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HOME AND FURTHER AWAY:

Space, Emotions and Identity in

NoViolet Bulawayo's and Teju Cole's Novels

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1. ABSTRACT

This end-of-degree dissertation shows how identities are shaped by the different spaces characters occupy in the novels *We Need New Names* (2013) by NoViolet Bulawayo and *Every Day is for the Thief* (2007) by Teju Cole. In the former, the protagonist moves from a shanty town in Zimbabwe to the United States. In the latter, a Nigerian boy returns to Lagos after having lived in the U.S. Although the relationship between feelings and spaces is a relevant topic in the study of African literature, it remains an understudied subject when it comes to the analysis of these two novels. This study contributes to completing the space that investigates the connection between emotions and the environment (see, for example, Massumi, 1995; Mitchell, 1980). In addition, Afropolitanism, coined by Taiye Selasi in 2005 to refer to Africans in the world, will also be used. From the point of view of Afropolitanism, we can perceive the differences between how African characters are seen in diverse spaces around the world.

In short, this dissertation will explore how characters are not only described but also perceived by others in either familiar or strange spaces. On the one hand, a narrative of leaving a home country to look for better opportunities is explored. On the other hand, the protagonist does return to his home country. In both cases, they will encounter obstacles and difficulties that will condition their identity or their sense of belonging regarding the space in which they are. Both feelings and spaces will influence and accompany these Afropolitans throughout their lives.

Key Words: spaces, feelings, afropolitanisms, colonialism, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, U.S.

RESUMEN

Este trabajo de fin de grado muestra cómo las identidades se ven moldeadas por los espacios en los que los personajes de las novelas *We Need New Names* (2013) escrita por NoViolet Bulawayo y *Every Day is for the Thief* (2007) de Teju Cole se encuentran. En la primera, la protagonista se muda de una barriada en Zimbawe a los Estados Unidos. En la última, un chico Nigeriano vuelve a Lagos, Nigeria, su país de origen, tras haber estado viviendo en los Estados Unidos durante unos años. Si bien las relaciones entre los sentimientos y los espacios han sido estudiadas en la literatura africana, no han recibido suficiente atención en relación con estas novelas. Este trabajo de fin de grado contribuye al estudio de los espacios al investigar las conexiones existentes entre las emociones y el espacio (véase, por ejemplo, Massumi, 1995; Mitchell, 1980). Además, el afropolitanismo, acuñado por Taiye Selasi en 2005 y que se refiere a las Africanos en el mundo, también será estudiado. Desde este punto de vista, se pueden apreciar cómo los personajes Africanos se ven en diferentes espacios.

En resumen, este trabajo de fin de grado estudiará cómo los personajes no son solo descritos sino también percibidos por otros en espacios tanto conocidos como desconocidos. Por un lado, se estudia la narrativa de dejar el país de origen para encontrar mejores oportunidades. Por el otro, el protagonista vuelve a su país africano. En ambos casos, se encuentran con obstáculos y dificultades que condicionarán tanto su identidad como su sentimiento de pertenencia. Ambos, tanto los sentimientos como los espacios, influenciarán y acompañarán a estos afropolitanos a lo largo de sus vidas

Palabras clave: espacios, sentimientos, afropolitanismo, colonialismo, Nigeria, Zimbawe, Estados Unidos.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

We Need New Names (2013) was written by NoViolet Bulawayo, an acclaimed contemporary Zimbabwean author. Although this is her debut novel, it has been shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize, the International Literature Award and the Guardian First Book Award. She has also written another novel called *Glory* (2022) which has received relevant literary awards such as the Hurston/Wright Legacy Award or Pen/Hemingway Award. As a postcolonial work that gave voice to what most African countries were experiencing, in this case Zimbabwe, the novel was well received by the critics. Thus, it was shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 2013.

The author's life inspires the novel. As the main character in her novel, Bulawayo moved to the United States to complete her college education when she was still a teenager, where she suffered discrimination. The novel is set in the Zimbabwean regime of Mugabe, which lasted for 37 years from the late 1960s until 2017 and depicts the challenges that the population had to overcome. It is said that he was a *liberator* that turned into an oppressor. As our writer was born in 1981, she lived during this Zimbabwean period which influenced her writing. Thus, the novel could be considered semi-autobiographical. Other recurrent themes are the search for identity and the challenges faced as immigrants in a developed country such as the U.S., in contrast with their "home".

Every Day is for the Thief (2007) was written by the Nigerian American author Teju Cole. He was born in the United States in 1975 but he spent some time in Nigeria as his parents were Nigerian and were thus raised in Lagos. After some years in Nigeria, in 1992 he returned to the U.S. This was his debut novel and although it was not shortlisted for the Booker Prize, it was well-received by the public. The novella was awarded the Book of the Year Prize by the New York Times, the Globe and Mail, NPR, and the Telegraph. The author also wrote other remarkable novels such as *Open City* (2011), which was also awarded and shortlisted for several awards such as The New York City Book Award for Fiction or the PEN/Hemingway Award. Currently, Cole is a professor at Harvard University and he continues his literature career not only writing for the New York Times Magazine but also publishing novels such as *Tremos* (2023).

The novel is set in a changed and developed Lagos, contrasting with the one the protagonists, who left when he was a child and flew to the U.S. Among other themes, such as globalization or corruption, the novel portrays how what was once called home,

is now unrecognizable. As in the previous novel, the author's experiences also influence the narrative. Cole provides insight into how the complexities of the postcolonial Nigerian society have influenced the main character's perception of Lagos.

In this dissertation, I present these two novels as examples of diasporic African postcolonial literature. Both novels develop their argument in the U.S. and an African country, thus spatial theory is applied to examine the relevance that places might have on characters' experiences. Moreover, feelings are always involved in people's actions, thus being relevant in our lives. As a consequence, as both main characters have similar experiences, affect theory is applied to the spaces in which the action takes place. Finally, as debates have been going on about the term *Afropolitanism*, coined by Salasi in 2005, this dissertation will use it to show the importance that this term has in the analysis of the main characters of the novels.

2.2. REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

In postcolonial literature, narratives of going away or instead, returning to one's home country carry a significant weight. According to Christina Heckmann (2006), so many people have left their homelands in the course of colonization and up to the present time that it is a topic worth studying. They have to be in harmony with the host country even though they feel somehow still connected to their country of origin (Heckmann 2006). The novels by NoViolet Bulawayo, *We Need New Names*, and by Teju Cole, *Every Day is for the Thief*, are examples of these contrasting narratives. A number of articles examine this issue of postcolonial literature such as "Postcolonial Theory" (2020), published by Mishra, or *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction* (2020), published by Young. Both works provide relevant information such as concepts included by Said or Bhabha, which are going to be used to establish the theoretical framework of this dissertation.

Afropolitanism was coined by Taiye Selasi (2005) and Achille Mbembe (2007) to refer to an Afro-cosmopolitan ethos of transcending national differences to forge multiracial communities and has become an increasingly important concept in postcolonial literature (Balakrishnan 2018, 1). Articles such as "We, Afropolitans" (Eze 2016) or "How Did We Come to This? Afropolitanism, Migration and Displacement" (Crowley 2018) have widely investigated the possibilities of the term. However, to date, there has been little agreement on what is the relationship between feelings and the places in which the novels develop.

