

## **DISPLACEMENT AND THE URBAN SPACE IN CONTEMPORARY FICTION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper examines displacement and urban space in Lisa Braxton's *The Talking Drum* and Tommy Orange's *There There* to illustrate how the urban space evolves through a process of displacement. This evolution is expressed with terms like urban development, gentrification, urban renewal, etc. Using the poetics of geocriticism, the study proceeds on the assumption that urban spaces are at once social, cultural, physical, and discursive. It also investigates how urban spaces function as sites of spatial tension, aesthetic representation, and displacement in contemporary literature. The multifocal, stratigraphic, and polysensorial approaches of Geocriticism allow for an interdisciplinary exploration of space and the relationship between identity, belonging, and marginality. The paper argues that urban spaces in the selected texts embody contradictions that simultaneously offer opportunities for growth and conditions for exclusion. Thus, displacement, whether physical, psychological, or socio-cultural, is revealed as an outcome of urban evolution and is often driven by capitalist, political, and social forces. Characters in the texts experience dislocation due to gentrification, immigration policies, and identity crises. These suggest that the urban space is not inherently inclusive. Rather, it is contested, dynamic, and oppressive. The study highlights how each narrative uses multifocalisation and spatial metaphors to interrogate issues of privilege, access, and power. Urban spaces such as Oakland and Petit Africa emerge as spaces where identity is continuously negotiated and subverted. The urban condition, as depicted in the texts, aligns with postmodern concerns of fragmentation, heterogeneity, and existential ambiguity. Ultimately, the paper concludes that the urban space is both a product and a producer of social relations, and that displacement within it reflects the broader struggles over space, belonging, and survival. The study thus contributes to spatial literary criticism by demonstrating how literature participates in the ethical and aesthetic production of space, illuminating the lived realities of those navigating complex urban geographies.

**KEYWORDS:** Displacement, urban, space, and Geocriticism.

### **INTRODUCTION**

This paper engages Lisa Braxton's *The Talking Drum* (TTD) and Tommy Orange's *There There* (TT) in relation to displacement and the urban space by using the poetics of Geocriticism to examine how the designation of places in the urban space functions as spatial aesthetics in literary representation. The paper generally

examines the issues of urban displacement as an outcome of urban evolution in Braxton's *The Talking Drum* and Orange's *There There*. While the first text is replete with the politics of gentrification and urban evolution, the second text predominantly agitates for spatial justice and advocates a spatiotemporal approach to assessing the urban native Indian identity. Urban displacement is therefore examined as a "spatial process" (Davidson, 2009: 223) that translates to gentrification. According to Hirsh et al (2020:393), gentrification is one of the four main terms that are often used in case studies of urban displacement around the world, the other three being DID, slum clearance, and eviction. Put together, both texts illustrate that the reality of urban displacement is not remotely the consequence of spatial discrimination. The analysis is premised on the assumption that the urban space is a socially produced space that brings about physical, social, cultural, and political transformations. It explores the shifting landscapes that have become symbolic of the changes in human values and how the characters in the texts engage these spaces of transformation while dealing with the barriers created by the ritual of urbanity and the privatisation of public spaces.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Urban Space, Displacement and Literature**

This segment attempts a review of works that show the intersection between the urban space, displacement, and literature. It also reviews works that focus on the genre of urban literature. In *Urban Revolution*, Lefebvre (2003:39) describes the urban space as a place where people walk around, find themselves standing before and inside piles of objects, experience the intertwining of the threads of their activities until they become unrecognisable, and entangle situation in such a way that they engender unexpected situations. Here, the urban space is portrayed as a space of unpredictability. Soja, in Balshaw and Kennedy (2000:4) states that when social space folds into mental space, the urban real is displaced by the urban imaginary. By way of interpretation, Balshaw and Kennedy (2000:4) argue that the enfolding of these spaces is what characterises the meaning of urban space in fields of representation. Put together, their arguments indicate that the urban space is a social construct that is never fixed in terms of representation and interpretation. This is why the urban space is both a space of placement and displacement. The dynamics of negotiating both extremes offer a plethora of themes that all reflect the urban condition. It is in this regard that they express the view that 'Literary and visual representations of urbanism map the fears and fantasies of urban living, within which – through practices of reading and seeing – we all dwell (Balshaw and Kennedy, 2000:6). This position echoes Foucault's engagement with space as being characterized by the spatialization of power and knowledge. One of the arguments raised by Balshaw and Kennedy (2000:11) is that:

Cities exhibit distinctive geographies of social differences and power relations, where space functions as a modality through which urban identities are formed. Major changes in urban forms are experienced differentially, and

socio-spatial restructurings (sic) of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexual identities are key features of modern and postmodern urbanism.

