above which Carlos further comments on "his bold-faced presumptions still astound me to silence, that he should act as if he thought he had discovered us,

as if before his arrival we had not existed at all!” (123). This mindset which I have mentioned before regarding Captain Cook’s reduction of the Aborigines to animals is a symbolic form for deterritorialization which serves as a pretext for the actual seizure of lands. The belief of the colonizers that they are superior and more human is what led the colonizers to imagine that they had a right to the lands of the colonized. It is as such that Dr Gardner seizes Carlos’ house and makes himself the lord of it and eventually makes Carlos his slave. Thus embedded in the problematic of land is the binarism superior/inferior which defined colonizer/colonized relations. Gardner successfully turns the table on Carlos and becomes the host while they the guests. Once when Carlos and Ariana arrive slightly earlier for breakfast, he tells them that “a civilized man [...] does not arrive at the home of his host before he is invited. He knows that it is inconsiderate for the guest to arrive early as it is for him to be late” (139). So he has tactfully made Carlos a guest in his own house. Carlos underlines that he knew that Gardner and his daughter were the guests, however he is held in check by recollections of Gardner’s anger and violence. He therefore allows Gardner to be the “kind of my castle” while he becomes Gardner’s worker doing all the menial jobs in the garden and strictly following his orders. When Carlos takes Gardner to the lighthouse to show him some special plants, he observes that Gardner’s attitude was of one who owned the entire visible landscape: “and it seemed to me that at that moment Gardner believed that the boca, the rocks, the mountains behind them, the ocean, everything he could see, belonged to him” (175). Dr Gardner’s actions up to this point have persuaded Carlos to perceive of him this way.

Nunez has therefore succeeded in metaphorizing the land issue in her oeuvre through the use of the house to represent the lands of the colonized. Dr Gardner’s actions mirror those of the colonizers who in their expansionist bid invaded and seized large areas of territories from their colonies. This leads us to Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *The Book of Not* which although not involved in the minute details of Nunez nonetheless highlights the gross abuses that the seizure of indigenous lands ushered in.

In her novel, she uses the dormitory to serve as metaphor for the land. When the British settlers arrived Zimbabwe, they took over vast areas of the best lands while the indigenous Zimbabweans were pushed to the peripheries and occupied the less attractive lands. She aptly captures this land crisis in her novel. In the dormitory of the Young Ladies College of the Sacred Heart, the dynamics and problematic of the land are metaphorized and dramatized. The first thing worth noting is the way the room division in the dormitory mirrors the land division in Zimbabwe between the white settlers mentioned above and the indigenes. Tambudzai the protagonist and narrator informs that:

The dormitory that Ntombi and I occupied together with Irene was situated in the first form block, St Ignatius, the most junior corridor. In this room, besides Irene, Ntombi and I, lived Anastasia, Benhilda and Patience. Anastasia was in form five, Benhilda in form four. (41)

The fact that six African girls are made to live in a room meant for four, is actually reflective of what really occurred in Zimbabwe. It aptly captures the land division and highlights the concept of dispossession once again. Although in their country, they have been marginalised and made to occupy the most uncomfortable quarters while the white girls in the same dormitory live in more spacious and comfortable rooms. The fact that these African girls' room is the "last room on the junior corridor" bespeaks its peripherality. The room is "called by the members of the school who did not live in it, the African dormitory" (51). This African dormitory represents the African quarters of the colonial period which did not have the same facilities as the European quarters. With this information in mind, it therefore comes as no surprise to learn that the African dormitory is the only one in the school that does not have an incinerator where the girls can incinerate their hygienic pads. They are thus forced to put their used pads in their school bags and look for a way to dispose of these out of the dormitory. This point has been well elaborated by McLeod who notes that:

The colonized location is often a perversely organized one, geographically divided to cement and maintain the imaginary differences between colonizers and colonized. In contrasting the elegant and spacious European quarters often found in the colonial towns with the haphazard, impoverished and cramped enclaves of the colonized, Fanon writes that "this world divided into compartments, this world cut in two is inhabited by two different species" (1968; 30). The divisive territorial consequences of colonialism express and underwrite other kinds of distinctions and discriminations which often mark out colonized people as lacking the same levels of humanity, and human rights as Europeans.
(2)