Both novels offer different insights into *Afropolitanism*. They show the challenges that characters must face and that shape their lives. Moreover, the significance of naming and translational lives due to migration is also a key issue. Although these novels were chosen to be analysed together, associations can be drawn with other novels such as *Americanah* (2013) or *Ghana Must Go* (2013) by Taiye Selasi. All of these contribute to the construction of an African identity discourse. Multiple articles have been published on different topics dealing with both novels, but some gaps need to be filled. Some subjects covered could be the relevance or naming (Moji 2015) in *We Need New Names* (2013) or the concepts of home and belonging (Hewett 2014).

Traces of Afropolitanism are present in both works through the exploration of their characters in their spaces. *We Need New Names* examines the girl's experiences in her new country, the United States. Her identity is being affected by the contrast between her home country and the globalized America, in which she is discriminated. Cultural tensions and the obstacles that her roots cause come to the surface. In *Every Day is for the Thief*, the protagonist faces a different situation. The feeling of strangeness caused by an unknown environment is experienced by this character in his home Lagos. Lagos shows how an *Afropolitan* suffers diverse feelings in his home country. Afropolitan identities together with the character's search for identity characterize both novels. "We, Afropolitans" published in 2016 by Chielozona Eze deals with the question of why Africans need a specific term to define themselves rather than simply use the term "cosmopolitans." New voices are needed to tell the stories from their point of view. The novel's different perspectives in combination with Afropolitanism give us shreds of evidence about the difficulties of being accepted as an African in an unfamiliar society. Both novels set an example for the justification of the term Afropolitanism for which there has been a debate going on.

Moreover, how identities are shaped and changed concerning the environment in which they exist has been investigated in postcolonial literature. Consequently, different authors have explored some areas such as in the importance of language, race, or identity (Taylor 2019) or dislocation and naming (Moji 2015). In addition, concerning Cole's novel, not only has cosmopolitanism been studied (Hallemeiner, 2013) but also the experience of homecoming of the protagonist (Suárez Rodríguez 2020), but it needs to be studied how feelings are related to these experiences in the spaces. Postcolonial theory contributes to the reconfiguration of space dynamics. Another aspect that has been explored in spatial theories is the construction of colonial space. This theory suggests that

colonialism imposes social and political dimensions to physical spaces, shaping thus, politics, society, or culture. Hence, the remains of coloniality are still present in the novels which are going to be analyzed. Moreover, not only the postcolonial environment but also the spaces in which the characters live also change their feelings, being thus a remarkable aspect to study.

Postcolonial feelings such as displacement, resilience or even the lack of agency are portrayed in both novels in diverse modes. However, the concept of the *stranger* as a feeling appears in both novels. Cook (2022), who deconstructed the term since it was coined in 1950, addresses the concepts of a foreigner, immigrant, alien, outsider pariah, and marginal, to analyze them through sociological and cultural theories: “All these deal with the point of view of identity, the definition of Stranger lies primarily in the difference between the “other” versus a group” (Cook 2022, 150). Bulawayo’s main character suffers from the feeling of strangeness in American society. Moreover, this also happens to Cole’s protagonist, as he returns to his home country which has suffered changes since he left.

The issue of “in-betweenness” is also present. In Cole’s novel, the unnamed narrator suffers the displacement in his home country Lagos, to which he returns several years later after being abroad in the United States. In Bulawayo’s novel, resilience is present in the girl’s life as she has to go through difficulties to survive and achieve her dream of going to America, where she will supposedly have a better life. In addition to the difficult situation in the country, being a girl worsens the situation. In contrast, in Lagos, resilience is not embodied by the protagonist but by the inhabitants of the city. They, together with the city, have overcome the difficulties over the years. In both works, we can see how characters face the challenges of agency. Their decisions are constrained by political issues and by the difficult situation of both countries. Many postcolonial feelings such as agency or resilience have indeed been explored in different papers, but they have not been linked to places.

The most relevant themes of the novels are addressed in this dissertation. They were indeed studied in different articles as these are two well-known pieces of literature. Some of these ones were taken into consideration to write this review of the literature. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that other themes were also studied. Some examples could be migration, the issue of being a child, homecoming or how Lagos is pictured. What is even more, a comparison with other novels can be drawn.

In addition to articles published by scholars, both works have been reviewed not only in *The New York Times* but also in *The Guardian*. These well-known newspapers have not been the only ones which paid attention of these novels, as scholars have studied some aspects of the novels as mentioned before.

Regarding my research questions or rather the objectives of this dissertation, I have seen how feelings have been explored but not in relation to spaces. That is the case with how places and spaces shape characters and what they are experiencing in these postcolonial environments. Moreover, strangeness is linked to affect theory justifying thus the need for the term Afropolitanism. Finally, one of the most relevant aspects that has not been explored concerning these two novels is how they can provide a relevant contrast between the narratives of going abroad and returning to the changed home country. Thus, Afropolitanism is seen through different eyes as the characters' lives are different: a Zimbabwean girl leaving to the U.S. and a Nigerian boy who returns, after living in the U.S., to Lagos.

A connection can be set between Bulawayo's novel and Cole's and other works with similar thematic aspects. *Americanah* by Adichie deals with the life of a Nigerian woman who migrates to the U.S., being there challenged by the circumstances. Regarding Teju Cole's *Every Day Is for the Thief* a link can be established with his novel *Open City*, which tells the story of a Nigerian man in New York, contrasting with our chosen one as the main character is now in Lagos, Nigeria. But in addition to fictional works, as there are common themes in both novels such as postcolonialism, African Literature studies or even migration, a great number of works have been published. Spivak, Bhabha and Said are the key figures in postcolonial literature which have offered different opinions and perspectives to study that literature, which are going to be used in this dissertation.

2.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Different aspects of postcolonial literature shape these narratives and contribute to creating different meanings of places, names, or experiences but some remain understudied. Considering the field of study established above, this dissertation will answer the following questions:

- Which are the elements within postcolonial literature that contribute to the shape of narratives?
- How are spaces and feelings connected in postcolonial literature?

- How has the perception of a place changed due to the experiences of the protagonists?
- How is Afropolitanism present in both narratives? Is it similar or does it differ somehow?
- Are there still postcolonial traces in these African countries?

In conclusion, the research questions previously shown stand as the investigation lines for this dissertation, in which I aim to delve into the complexities of postcolonial literature in regards of space and feelings. By addressing these research questions, the dissertation aims to provide deeper insights into the relation between African literatures and the existing presence of colonialism. It seeks to show these aspects within the novels *We Need New Names* by NoViolet Bulawayo and *Every Day is for the Thief* by Teju Cole.

3. METHODOLOGY

This dissertation employs an individual analysis of the novels *We Need New Names* by NoViolet Bulawayo and *Every Day is for the Thief* by Teju Cole. The contexts in which they are analysed are postcolonial literature, affect theories, spatial theories and afropolitanism. In order to carry out a scholarly analysis of the texts, I have reviewed existing literature on these topics and previously published scholarship on the two novels I analyse in my dissertation.

The literary review section contains a brief review of the extensive literature that was published regarding not only the books but also the theoretical framework used. This review establishes an understanding of each theoretical concept and their relation to the selected novels. This dissertation examines the theoretical framework and general ideas that are going to be taken into account to establish comparisons and draw some conclusions in relation to the novels *We Need New Names* and *Every Day is for the Thief*. The analysis focuses on identifying similarities and disparities in the treatment of these themes: the relation or not between spaces and affect/feelings, how Afropolitanism is portrayed in both novels along with the presence of the colony, and the concept of 'strangeness'. The end of the degree dissertation aims to portray how these themes are created, encountered, and addressed within the texts. This method enables a deeper study of the complexities that are present in both novels.