Here, emphasis is placed on ‘Social differences and power relations’ as dynamics that shape the urban condition, and these phenomena find expression via the agency of institutions and systems, which are mostly shaped by race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexual identities. Lefebvre (2003:21) corroborates this position when he states that, “any space that is organised around the monument (any seat of institution: the church, the state, the university) is colonised and oppressed”. This proves useful in interrogating the urban space as a space of ‘freedom’ because within such institutionalised structures are monuments that stand for liberation, but in the real sense are the underlying forces of oppression and sources of differentiation and urban displacement. Postmodern writers have continued to explore the dynamism of the urban space as a subject of literary investigation. The *Encyclopaedia of Urban Studies* holds that

The study of the urban novel is one of the key disciplines in the history of urban studies... Literary representations of lived space also allow for the greatest possible nuance and individualization in joining empirical observation with abstracting representation. As a result, reference to the urban novel has continued to play an important role in urban studies (Eeckhout and Keunen, 2010: 899).

Here, the utilitarian value of the urban novel finds expression both within the fictional and the real. Thus, the fictional readily provides examples for the real, therefore raising questions about how the real is implicated in the fictional and vice versa.

In *Planned Violence: Post/Colonial Urban Infrastructure, Literature and Culture* (2018) the contributors, among other things, explore “how urban infrastructures make manifest social and cultural inequalities and how art forms including literature speak back to these often-violent coordinates” (Boehmer and Davies, 2018:2). For instance: Layne’s article; “Sound Systems and Other Systems: The Policing of Urban Aesthetic Spaces in the Poetry of Linton Kwesi Johnson” argues that:

Johnson’s music-centred ‘sound system poems’ portray how ... concrete urban infrastructures and architectural formations often *force* black poets to be confrontational, explicitly political, and overtly representational, whether they wish to be so or not (p. 160).

Here, Layne’s statement indicates that the complex nature of the urban space triggers imaginative responses from poets or writers. Odiwo (2006:121) expresses a similar position when he states that the role of urban as a catalyst for the development of modern society is what informs its presence in literary creativity. Concerning Mwangi’s *Going Down River Road*, he submits that urbanisation in Africa is not an index of socio-economic development but one of rot, retrogression, and display of personal aggrandisement amid palpable want and poverty (Odiwo, 2006:133).

Though Urban Literature in Africa addresses a wide range of issues surrounding urban life in modern postcolonial African states, a vast collection of

African urban fiction has not been subjected to in-depth study (Owino, 2020:89,90). The urban space and displacement are examples of post-colonial issues that require such in-depth study because they are, among other factors, reasons for the pessimistic and seemingly unpatriotic tone in much of the literature produced in the 1990s to the present day (Mushakavanhu, 2013:130). Ampah (2009:11) also gives insight into how the short story “Designates postcolonial urbanisation as unstable but illusive, as attractive but fragmentary, as inviting and fragmentary, etc., or as axiomatic of the inequities and domineering qualities of postcolonial condition.” This statement paints a picture of the complex nature of urban space and its thematic and stylistic implications for the short story form and all other forms of writing. It is within the purview of such submission that this study situates the representation of the phenomenon of urban displacement in the selected texts. More so, Ampah (2009:83) mentions that literary creativity is intricately linked to the proliferation of urban settlements where enforced cohabitation of people in closer space necessitates constant contact. Using the short story form, she submits that the city is a site to produce the crisis of the postcolonial state (Ampah, 2009:86). Beyond this, the present study considers the city as a site for the reproduction of the crisis of both the urban and postmodern condition. Displacement is therefore considered, in this study, as one of such crises.