The African dormitory thus symbolizes those areas that the colonizers carved out for the colonized and which highlighted the dichotomous relationship between the two. Thus in describing these divisions in the dormitory, Dangarembga can be read as indeed describing the land divisions in colonial Zimbabwe. From the postcolonial geocritical perspective therefore, *The Book of Not* not only writes place, but problematizes it. Since it is within land that the colonial tendencies of dispossession and expropriation are played out, land or place then occupies an important place in postcolonial literature. The close description of the dormitory points to the larger geographical spaces that were terrains of tensions within colonialism. These descriptions are meant to give the reader an exact idea of how the colonized were displaced from their best lands and made to occupy smaller patches or less fertile lands. Tambudzai continues as follows:

The final dormitory was allocated its end position in order to allow a drain to run outside, down beside the fire escape, from a small bathroom and laundry which opened off the bedroom. This dormitory, which was the only one to have its own ablution section, was called the African dormitory because we six young women slept there. (51)

So just as the colonized black Zimbabweans owned just twenty percent of all the lands in the country and generally the less appealing lands, so too do the

African girls occupy the last and least comfortable room. This therefore captures the land issue in Zimbabwe. The room is equally located near a drain, thus subject to smells therefrom. They are not only cramped into a tiny room, but the white school administrators have ensured that it is poorly located. This points to the little regard the colonizers had of the colonized. The space attributed to them is reflective of what is thought of them. So, in the school, although the students in the fifth form are supposed to have separate rooms, this rule does not extend to the black girls; as Tambudzai notes “Anastasia, though – who was in the fifth form, and technically should have a room all to herself with a washbasin up on St Sophie’s corridor, but because of the systems that Miss Plato loved was still in the African dormitory [...]” (53). So her blackness has refused her the privileges accorded to other fifth formers. The laws of the school prohibit the black students from using certain facilities which belong to the white girls like the public toilets. In a moment of distress, Tambudzai uses one of such toilets with the result being her humiliation by Miss Plato, reminding her that she must stay in the place carved out for her and people of her race. Equally, Tambudzai is a science student and all the science students of her school have to take some of their courses at the government school. Unfortunately, she cannot go because the laws forbid her as a black Zimbabwean from stepping into a government-owned school. She notes with bitterness:

The girls in my class reading science subjects were driven each day in the school bus to Umtali Boys High School for their lessons. This secondary school was built upon government land, so that my presence there was forbidden. [...]. I wondered was I a Rhodesian, if I could not sit on Rhodesian seats, read formulae from a Rhodesian blackboard and press down upon Rhodesian desks. (153)

This once again points to the concept of dispossession consequent on colonialism. Not only is Tambudzai Rhodesian but as an indigene she is more so than the colonial settlers. However, in their polarized view of themselves and the colonized and in their belief in their inherent superiority, they take over the lands of the colonized and deny them access to these. The colonized, although in their land, find themselves without land and/or pushed to the periphery of the territory. Dangarembga like Nunez, has artistically portrayed the land crisis in Zimbabwe occasioned by colonialism in her novel. Through a complex use of metaphors, she has dramatized the dynamics of the dispossession that characterized British colonialism in Zimbabwe.

Conclusion

This paper set out to experiment with and therefore initiate discussions and debates on the representation and theorization of place or space in postcolonial studies. Based on the thesis that the question of place was central to the European colonial expansion and consequently in postcolonial discourse, the postcolonial writer does not broach this subject like his/her European counterpart. Rather for the postcolonial writer the description of place is not merely to make place central or to be geocentered, it is a political act meant to underline one of the ways colonialism seriously affected and transformed

indigenous relationship with place. The invasion, seizure and settlement of local lands by the colonizers mean that for the postcolonial writer the question of land is a problematic one. Inscribed within this displacement of indigenes from their lands are the racist, Eurocentric ideologies which conceived of certain people as inherently inferior and thus available for domination and subjugation. Seizing their lands constituted part of this agenda. Given that geocriticism is the theory involved with the reading of place in texts, and postcolonial theory is interested in uncovering the artefacts of colonialism, my intention in this paper has been to forge a union of the two so as to adequately theorize place in postcolonial fiction, this to give birth to a postcolonial variant of geocriticism. This has been sustained through the application of postcolonial geocriticism to Nunez's *Prospero's Daughter* and Dangarembga's *The Book of Not*. This has uncovered the fact that within postcolonial Geocriticism, there is the interpretation of deep metaphors of place which authors retain to indicate the within the context of colonialism place remains the setting where the myriad colonial abuses were unleashed. It is the place of the postcolonial geocritic to uncover these metaphors and critically pinpoint the power play occurring in them.

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