Thanks to the application of this methodology, this dissertation purposes to contribute to these unexplored, or underexplored fields in the broad literature theory area.

The goal is to improve the comprehension of the complex socio-cultural factors that are present in postcolonial literature.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 Postcolonial theory¹

One of the central concerns of postcolonial theory has been to reconstruct Western thought, providing a new perspective to examine literature. So,

postcolonialism is not just a disciplinary field, nor is it a theory which has or has not come to an end. Rather, its objectives have always involved a wide-ranging political project—to reconstruct Western knowledge formation, reorient ethical norms, turn the power structures of the world upside down, and refashion the world from below. (Young 2012, 20).

Postcolonial theory is a literature-critical approach that studies writings produced in countries that were once or are still, colonies of others. This dissertation will focus, specifically, on British ex-colonies located in Africa.

The origins of postcolonial theory according to Vijay Mishra (2020) can be traced back to the mid-20th century, when a movement aiming at giving voice to marginalised voices and challenging the existing colonial structures emerged. Nevertheless, most of the postcolonial literature comes from Britain's past colonies which were spread along the world, such as the Caribbean or India. Many scholars, not only British but also from the colonies, have made contributions to the field. Some of the best-known are Said, Bhabha and Spivak, who provided the basis for the so-called postcolonial theory.

African literature has great importance in the postcolonial field. African writers, who flourished in the era of postcolonial rule, made great contributions to the literary scene by engaging with themes such as identity, power and resilience, among others. The groundbreaking book *Things Fall Apart* (1958) by Chinua Achebe, considered an iconic work delves into the visible effects of colonialism in the Igbo society. Moreover in "Decolonising the Mind" (1986) by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, the author calls for the need to forget about misinterpretations and look at key points such as language or identity.

¹ According to McLeod (1969, 5) post-colonial refers to "a specific historical period following colonial rule, such as "after colonialism" or "after independence". However, postcolonial involves much more than historical values that coexist with colonial times and beyond. Thus, this dissertation makes use of the non-hyphenated concept 'postcolonialism'.

Finally, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin's *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) provide an in-depth study of postcolonial literature, particularly African writings.

There is no postcolonial theory without Homi Bhabha (Mishra 2020, 7). He is still today a remarkable figure in postcolonial theory who introduced several key ideas that have influenced the field. One of his central ideas is the commonly named *cultural hybridity*. According to him, in postcolonial contexts, identities are in constant change due to the interactions not only with the people surrounding the characters but also with the environment in which they live. After putting together some of the main ideas of Bhabha, we come to the *third space* in which new identities can emerge, changing thus the existing traditional dynamics. As a consequence, new narratives and perspectives can be seen through Bhabha's eyes. In this way, we perceive how the interactions the main characters of the novels that are examined in this dissertation have with their surroundings create new identities in their destinations.

Edward's W. Said well-known work "Orientalism" (1978), has highly influenced the postcolonial field. It is worth mentioning that he was not aiming to contribute to this literary area. According to Said, there should be a re-reading of the Orient, as it is addressed through Western constructs and not through real facts. The East is treated as "the other". In addition, he remarks on how the discourse is shaped by the West: power relationships influence the representation of the East. Western ideology is stronger and more influential in the discourse. Although Said did not proclaim himself as part of the postcolonial theoretical literature, his writings are still relevant to the theory today. Both novels are written by African authors; they do not tell a story that it is written by a white author. What Said calls *Orientalism*, meaning the study of the Orient re-reading the true facts, can be applied to these novels but as African works.

The recovery of the subject, the one who tells the story in postcolonial theory relates to Spivak's *Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999) in which she gives voice to the silenced voices, especially those of women in the master philosophical texts of Europe and in colonial discourse as well (Mishra and Hodge 2005, 385). These silenced figures, along with the colonized ones, should empower themselves to be freed from the oppression of the colonizers. Achieving so, they will be able to have their identity back, although their previous experiences will influence them. In the case of the novels selected, not only Darling but also the other main characters are silenced.

As previously mentioned, women were silenced not only in the West but also in the East. Postcolonial theory, when viewed through a feminist lens, helps to bring visibility

to, in this case, African migrants who have been historically marginalized and silenced. Through this approach, the relations between gender, race, and class together with colonialism can be analyzed, as Crenshaw argues in “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color” (1991), an intersectional approach is needed to fully understand their situation while also questioning patriarchal and colonial structures. Themes such as identity, sexuality, and African women’s lives are also studied.

Another aspect to consider is that “the other” has been used in postcolonial literature to refer to minorities and marginalized, silenced groups. Postcolonial theory aims to deconstruct this term, which is seen as a discriminatory one, as we are all equal. This would allow minorities to represent themselves and not be seen as “strangers”. As the term has been criticized, scholars advocate for reconsidering it to go beyond the idea of “the other”. The concept of a *stranger* as a feeling appears in both novels. Cook (2022), suggests using socio and cultural frameworks to study them. All of these address the issue of identity and feelings; the distinction between the “other” and a group is what defines a stranger.

Postcolonial literature has been so thoroughly studied that it is even argued that it is saturated. In contrast, others suggest that it has evolved together with the actual world dynamics. Scholars continue to study the field and engage with this perspective to study current issues such as migration in *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid (2017) or postcolonial ecocriticism such as *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* by Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin (2015). I consider that the field remains relevant today and it has expanded to a point that early proponents could not have imagined, and that is why some scholars still discussing colonialism. We are still talking about colonialism, we have not come to announce the “end of postcolonialism” (Misha and Hodge 2005, 375). The legacy of colonialism is present up to date, and challenges posed by it are being faced even today.

Young, for example, advocates for “a reconsideration of the role of the postcolonial in the era of the twenty-first century” (2012, 22). He focuses

on contemporary issues that involve what can be characterized as the politics of invisibility and of unreadability: indigenous struggles and their relation to settler colonialism, illegal migrants and political Islands. None of these falls within the template of the classic paradigm of anticolonial struggles, but they all involve postcolonial remains as well as prompting political insights that show the extent to which the postcolonial remains. (Young 2012, 22)

This approach is relevant to the dissertation as the characters are living in the twenty-first century. Thus, a reconsideration of the postcolonial is needed to see how the classic struggles are present, but new ones could appear.

4.2 Afropolitanism

Such a controversial term nowadays proves to be necessary for the protagonist of both novels. Coined By Taiye Selasi (2005) and Achille Mbembe (2007), it refers to an Afro-cosmopolitan ethos of transcending national differences to forge multiracial communities. Sarah Balakrishnan defines the term as follows: “Afropolitanism refers to a way of being African in the world—of being ‘African’ and ‘cosmopolitan’, and of observing African cultures themselves as hybridity’s formed from many different influences and roots” (Balakrishnan 2018). From the year in which the term was coined up to today, not only have different definitions been provided but the field has also been greatly enlarged.

Afropolitanism has not only been indeed recently criticized by scholars but has also called the attention of critics. It is associated with whiteness and their supremacy over African people; it is seen as a Western term. In *Debating the Afropolitan* (Durán-Almarza, Jahanara and Rodríguez González 2019), the acceptance of the term is discussed through different articles. If we apply this term to the novels, we can see that it can be used and related to the characters, which helps them define themselves in those situations.