## **GEOCRITICISM AS THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This paper adopts geocriticism as its tool of literary analysis, and it proffers new ways of thinking about space and place, particularly about the phenomenon of displacement and urbanisation in the selected texts. Postcolonial theory, cultural geography, spatial theory, and ecocriticism are some of the theories that influenced the emergence of geocriticism. The fluidity of postmodern thinking opened a movement often referred to as the “spatial turn”. The “spatial turn” which emerged in the 1960s gained prominence through the 1980s and 1990s (Alexander 2015:3). Some key figures whose works gave impetus to spatial thinking include Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991), Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) Michel Foucault (1926-1984), Felix Guattari (1930-1992), Jameson Fredric (1934- ), David Harvey (1935- ) and Edward Soja (1940-2015). Their approaches were, however, more cultural and geographical than literary. Borrowing from their ideas, Bertrand Westphal and Robert Tally popularised and theorised spatial thinking in literary criticism in their seminal works titled *Geocriticism* (2007/2011) and *Spatiality* (2013) respectively. Other notable figures include Eric Perito and Caren Irr. As a literary framework, geocriticism hinges on the notion of multifocalization and proceeds on the need to redirect spatial attention from the text to the outside world, which Westphal refers to as the “referent”. What this entails is that there is a closure between the reader, text, and context.

A Geocritical approach requires multifocalisation, a polysensorial approach, a stratigraphic vision, and intertextuality. Westphal describes these lenses as the four cardinal points of the geocritical approach. Multifocalisation requires a plural

perception and representation of space, which means that it allows for an interface and the identification of the interactive boundaries that emerge from the convergence of the exterior and interior points of view. Polysensoriality refers to the use of multiple senses in the geocritical process to enable the proliferation of gazes and the creation of environmental awareness through personal experiences of place. Stratigraphic vision entails the degree to which a specific place comprises the accumulation of past moments and an archeological layering of successive historical phases (Prieto, 2016:25). It helps to make sense of how a “fictional text brings out all the folds of time relating to a place because for Westphal (2011:143), a city is but the paper on which one writes or reads at a given time. A stratigraphic approach therefore requires “examining places through layers of pasts, histories, archaeologies, and memories” (Gladwin, 2016:42). Intertextuality, for Westphal, is that space that can be read as text when understood from the perspective of the representation that texts sustain, since from a poststructuralist perspective anything that yields itself to analysis is a text. Within the framework, textuality eventually escapes the closed logic that confines the text within a textual system. The same poetics are deployed through spatial analysis, cartographic analysis, geographical contextualization, and comparative analysis. However, this paper deploys spatial analysis.

Geocriticism favours a space-centred approach and engages place as its object of interest. It also reintroduces the extrinsic relation between the text and the context (Westphal 2011:127). There is a shift from writer to place using complex chronology and diverse points of view; the spatial referent is the basis of analysis and not the author and his/her work because the referent is a common space of convergence between the reader and the text since the reader is aware of the referent as much as the text represents the referent. A major problem that the geocritical enterprise must, however, resolve is the scattering of its sources because some places seductively generate hundreds or thousands of artistic representations (Westphal 2011:117). For this paper, the analysis is a spatial interrogation of the manifestations and representations of the urban space as a social construct and a site of displacement in the selected texts.

### **The Displacement of Rights and Urban Privatisation in *The Talking Drum***

As an urban practice, gentrification raises questions about spatial dominance and the rights of individuals or peoples to own spaces because within the urban space, the ownership of space is scarcely a function of heritage but more typically, it is a function of socio-political and/or economic power. Hirsh et al (2020:394) observe that gentrification research shows that displacement takes many different forms—direct or indirect, physical, or economic, and exclusionary—and may result from either investment or disinvestment. In *The Talking Drum*, the right to space is socio-politically and economically determined. The production of the Harborview is considered a profitable investment for both the developers and the politicians. While the profit is monetary for the developers, the profit for the politicians is a question of legacy and political relevance in the eyes of the benefiting class. The lack of political

and economic power on the part of the people of Petit Africa robs them of their right to stay in their neighbourhood, which is a significant “place of incubation” (p.83) and social development. According to Kwame, “before we pioneer the rest of America, we come to Petit Africa” (p .83). Petit Africa, therefore, signifies the downtown which accommodates the downtrodden, the urban poor, the underprivileged, and all kinds of migrants and low lives who cannot be integrated into the urban mainstream because they are socially unfit and financially handicapped. So, for this category of people Petit Africa “is the first step for many from Africa or the West Indies (p.155). They simply stay there until they can properly fit into the urban mainstream within the United States. Within such transient moments, they suffer oppression from property owners and the landlords who cared less about the standard of services of the tenants. An instance in the novel illustrates the attempt of the tenants to resist such negligence: “All of the tenants were fed up with the conditions. One night, they met in the stairwell to vent about the building’s problems they decided on a rent strike. They would not pay Fullerton until repairs were made” (p.16).