For example, Skinner (2017) studied the different relations between locations – the global and the local ones. As a consequence, not only attention is paid to both aspects but also it makes people aware of the duality. A change can be observed, as recognition is given to Africa. It includes the portrayal of African experiences, problems and mobilities among a great variety of things. Afropolitanism stands out for its ability to portray African complex experiences to the rest of the world. Skinner, on his side, believes that Afropolitanism is important because it creates a new manner of thinking.

Writers such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Teju Cole, and Taiye Selasi incorporate themes of mobility, cultural hybridity, and connections in their works, reflecting the experiences of today’s African people. Our focus is on literature, but Afropolitanism is much more. Afropolitanism is also present in music, fashion and art as portrayed in *Every Day is for the Thief*. Thus, it challenges the traditional view of Africans and offers, in this way, new insights.

Traditional ideas about African culture and identity have been significantly challenged by the Afropolitan model. Firstly, an African identity characterized by the cosmopolitan component along with the acceptance of different cultural influences going beyond the traditional divisions of race or nationality is promoted. Secondly, by highlighting the complex fusion of multiple influences, it draws attention to the hybrid nature of current African identities. Thirdly, by rejecting the notion of an individual African identity, Afropolitanism embraces richness and diversity providing thus a broader understanding of the current African identity in today's world.

Furthermore, Afropolitanism recognises how globalisation and migration shaped and are still shaping African culture and identity together with the important role of technology. Additionally, Afropolitanism supports an open understanding of African identities going beyond the traditional viewpoint of a single African identity. In short, Afropolitanism offers a more open and understanding point of view on current African identities, advocating for a reevaluation of African identity and culture in this globalised world such as done in the novels.

4.3 Spatial theory

Spatial theories focus on the relevance that spaces have when reading a novel. In this dissertation, in order to study spaces in postcolonial literature, we consider Massey's study along with the arguments of Quayson and Mitchell who justify this approach to literature.

Doreen Massey states that "one of the effects of modernity was the establishment of a particular power/knowledge relation which was mirrored in a geography that was also a geography of power (the colonial powers/the colonized spaces) – a power-geometry of intersecting trajectories" (2005, 64). The relationship established between the postcolonial environment and its spaces creates a clear dichotomy which is worth studying. According to Krishnan (2018, 629), spaces function not as an auxiliary to colonial conquest, but as a central component. Thus, Massey's study of space, place and geography contributes greatly to the understanding of postcolonial spaces. She highlights the entangled relationship between spaces and powers in colonial contexts. In this way, she sheds light on how the colonial maintains control over the colonized areas through their presence in different ways.

Furthermore, spatial theory's associations with context are addressed through the term she coined "power-geometry of intersecting trajectories" (Massey 2005, 64). Power

dynamics are entangled with spaces, thus an understanding of the factors that shape the postcolonial discourse can be made. Moreover, these relations are politically influenced, lying behind greater settings which need to be analyzed.

Spaces are a complex issue to address. They were constrained by the colonial powers, which made clear alterations to the locations where they arrived, not only physically but also in terms of power structures. Among the most remarkable changes were those related to languages, cultural aspects, or power structures. What is even more, prohibitions regarding language or some customs were applied. As a consequence, the environment changed.

Hybridity is still present today; a mixture of the local culture with that of the colonizer is still perceived. These spaces are characterized by the feeling of displacement by the local communities. There is a need to go beyond in literature and consider the complexities of the situation that some communities are still facing today. According to Krishan (2018):

When applied to the study of literary spatiality, these divisions and dualities result in a condition in which the text remains a passive repository of alternately abstract and materialist visions of space which do not account for its full, lived complexity as a site of the constitution. (Krishan 2018, 630).

Other scholars such as W. J. T. Mitchell (2012) also explored the concept of spatial form in literature, challenging the existing dichotomy between space and time. From his point of view, spatial forms can be used in combination with temporal forms. Certain spatial patterns can be described using spatial forms. Spatial and temporal forms are closely related in literature; a combination of both of them creates coherence and progression when creating a literary work.

Spatial forms can be used to create a deeper meaning in these literary works, going beyond just descriptions. Mitchell, with his analysis, questions conventional assumptions about literary interpretations. He defends a more complex principle that views spatial theory as an indispensable component of literary works, as part of their narrative structure and their meaning-making. In this way, the author clears up the complex relationship that lies between space, time, meaning and form.

Other scholars such as Ato Quayson (2012) also argue that space is key to postcolonial theory. Following the same argument as the previous one, space influences the reading and understanding of postcolonial works. Thanks to postcolonial theory, space dynamics are reconfigured and thus explored from another point of view. A further

aspect that has been explored in spatial theories is the colonial space construction: imposing social and political dimensions to physical spaces, shaping thus, politics, society, or culture.

As mentioned before their three different explanations for the importance of spatial theory in postcolonial literature, establish clear links between spaces and the postcolonial context. In the thesis, we aim to provide insights into the complex relationship between the three: space, postcolonial places, and feelings.

4.4 Affect theory.

There has been an “affective turn” in literature, as new perspectives on works of literature have been given, going beyond the traditional methodologies that mostly addressed perception and meanings. Therefore, affect is going to be analyzed concerning spatial theories following Brian Massumi and Sara Ahmed’s works.

Brian Massumi explains the autonomy of affect through a snowman example in his article “The Autonomy of Affect” (1995):

A man builds a snowman on his roof garden. It starts to melt in the afternoon sun. He watches. After a time, he takes the snowman to the cool of mountains, where it stops melting. He bids it good-bye, and leaves. (Massumi, 1995, 85)

The story is taken from a German TV show. Through it, the author shows how affect is not linked to awareness or cognitive processing. Therefore, they are automatically generated. Massumi’s analysis of affect sheds light on the complexities and the important impact on human experience and perception it has. A distinction is made between affect and emotion. On the one hand, emotion is characterized by the cultural and linguistic aspects. On the other hand, affect is depicted as an unrecognizable character which is unknowable. This difference is key to understanding the complexity of individual experiences. It was seen that affect influenced people’s experience and views, being affected by the interactions with the surroundings.

Fields such as the physical, emotional, or sensory are explored in affect theory studies. Affect theory, in addition, examines how readers are influenced by the text. Thus, it is concluded that literature has the potential not only to create emotions but also to transform them when being read. A close relationship between the reader and the text is fostered. Readers’ emotions are influenced by for example language or narrative techniques.

Moreover, Sara Ahmed (2014) published the book *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* where she explores “how emotions work to shape the ‘surfaces’ of individual and collective bodies. Bodies take the shape of the very contact they have with objects and others” (Ahmed 2014, 1). Characters in the novels analysed are not only in contact with different environments but also with other people. However, as spaces are relevant, we will focus our attention on the emotions they have when being in different spaces. According to Ahmed “rather than asking “What are emotions?” we should ask “What do emotions do?” (2014, 4). She also addresses the question of fear, fear of blackness. In both novels, fear is expressed indirectly towards the unknown. As such, characters expressed fear when they are in a place that has suffered change and it is no longer as they have remembered—for example, Lagos after being in another country for years.

5. ANALYSIS

5.1. *We Need New Names*

We Need New Names (2013) tells the adventures of Darling, a young girl who spends her days playing with her friends in a Zimbabwean shanty town called Paradise. Through her eyes, we can perceive the precarious situation of the African country. Then, she moves to the U.S. where her Aunt Fostalina lives and where she encounters the difficulties of being a black migrant, offering insights into the complexities of migration to an idealized country such as the U.S. With such a variety of spaces, the characters’ feelings are worth studying. Other aspects that are going to be examined are the notion of Afropolitanism, which is seen in the relation between African and Western cultures which Darling inhabits, or the presence of colonialism. Through the analysis of a selection of quotes taken from the novel, I will demonstrate not only the presence of these topics but also their importance in postcolonial literature.

5.1.1. Affect and spaces.

Masumi (1995) studies affect and portrays the complexities and the impact that affect has on human experience. Affect is depicted as an unrecognizable character who is unknowable. This helps us to understand the complexity of individual experiences. In the theoretical framework of this dissertation, I discussed how affect has an influence on people’s experiences and views, being affected by the interactions with the surroundings.

Moreover, Tomkins (1980) states that affect is key in human experiences, as it influences either our perceptions or our behaviours.

Spaces are constrained by colonial powers. Changes have taken place in this African country, not only physically, at the level of landscape or infrastructure, but also culturally. As a consequence, the country is characterized by a hybrid environment: the combination of their original culture together with colonial impositions. According to Krishan (2018), any text, in this case the novels, remains a passive repository which does not exemplify the complex situation. Moreover, Massey (2005) sheds light on the complex relationships between spaces and colonial contexts. Therefore, for this dissertation, I combine both theoretical approaches in order to show how different spaces influence our so-called affect, or rather our feelings. In the first section, I will analyse how places are different from what they seem, analysing the shanty town of Paradise and the Budapest neighbourhood from the character's perspective. Secondly, I will focus my attention on the plane, the means of transport that connects the U.S. and Africa. Thirdly, I will look at the influence a place has on decisions. Finally, I will show how the U.S. is portrayed in this novel together with the situation the characters encounter in her arrival.

5.1.1.1 A misleading Paradise

The shanty town in which Darling lives, called Paradise, is not what it may seem from its name. This is the main space in which the character develops her activity during her time in Zimbabwe. Although it is called Paradise, in fact, it is not a paradise. Thus, the name of the shanty town is used as a metaphor: the space is not as perfect as a paradise. Instead, the feeling that it gives to the character is the desire to leave it behind. Since the beginning of the novel, the characters dream about going away, leaving behind their home country to get to a better place.

This desire to leave the home country is not only present in this young girl but also in previous generations. The 'native' spaces have been contaminated with the colonial influence. As a consequence, spaces and colonial contexts have a complex relationship that in most cases is avoided by the population if they have the chance. In the novel, two examples of Zimbabwean citizens who left the country are mentioned. Darling's aunt, who is called Fostalina, is now living in the U.S. Then, Darling encounters a young white girl whose father is from Zimbabwe but emigrated to the U.K. years ago. This unnamed girl says: 'I'm from London. This is my first time visiting my dad's country, she says and twists the chain on her neck. The golden head on the chain is the map of Africa'

(Bulawayo 2013, 7). We can appreciate that in this case, the man who emigrated to the U.K. looking for a better future, for himself and his family achieved so. The evidence that demonstrates that he succeeded in the European continent is money. On the one hand, he can afford to travel, not alone but with his family to Zimbabwe. On the other hand, he can afford to give his daughter a gold chain. These kinds of signs are those that Darling sees and motivate her to leave the country.

The situation in Zimbabwe is not an easy one. Darling explains that ‘Getting out of Paradise [is] not so hard’ (Bulawayo 2013, 1). On the one hand, Darling does not consider the feelings she has for her family or her home at this moment. On the other hand, she is moved by the circumstances: the injustices present in the country due to colonial powers. Some reasons that could justify her decision to leave could be the struggles that she experiences there. Darling says: “This place is not like Paradise, it’s like being in a different country altogether. A nice country where people who are not like us live. But then you don’t see anything to show there are real people living here; even the air itself is empty: no delicious food cooking, no odors, no sound. Just nothing” (Bulawayo 2013, 4). This quote illustrates the huge differences between ‘neighbourhoods’ or rather the different parts in which the population is divided. Darling and her friends experience the place as if it were part of a different country. Such is the difference between the neighbourhood of Paradise and Budapest, which will be explained later, that Darling considers that they are different in terms of identity, as they are not like them. Moreover, the culture is also perceived as different: the food or the language. Therefore, the effects of colonialism are present in the country, both, shaping and affecting them. Darling sees the white population as strangers.

This situation has been with her since Darling was a child, she had to see harsh circumstances that are somehow now imprinted in her mind. Although years have passed, some remarkable actions that she experienced when she was a child, always remain in her thoughts:

Even if I want to sleep I cannot because if I sleep, the dream will come. And I don’t want it to come. I am afraid of the bulldozers and those men and the police, afraid that if I let the dream come, they will get out of it and be more real. I dream about what happened back at our house it away but the dream keeps coming and coming like bees, like rain, like the graves at Heavenway. In my dream, which is not a dream-dream because it is also the truth that happened. (Bulawayo, 64-65)

These actions that they had to live with are now part of their traumas and they are part of their daily life. This kind of trauma can affect children in different ways. As we can see from the quote, their sleep is ‘polluted’ with their previous experiences.

5.1.1.2. Budapest

Budapest does not refer to a European city, but some similarities can be drawn. In the novel, Budapest is a rich neighbourhood in the city where Darling lives. And Budapest contrasts with the neighborhood where Darling lives, Paradise. Only in the story, the real *paradise* in the novel is, ironically, the rich neighbourhood, not the one actually called Paradise. Darling says:

This place is not like Paradise, it’s like being in a different country altogether. A nice country where people who are not like us live. But then you don’t see anything to show there are real people living here; even the air itself is empty: no delicious food cooking, no odors, no sound. Just nothing. (Bulawayo 2013, 4).

At this point, we see the huge differences between both places, Paradise, and Budapest. This Europeanized neighbourhood, with visible effects of colonialism, is a very different place. Moreover, I make another reading of Budapest. Budapest is a European city which is characterized by a better quality of life than that of many African countries. Therefore, Budapest in the novel stands for a neighbourhood with a better quality of life. It could also be read as a way of escaping the country and going to Europe by marrying a white European man.

5.1.1.3. Means of transport

Different reasons and different ways to leave the home country are shown in the story. Darling has dreams about leaving since she was a young girl. However, I must mention that not much information is provided about the means through which characters leave the country. Eventhought, it is said that it was easy to leave Paradise, the lack of this information could suggest that Darling was leaving the country in an illegal manner. Moreover, this condition could also trigger her experience in the U.S., as she will not be able to leave the country. In *We Need New Names*, it is implied that Darling leaves the country by plane. The plane is the link between Africa and the U.S. She is travelling towards the U.S., flying above her country, and leaving behind the circumstances that make her take the decision to leave it; she is going to start a new adventure. Darling says: “I look up to the sky and see a plane far up in the clouds. First, I’m thinking it’s just a

bird, but then I see that no, it's not. Maybe it's a British Airways plane like the one Aunt Fostalina went in to America [...]” (Bulawayo 2013, 34). She wants to follow the same path as her aunt Fostalina. I argue that a simile can be established between the animal and the plane, they are the means that allows the main character, Darling, to leave the country behind and reach the U.S. She feels a desire to leave but also enthusiasm as she hopes it happens sooner rather than later. This was not the only way in which they could leave the country, other options were considered, such as marrying an outsider as this quote exemplifies: ‘I’m going to marry a man from Budapest. He’ll take me away from Paradise’ (Bulawayo 2013,12).