This level of oppression within the urban marginal space is a common phenomenon and offers an advantage of power to one over the other, in this case, the landlord over his tenant. The height of such power display often translates to displacement. Eviction, which is a common form of displacement within the urban space, accounts for the homeless situation in which many find themselves. Fullerton’s tenants were for instance, were threatened with eviction notices all at once after they met and decided they would embark on a rent strike. In another instance, Omar, in referring to James Fullerton's eviction threats, laments thus: “We shall not let this man chase us from this building.... We have the right to be here and to have good services. He cannot possibly put all of us on the road” (p. 17).

The question of right to the urban space is projected here as a matter of financial strength because it will cost Omar and his fellow tenants far less to secure their tenancy than to hire the services of an attorney against Fullerton. This difference is possible because securing a place within the urban space is not free or cheap, being a commodity that is made available to the highest bidder. The private developers were the highest bidders and, therefore, the key players in the production of Harborview.

### **Urban Displacement and the Native Indian Identity in *There There***

*There There (TT)* is a novel that captures the displacement dilemma of urban native Indians in America. The characters, who are predominantly native Indians, grapple with issues of identity, trauma, resilience, community, and misconceptions about Native American Heritage. The novel deploys a stratigraphic approach to explore issues that confront the urban native Indians whose crisis ab initio is rooted in a history of war and displacement. Their agitation is that they have been “fighting for decades to be recognised as a present-tense people, modern and relevant” (p. 91). This implies that their displacement is not just about the past but also the present. The narrative opens a discursive space that engages the subject matter of urbanity for

the urban Native American from multiple perspectives. There's an imprint of Native Indian history on the outlook of Oakland as an urban space and there's also the question of personal history versus collective history, ironically the older characters such as Jacquie feel that history is such a burden and they will rather not talk about it while the younger generation is vehemently in search of history in the bid to be properly situated as Urban Native Indians. This contrast sustains the subject matters of urbanity and the erasure of history, the crisis of contemporary urbanity, and the question of the right to space. Other issues found in the text include: the right to modern America and the need to honour the history of its evolution.

The author portrays the disjointed nature of the Native American experiences by using multiple narrative voices and a non-linear structure. Characters such as Dene Oxendene, Daniel Gonzalas, Octavio Gomez, Edwin Black, Blue Bird, Tony Loneman, among others, all embody different dimensions of the urban Native American experience. Beyond the recount of these experiences, the novel agitates for spatial justice and advocates a spatiotemporal approach to assessing the urban native Indian identity through time rather than the cramming of events into the present. To properly situate the Native Indians into the urban space in America is to explore the past through a "renewing process" (neo-) rather than a "passing away" (post) (Westphal, 2011:14). To do otherwise is to encourage the displacement of culture, heritage, and identity. The urban native Indian simply demands an acknowledgement of the history of their movement through time and space. In Lefebvrian terms, the urban native Indians are a vital part of the production of the urban space. Thus, the history of contemporary American Urbanity must acknowledge its past. The Powwow, which is a major event in the novel, signifies a neo-nativisation process and engagement with the urban space. Spatial justice is directed toward situating itself within the urban cultural space. The neo-urbanisation agenda is the effort to counter every attempt at post-urbanisation, which is a trivialization of the Native Indian heritage and past.

As illustrated in the text, the urban space is both physical, cultural, discursive, and digital because the urban space is a constellation of multiple spatial practices. The urban experience for the urban Indians, as portrayed in the text, is rooted in a history of displacement. In a poetic tone, therefore, the author laments that they have become memories they don't remember but live in them, and they feel. This implies that displacement is a never-ending circle that is contingent on the evolution of the urban space. In place of their past is a present that is threatening with an uncertain future. The expectation of the Native Indians is that the urban space, as a product of events through time, must acknowledge and respect its conception and everyone who was a part of it.

### **A Comparative Analysis of Displacement and Urban Space in *The Talking Drum* and *There There***

The multidimensional feature of the urban space is what accounts largely for the spatial tensions that characterise the movements of characters across the narrated spaces in the selected texts. They all portray the heterogeneity of the urban space in

tangible and visible terms. The phenomenon of displacement is therefore projected in the texts as one of the consequences of urban evolution. The representation of places and spaces within the texts reveals the contradicting experiences of characters and how the designation of spaces leads to displacement. For instance, the difference between Liberty Hill and Petit Africa in *TTD* and the gap between the past and present of urban native Indians in Oakland are a function of the dynamic nature of urban life. Multiple factors influence the changes that take place in these spaces and their tendency toward inclusion or exclusion. The levels of displacement that occur as a result range from physical (*in TTD*) and psycho-social (*TT*).