Moreover, the car is also mentioned in the novel. The car, as a means of transport, is not a safe space for the characters. Darling recalls when a black man was shot for being black. After having driven without a license she thinks: “I remember that the police will shoot you for doing a little thing like if you are black, so I sit in the car” (Bulawayo 2013, 219). She was doing something illegal, so as not to have the same end as the other man, she decides to stay in the car. It is true that she is doing an illegal act. However, this is an extra condition that does not play in her favour. As she is black, she could end up dead for driving a car. She needs to think about her actions in the means of transports as it could have huge consequences for her.

5.1.1.4 The space makes her leave.

Spaces influence one's living and also force people to make decisions. This is the case of Darling, who wants to leave the country. Another remarkable quote taken from the chapter “How They Left” reads as follows:

Look at the children of the land leaving in droves, leaving their own land with bleeding wounds on their bodies and shock on their faces and blood in their hearts and hunger in their stomachs and grief in their footsteps. Leaving their mothers and fathers and children behind, leaving their umbilical cords underneath the soil, leaving the bones of their ancestors in the earth, leaving everything that makes them who and what they are, leaving because it is no longer possible to stay. They will never be the same again because you just cannot be the same once you leave behind who and what you are, you just cannot be the same. (Bulawayo 2013, 146)

From the text, we can perceive that the decision to leave was not taken without a great consideration. After suffering for a long time, people feel forced to abandon the country. It was *no longer possible to stay*. They were harmed and wounded in what was some time ago their so-called home. Moreover, famine was prominent. Despite this

suffering, it was not an easy decision. In that land, their relatives, which are a fundamental part of her life, remain. Together with them, their roots would be forever linked to that land. The novel shows how its characters' identities are shaped by the places where they live, changing their perceptions of things. Afropolitanism could be argued to be both a fundamental and necessary term for these populations. They are now influenced by their surroundings, but their roots are still African.

5.1.1.5. The perfect place: The United States

Before her arrival, the United States is idealized through the eyes of the protagonist, but when she arrives, the situation she encounters is not the *paradise* she has imagined. Struggles are also present here.

Going to the United States, which is seen as the most important country, is presented as being lucky. Darling believes that: "If I'm lucky, like today, I get to be to the U.S.A., which is a country-country; who doesn't know that the U.S.A. is the big baboon of the world? I feel like it's my country now because my aunt Fostalina lives there" (Bulawayo 2013, 49). She perceives the U.S. as a real country, differing from her Zimbabwe. It is seen as the only possible solution to leave their *no-country*. It is even said that she already considers the U.S. as her own country. These thoughts imply that she does not feel at home in her country of origin. For her to think this way, there must be something wrong in Zimbabwe. It is described as a place that could bring them opportunities to grow economically. It is seen as the perfect place that was waiting for all migrants. It seems that it is prompt to give her opportunities to succeed in life. Darling once in Zimbabwe said: "There, right there, was a Lamborghini Reventón, Stina says. When I go to live with Aunt Fostalina, that's the kind of car I'll drive, see how it's even small like it was made for me? I say. I just know, because of this feeling in my bones, that the car is waiting for me in America" (Bulawayo 2013, 110-111). Such a car costs a lot of money and Darling knows it. She feels that the U.S. is a place that is waiting for her and that could bring her this kind of opportunity, providing her with a better life. The poverty of Zimbabwe is portrayed several times throughout the novel. Nevertheless, the U.S. does not have these problems, according to Darling. Therefore, this is one of the reasons that made her decide to leave her home country and travel to the U.S., where she would be able to succeed economically.

Washington is the place where Darling has to face a case of discrimination for the first time. The protagonist was dreaming of leaving her home country, but the situation got complicated when she first arrived in the U.S., where she found a difficult situation that they had to face. The declaration that the young girl says shows that the situation was a very hard one:

When I first arrived at Washington I just wanted to die. The other kids teased me about my name, my accent, my hair, the way I talked or said things, the way I dressed, the way I laugh. When you are being teased about something, at first you try to fix it so the teasing can stop but those crazy kids teased me about everything, even the things I couldn't change, and it kept going and going so that in the end, I just felt wrong in my skin in my body, in my clothes, in my language, in my head, everything. (Bulawayo 2013, 165)

Unfortunately, this was just the beginning of the situation until she gets used to this new environment. Years passed and difficult episodes happened in the country. Immigrants were firstly discriminated for their accent, the name, clothes...., but in a certain way she could *assimilate* to the new American atmosphere and change her way of being to fit better in that white American society. Darling's mother, while they are in a phone call, says to her daughter "I see that America has taught you to speak English to your mother, and with that accent. He-he-he, so you are trying to sound white now!" (Bulawayo 2013, 204), becoming thus a case of assimilation to the American pronunciation rather than the Zimbabwean way. In fact, the shantytown Paradise is a better place for her. It is true, however, that the situation in the African country would not be the easiest one, but at least some difficulties could have been avoided.

There is a need for Afropolitanism to combat discrimination. The remarkable aspect that blocks the character's path in the country is the colour of her skin, as she is black. This situation was not only faced by her in the U.S., but also by their relatives in Europe. Years ago, episodes against the black population were happening in Europe, and unfortunately, the situation has not changed. In *We Need New Names* there are two quotes that exemplify the situation that black people have to face. Darling says: "Like last week Aunt Fostalina's friend MaDumane called to say that her husband, who works for the newspaper, had been taken by the police in the middle of the night for things he had written [...] He has not been seen or heard from since" (Bulawayo 2013, 203). Not only Darling's family but also the black communities were used to these situations. As can be seen in the quote, he was taken at night and nothing more is known. The reality is that he must have been killed for expressing his own opinions. These ones were probably not well seen, so freedom of speech for them was not a possibility. He ended up dead.

Due to the circumstances black people must face in the U.S., they miss what was once their home, as most of their family lives there together with their friends. She has grown up in such a different country with many distinctions from this new one that they could even be seen as two different worlds. The young girl asks to go home: “So I tell Aunt Fostalina that I want to go home and visit just for a little while, to see how my friends and Mother and Mother of Bones and people and things are” (Bulawayo 2013, 185). She remembers her origins and she feels sadness because she is not near them any longer.

5.1.2 Colonialism

Colonialism still affects the country because it was once a British colony. Said argues that, given the significance of colonies perspective, a new approach is required to depict the circumstances of the colonies. That is why, *We Need New Names*, the semi-autobiographical novel is written by a Zimbabwean writer who shows her experiences through the eyes of Darling. The novel has several instances of postcolonial remains.

Different effects of colonial times can be seen in the novel. Language is imposed in the country in which the British arrived. An unknown character says: “You bring English to this country and now you want it explained to you, your own language, have you no shame? One of them says” (Bulawayo 2013, 117). They were forced to learn the language that the colonizer spoke. There were cases in which children at school were punished physically for not speaking the appropriate language. This not only happened in the British colonies but also in many others such as Spanish or French ones.

Another visible effect of colonialism in these postcolonial territories are NGOs. In *We Need New Names* these organizations aimed to help native populations bringing them clothes, toys, food, etc. In the novel, it is narrated how they arrive to the shantytown occasionally without caring really about the population. They just leave there the materials that are inside the truck. Darling thinks that “The man starts taking pictures with his big camera. They just like taking pictures” (Bulawayo 2013, 52). They take the pictures to demonstrate that they have done their job. Darling thinks that they do not care about them as they do *just* that. Moreover, natives need to behave well as if they do not, they can be punished, “the NGO people were not happy about it, like we had committed a crime against humanity” (Bulawayo 2013, 51). Furthermore, this help is provided by NGOs in which white people work, showing still in a certain way the superiority over these populations and cultures.

NGOs are created in Western countries and go to African ones, in this case, Zimbabwe, to help the populations. According to Kabonga (2023) the role of NGOs in Zimbabwe deals with increasing income, improving health and educational outcomes, reducing food insecurity, and sustaining livelihoods. Despite these contributions, NGOs in Zimbabwe face challenges that are limiting their efforts towards eradication of poverty.

5.2. Every Day is for the Thief

Every Day is for the Thief (2007) tells the experience of the homecoming of an unnamed Nigerian who has been living in New York for many years. The novel describes the days that the character spent in what was his home years ago. Now, feelings of strangeness are with them. The character, due to the change that the country has experienced, feels as if it is no longer his home, he feels like a stranger. Moreover, the character's feelings vary according to the place in which he is. Through the analysis of quotes taken from the novel, we can demonstrate not only the presence of these topics in the novel but also their importance in postcolonial literature.

5.2.1 Affect and Spaces in Homecoming

Masumi examines affect and illustrates the complex conditions of human experience as well as the influence that affect has on it. It is said that affect is an unknowable, unidentifiable feature. Consequently, it facilitates the appreciation of varied personal experiences. Thus, we can conclude that affect shaped people's perspectives and experiences. Furthermore, according to Tomkins, affect plays an essential part in human experiences since it shapes our perceptions and behaviours.

The colonial powers imposed restrictions on spaces. This country in Africa has undergone both physical and cultural changes. As a result, a country is defined by a hybrid environment that combines colonial impositions with its own culture. Krishan (2018) argues that the text is a passive archive that fails to illustrate the complicated circumstances. Furthermore, Massey clarifies the entangled connections between locations and colonial settings. As a result, I use both theoretical approaches in this dissertation to demonstrate how different locations alter emotions, or what is known as affect.

5.2.1.1. Office and corruption

Neither in Nigeria nor in the U.S. does the protagonist encounter a comfortable situation. In *Every Day is for the Thief* the character leaves his home country, Nigeria, under a difficult situation. He feels that he has “left under a cloud” (Cole 2007, 10) after the death of his father in addition to having had a huge discussion with his mother. In *We Need New Names*, the character was living under a dictatorship. In both novels, it was not an easy one. Both protagonists had to face hard circumstances which led to the desire to search for better or rather different futures. Following the same argument as in the other novel, the U.S. was seen as a perfect country. So, cases of corruption should not take place. However, corruption is present in paperwork, which the character of *Every Day is for the Thief*, has to face. This is most likely in African countries as the character states: “I have mentally rehearsed a reaction for a possible encounter with such corruption at the airport in Lagos. But you walk in off a New York Street and face a brazen demand for a bribe: that is a shock I am ill-prepared for” (Cole 2007, 7). The character has not thought about this event happening in the U.S. He sees Lagos as a more corrupt city, where these cases are more likely.

5.2.1.2. Means of transport

The means of transport by which the character leaves the country not only the first time but also the second time is the plane. The plane is the beginning of his new life. He is flying above his country and leaving behind the circumstances that made him decide to leave it. He was starting a new life in New York.

When the time to go back to the U.S. after the visit comes, the characters are not feeling good. He suffers from malaria, an African disease. This connects him with his *home*. However, when the plane takes off and the only thing he sees is the “earth’s black curve” (Cole 2007, 157), he forgets about Nigeria and what he has lived on this trip. Such a ‘small’ vehicle as a plane makes the character feel ecstasy about going *home* but it also makes him forget about Lagos and focus on his life in New York.

However, while the character is still in Lagos he uses the car. The car needs fuel to move. As stated by the narrator “half the city runs on diesel generator, and Nigeria is one of the world’s leading producing or cruel oil” (Cole 2007, 95), so there must not be a problem to find a suitable station. “Shortages make so sense” (Cole 2007, 95) in the country. The protagonist tells how he needs to drive for a long time to different stations to look for fuel as there was none in some of them. Moreover, this situation together with

the fact that the characters were swindled in the station, does not disappoint his colleague. However, the character is not only preoccupied by the situation but also angry about it. Therefore, Nigerians were used to this corruption dealing with the petrol industry, being thus another problem in the African country. Moreover, driving a car seems to be a privilege. As shortages were common in the country, the fuel price was high. We need also to consider that they were charged a certain amount, but less fuel was given. So, they needed a lot of money to afford that situation.

5.2.1.3 Lagos

In *Every Day is for the Thief* the main character feels the *ecstasy of the arrival* to Lagos as he has been shaped by the time he spent in the U.S. When he returns, he is not the only one that has changed, but also his city, Lagos. In addition to the cultural shock of return, there are some aspects that he needs to consider if he wants to come back there:

There are practical issues to consider. There is the question of money, the question of my professional development and my other work. Serious questions for which there are answers. But there is also the question of my tolerance for the environment. Am I ready for all the rage Nigeria can bring out of me? (Cole 2007, 66)

He can leave all his current life in the U.S., but as Lagos has also changed and he feels that here, he is a *stranger*, he is not sure about being able to get used to this new place. Despite bringing something good for him, he says that Nigeria can bring *all the rage* from him: a resentment feeling can still be there as when he left it was difficult, or there is something that does not convince him about the situation.

While the characters are children, they dream about leaving the African country to get a better life, and they consider the U.S. to do so. However, “by the time I entered my final year of secondary school, I knew I had to leave Nigeria” (Cole 2007, 119). They no longer dream, but are aware that they need to leave the country. In this case, in contrast with the girl in the other novel, the character radically wants to split paths with his home country: “My communication with those who remained at home was almost as bad, not out of any ill feeling, but from the need to make the break complete” (Cole 2007, 119). The character’s opinion changes as he grows up; when he is a child, he dreams about going away, whereas in his adolescent years, he becomes aware of what happens. When he left, he was still a young boy who wanted to *make a complete break*; when some years passed, he wanted to return to his home country where he even experienced positive

feelings in spite of the desire to leave, he had years ago. He is telling about his experiences in the country even getting to have good feelings about the Lagosian scene.

5.2.2. Strangeness

As the character goes to a Western country, the U.S., and then comes back to Lagos, his opinion of the city upon his return is shaped by his previous experiences both in Lagos and in the U.S. The man in *Every Day is for the Thief* sees himself as a stranger in this environment that has changed. He says: “But other things, less visible, have changed. I have taken into myself some of the assumptions of life in a Western democracy – certain ideas about legality, for instance, certain expectations of due process – and in that sense, I have returned a stranger” (Cole 2007, 17). Lagos has changed in most cases for the better but is no longer what it was. The character feels the necessity to fit in this country as it is his home country. However, he feels that between the U.S. and Nigeria, he needs to define himself. This is one reason why I can use Afropolitanism to define him: not one or the other, but both, an African of the world.

As the character expresses, he is used to his life on the other continent, and what some time ago he called home, is no longer his home, as he feels he is a stranger there. As he contends, “The word ‘home’ sits in my mouth like foreign food. So simple a word, and so hard to pin its meaning” (Cole 2007, 156). This is not the only situation in which the characters suffer for their belonging. This task also hardens the task of their identity definition, as where he belongs, the space he calls home strongly identifies him and creates his identity. It could be said that Afropolitanism is an important term to define themselves, as they are now in a limbo between two spaces.