Also, common to both texts is the rejection of the notion that the urban space holds the key to happiness and growth because the narrated spaces exhibit indeterminacy, thus offering hope as much as disappointment. In the selected texts, relationships are conditional, beneficial, and temporary because the urban space is a produced space that is driven by capitalism (Soja, 2010:98). This means that it is unpredictable. In *TTD*, for instance, Sydney, Omar, and Della find themselves as they traverse and respond to the urban realities that confront them, while Kwame, James, and Uncle Mustapha lose themselves. Kwame and James were consumed by their pursuit of materialism, while Uncle Mustapha was consumed by his inability to come to terms with the realities of gentrification and displacement. *TT*, on the other hand, presents an array of urban native Indian characters who are linked by a common heritage but divided by their engagement with space. The experience of privilege and/or oppression is therefore occasioned by the mapping of the urban space.

In terms of narrative style, both texts portray the multidimensional nature of the urban space, which is closely matched by the technique of multifocalisation. In this sense, the urban space is explored as a site of spatial aestheticisation. Through a multifocal approach, the plurality of the urban space is represented in a narrative style that uses flexible signifiers with universal appeal. For instance, in *TTD*, the declaration of Petit Africa as a “blighted community” and the failed struggle to rescue it conveys how the urban space evolves through displacement, a process known as gentrification. The dichotomy between “here” (Bellport and Liberty Hill) and “there” (Petit Africa) becomes the quality that enforces the difference between the designation of privilege and oppression within urban settlements. A harsher metaphor is used in *TT* to describe the urban space; it is likened to war; the prologue of the text reads: “We stayed because the city sounds like war...that fast metal, that constant firing around you, cars up and down the streets and freeways like bullets” (prologue). This depiction recalls the challenges that each character faces as they engage in the urban space. The representation of the urban space in the selected texts projects it as a potent site for literary aestheticisation. As an aesthetic space, the urban space is portrayed in the texts as susceptible to multiple expressive forms. Therefore, people, places, and events become signifiers of the wider space.

The premise of the displacing tendencies in the urban space is aptly captured in the words of Manolescu (2001:114), who avers that urban spaces signify political spaces and are characterised by a false rhetoric of togetherness, which is manifest in

the use of “we”, the imperative, and the interrogation. One manifestation of this “falsehood” is captured in the question of the right to urban space, which is an issue that runs through all four texts. The politics of belonging is a strong motif for the characters’ engagement with the urban space. The right to space is not without certain limits. It comes with the right of the state to determine placement and displacement. For instance, the occupants of Petit Africa in *TTD* were considered a nuisance to the peace of the neighbourhood, so the state clamped down on them. The people of Petit Africa in *TTD* are confronted with a similar displacement plan organised in the guise of gentrification. Displacements that occur because of urban renewal or development are born out of man’s desire to dominate and experiment with space. Such spatial practices are often developed to enforce exclusivity and urban evolution. People become victims of urban displacement because they lack the voice or fighting power to ensure justice. The Urban native Indians in *TT* also feel discriminated against and their right to America trampled upon through the course of history. A dominant motif in the novel is the attempt by the Native Americans to assert their rights as indigent people and reclaim their place within the urban enclave. Opal, for instance, narrates their displacement thus:

Everyone’s sleeping in cells. It’s warmer,” she told us. Me and Jacquie slept in the cell across from our mom. She’d always been crazy, in and out of work, moving us all over Oakland, in and out of our dad’s lives, in and out of different schools, in and out of shelters, but this was different, we’d always ended up in a house, in a room, in bed at least. Me and Jacquie slept close on Indian blankets, in that old jail cell across from our mom (*TT*, p. 26).

This situation is reflective of the condition of several of the native Indians in Oakland as projected in the text, even though they assert that “The urban Indian belongs to the city and the cities belong to the earth” (*Urbanity: prologue*), they still experience displacement. This implies that the right to the urban space is no longer solely a function of one’s heritage but a function of power, whether social, economic, political, military, or religious. An instance of this is seen, the policy of the Mayor against Petit Africa and the oppression of the people in *TTD* is also like the oppression of the urban native Indians in *TT*. However, the idea of the evolution of space not only keeps space alive but also moves a vital part of human existence. This is the case with Malachi and Sydney in *TTD*, who relocated to Liberty Hill, and the urban native Indians in *TT* who come from different parts of the United States to attend the Big Oakland Powwow from time to time. One thing they all share is that the movements are voluntary and are motivated by a search for meaning and relevance. In contrast, the people of Petit Africa in *TTD* suffered such forceful relocation, which translated to displacement. All these demonstrate that man’s experience is shaped by his interaction with places and spaces. The representation of the urban space in both texts is a mapping of the complex dynamics of the urban condition and the movement of humans across spaces in search of relevance and happiness.

The urban condition in *TTD* is informed by the gentrification plans of the state, which is informed by the Mayor’s attempt to build a legacy at the cost of the

livelihood of the people of Petit Africa; the protests, activities of arsonists and the eventual displacement of the people in the neighbourhood are all a response to the gentrification agenda. The urban condition in *There There* is rooted in the challenges that come with living with an ambiguous non-white ethnic identity in the United States. For the urban Indian, therefore, the urban space is a discursive space because urban life is a journey of self-assertion; thus, nothing is original and everything is doomed. They see the urban space as a veneer over their past. This is why being Indian is not about returning to the land because “land is everywhere and nowhere”. This postmodern perspective of the native Indian is an acknowledgement of the fluidity of the urban space as a product. Their philosophy is spatially oriented: the urban space and all its paraphernalia are a product of the earth. Thus, to traverse the urban space is to traverse the earth. This is why every story is a story about the earth

The urban space is a discursive space where ideas, opinions, and perspectives are engaged, debated, and negotiated. The convergence of the narrated spaces and the readers’ experiences of space sparks up a discourse that contributes to the production of space because issues of intellectual and universal significance are outcomes of such interactions. In exploring the subject of space, therefore, literature participates in the production of space by conferring on it what Westphal (2011:98) calls “ethical responsibility”. Issues that have emerged from the spatial analysis of both texts are located within wider discourses and are connected in ways that project the postmodern condition. The narratives are all a part of a space-oriented meta-narrative that seeks to give meaning through the intersection of life, history, reality, and space. For instance, the plight of the people of Petit Africa in *TTD* and the attitude of the state towards them is typical of urban evolution. The issue of gentrification or urban renewal is a universal challenge that has become a modern justification for displacement. In *TT*, there is even a wider discourse of marginalisation, which brings into perspective the barriers that limit movement in space. The discourse of the Indian Relocation Act is examined vis-à-vis the Indian termination policy. Here, the right to the urban space is presented as a product of struggle and not heritage. In response to such systems, the urban native Indians perceive the urban space as war. The constellation of these ideas, philosophies, policies, contentions, grievances, and expectations is what makes the urban space discursive and a site for spatial aestheticisation.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has examined displacement and the heterogeneity of the urban space in Braxton’s *The Talking Drum* and Orange’s *There There*, using the insights and assessment criteria of geocriticism to foreground the representation of both conceivable and visible spaces in the selected texts. In this light, man’s response to the indeterminacy of the urban space and the following consequence of displacement are central to this paper. This is because the dynamics of urban evolution lie in the convergence of spaces that are diametrically opposed; each expressing unique spatial practices that contribute to the multi-dimensionality of the urban space. In the texts,

space is presented in different lights, thereby doing justice to the aesthetic feature of space. The movements of characters through spaces represented in the texts also demonstrate the polytopic and engaging nature of space. Analysing movements through these delicate and complex spaces amounts to what Tally has described as literary cartography. Life for most of the characters in the texts is made meaningful or otherwise by their engagement with different spaces. The representation of the urban space and displacement in the novels illustrates the evolution of space in time and its response to all the factors of production, since it is itself a commodity that can be produced or lose value in terms of its safety and habitability. Put together, the texts studied portray different urban conditions and the spatial practices that determine the placement of characters within the spaces represented therein. The broad distinction between dominant and marginal spaces, whether in abstract or concrete terms, is what facilitates the ambition(s) of characters within the texts. The texts also portray the struggle for dominance within the urban space as a universal phenomenon that leads to urban displacement. The paper also concludes that; social relations are deeply implicated in the production of the urban space, displacement is an outcome of the complex relations that result from the production, control and evolution of the urban space, and the right to the urban space is determined by agencies that contend for dominance through systems, the right to the urban space is not a function of heritage but a function of social, economic, political, military and religious power. The urban space is therefore a heterogeneous and indeterminate outfit that creates conditions of displacement.

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