Despite the situation that past relatives and friends had to go through when they reached America, African people are dreaming about going there. They forget about the terrible situation that they will face in the new country; they only want to leave their own country. Nearly at the end of *Every Day is for the Thief* an old friend of the main characters says: “Maybe one day, by knowing you, I can have the chance to go to America” (Cole 2007, 152). This person is familiar with the situation that her friend had to face there but, the idealised image of the US is more powerful. Moreover, it is implied that if you have contact with someone that is in the U.S. it is easier to leave your home country. There, in Lagos, the situation is not easy either. Some people just accept it and do not want to leave it, as it is their home. Another old friend or the protagonist says he “Can’t complain. Dealing with this country, and the country’s dealing with me. You

know” (Cole 2007, 89). He is either giving it a chance or he is not able to leave the country.

The environment in which you are born shapes your identity. The character of *Every Day is for the Thief* is influenced by both the years he has lived in Lagos and the time he has been in New York. Hence, when the time of *homecoming* arrives, everything might feel different. His teenage years are relevant, as this is the time you change from childhood to adulthood, growing up and maturing, creating your own thoughts. These are influenced by the country that has seen the character grow for most of his life, the US. Although, the time of returning home “should be a time for joy. You know? Going home should be a thing of joy” (Cole 2007, 06), this is not always the case. As the character expresses, he feels that he is a *stranger* in the country. When returning to Lagos he says that he feels ecstasy, but as we can see he also feels like an outsider in what he still calls home.

5.2.3 Afropolitanism

Afropolitanism is a concept that helps define the character in his current situation: he is an African man who does not identify himself with Africa nor with the U.S. Therefore if we read the text from an Afropolitan perspective, we can perceive how the character is a citizen of the world but that he is marked by his African origin.

He gets to know about the situation in Lagos while he is in the country. He does not only recover contact with old friends but also with relatives. Furthermore, he does further activities such as travelling to other cities or visiting museums. Even though it has changed, it does not mean that it has changed only negatively. Some aspects could be for the worse, but a great part was for the better:

The book *Lagos: A City at Work*, is a huge textual and photographic compendium of the life of labour here. It features the work of Nigerian thinkers, writers, and photographers, all grappling with the “non-linear nature” of the city. It is a brilliant confrontation with our great behemoth of a settlement. And there is really only one word for what I feel about these new contributions to the Lagosian scene: gratitude. (Cole 2007, 131)

Nigerians, precisely the protagonist in this case, are creating their own identity, growing, and learning from their past, which is what has made them who they are now. They are proud of their identity and their culture. Moreover, the title of the book those people are writing is *A City at Work*. This means that Lagos has not only changed but it is still changing for the better. The character says that there is something that does not

convince him about Lagos, but maybe an opportunity should be given to this *new* Lagos that is transforming itself. The Nigerian identity is being spread to new places around the world thanks to people such as Teju Cole with his writings being this idea also portrayed in the novel. Thinkers, writers, and photographers, in short artists, are the ones sharing their knowledge in the book. Thanks to them, the book is going to be spread around the world and different audiences would get to know the true Nigerian image, as it is told from their perspective and not from the colonizer one. Finally, the quote finishes with the adjective 'gratitude'. They are thankful for these new contributions, these new perspectives that the artists are making. The true Lagosian scene would be known around the world. A chance was given by part of its population. This book is not only addressed to those who live in Nigeria but also to those Afropolitans, those inhabitants of the world who are somehow linked to the African culture.

5.2.4. Colonialism

As an ex-British colony, the effects of colonial times are present in the city. Said argues that a new perspective is needed to portray the situation of the colonies, one which centres their point of view. That is why, in *Every Day is for the Thief*, the novel is written by a Nigerian writer, but the main character also establishes through the space of the museum a contrast between New York and Lagos.

In the novel, the colonizer's impact can be seen not only in infrastructure but also in the country's culture. Regarding the infrastructure some parts and buildings in the city are the direct result of colonization such as "the National Museum [which] is in Onikan in the heart of old Lagos. This part of the city has much in common with other faded colonial centres. The legacy of foreign rule is visible in the churches, the Brazilian-style buildings, the porticoed and decrepit institutions that lace the tiny, winding streets" (Cole 2007, 71). From this quote, we can see that colonial effects are not only present in this city but also in other cities and their centres, the colony is still present there.

Another aspect to take into consideration is the fact that they *stole* culture-related items. This may seem not like a big issue, but these people were robbed valuable cultural items without their permission. Other museums such as MET have more items of Nigerian culture than the Lagos Museum itself. The main character goes into the museum and thinks that:

There are such gaps in the collection that one can only imagine that there has been recent plunder. The best pieces have probably found their way into the hands of dealers in Paris, Zurich, and elsewhere. My recent experience of Nigerian art at the Metropolitan Museum in New York was excellent. (Cole 2007, 74)

The character implies that valuable items were plundered, not so long ago, but recently. He suggests that they are either in Europe or in the U.S. They might have been robbed or auctioned, according to him.

The issue regarding the theft of cultural items has received an increasing interest in recent years, as countries which have achieved their independence from the colonizers are gaining voice. They have been fighting to get their identity defined together with recovering from the effects of colonialism. There has been going on the debate on whether or not these valuable items that were stolen should be returned to their original countries.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the stories of the characters in *We Need New Names* and *Every Day is for the Thief* contribute to the understanding of the relationship between the theories applied in this dissertation. Darling and the unknown narrator deal with the complexities of both common spaces, an African country, Zimbabwe, or Nigeria respectively, and the situation they have to face in the U.S. These characters reflect the complicated nature of postcolonial experiences as they manage the conflicts between the influences of Western colonialism and their own traditions.

Afropolitanism stands as a useful lens to examine the lives of these two characters, as we highlight their transcultural links with their new cosmopolitan identities. These characters, who have moved both geographically and culturally, exemplify global citizenship as they navigate their experiences in a world that is increasingly interconnected and mobile. Furthermore, space theory offers a framework for comprehending how important locations are in creating both personal and societal identities. The characters' encounters with different settings, both in their home countries and in the diaspora, emphasise the continuous struggles with identity and belonging as well as the complexity of postcolonial spatial relations.

In addition, the themes of strangeness and affect theory focus on how the main characters feel dislocated, and alienated, reacting, thus, emotionally to their surroundings—Darling's missing home, and the anonymous narrator's observations of his quickly changing nation. These stories ask readers to consider the larger effects of

colonialism and globalisation on individual subjectivities as well as to sympathise with the problems of the protagonists.

We could argue that both characters are looking for the *thief* who stole their *paradise* in each case. In both cases, the characters were not happy in their home countries, and that is the reason behind the choice to look for other opportunities abroad. Neither the situation at *home* was easy, nor was it at first in their new destination. They needed to go through circumstances which were not desirable for anyone. Not only did their behaviour and thoughts change in this new country, but also in the previous country. Darling has not given her home country another opportunity yet, and she ends up forgetting about it and assimilating herself to the USA. The other protagonist does give it a chance, but everything has changed due to colonialism. Thus, these characters use the global perspective provided by Afropolitanism to define themselves as citizens of the world, as in both countries they are strangers.

In the end, the texts this dissertation has analyzed show how difficult it is to construct a postcolonial identity and how colonialism still has an impact on people's lives today. These stories encourage readers to critically examine issues of identity and adaptability in a world shaped by past and present processes of colonialism and globalisation through their depictions of characters negotiating the entangled relationships of culture, power, and belonging.

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