

Exploring Geo-historical Identity in Abdulrazak Gunah's Novel *Paradise*

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ABSTRACT

As the know literature is a tool which explores the world and its reality. It can study historical, social, geographical perspectives of human life. Literature is pen-portraiture of society. But if we think how literature is studied keeping the view of geography, Literary geography was not actually geographical analysis of literature but rather a helping hand in descriptive geographic portrayal. Geography gives us setting of the novel. The series of locations, geological strata, barren mountainsides, rivers, battlefields are used in literature. These geographical locations whether good or bad for living, is shown with the forms of literature. Spaces has been intrinsically linked to fictional texts. Literature is the artistic form of an experimental geography. The geographical maps gives the idea of territory, while travelling in that area, some texts are often accompanied by a large number of maps, sometimes sketches carried out site, manuscript drawing from the coast. The representation of space supported by a literary instrument and iconographic sources are in close relation with chorographic literature. This makes us to ponder the visual dimension of geography and more particularly literary geography as well as the link between different types of images and writing of space. In literature, Amitav Ghosh in his *Sea of Poppies* (2008) and *River of Smoke* (2011) revisits the geography. Even Joseph Conrad's novels like Lord Jim, Heart of Darkness symbolized the territory of Africa as dark side realty. It's like Eco critical Study. In their charting of exotic lands, peoples and phenomena, adventures seem especially well suited, and it is studied through poetry, novels as a literary geography. In the Abdulrazak Gurnah's

alluring and frightening novel, 'Paradise', the maps provide the violent Geographic's. The setting of the novel is East Africa but the story is concerned with the 'Arab Traders, experience of encountering the expansion of the European empires in Africa. The novel focuses on dark side of Africa.

Keywords: Abdulrazak Gurnah, Post-colonialism, Geo-historical Imaginings, Decentered Subjectivity, Violence and Injustice. Imperial Geography, etc.

In the novel 'Paradise', by Abdulrazak Gurnah violent Geographic's are ironized. The maps that provide background for this novel is frightening one. Yusuf the protagonists of the novel, is sold to slavery at the beginning of the novel. The setting of the novel is East Africa as European War dawns, but the story is more concerned with the Arab trader's experience of encountering the expansion of the Europeans empire in general in Africa. The dark side of Africa shown in this novel.

"Everywhere they went now they found that Europeans had got there before them, and had installed soldiers and officials telling the people that they had come to save them from their enemies who only sought to make slaves of them. It was as if no other, trade had been heard of, to hear them speak. The traders spoke of the Europeans with amazement, awed by their facility and ruthlessness. (*Gurnah*, 1994-71-2)

As we read that the story is set in colonial Easts Africa as English invaders drives of the land. Soon Germans plan a railway across the continent. This novel is on the life of Yusuf, a teenager at the age of 12, and sold as a slave to pay off a debt. He is working with his uncle Aziz, and Yusuf learn the African ways of life of child slavery. He falls in Love with Amina. Later he learn something from Khalil. Yusuf is complex is character. The book deals with number of interesting issues of beginning of colonialism in East Africa, that Germans have arrived.

In this novel, geography is changing at every moment. Yusuf role is to travel with his uncle Aziz, into the Interior, but the final trading mission is a disaster and old maps don't give

those clear directions in the Journey. It is we read that geography is dependent on power. As Aziz tells Yusuf when he has almost finished recounting the complex geographical history of Journey and its division among Arab Lords.

“Now there is a talk that the Germans will build railway all the way to here. Its they who make the law and dictate how, although it has been that way since the time of Amir Pasha and frenzy realty. But before the German’s came, no one travelled to the lakes without going through this town. (*Gurnah* 131)

It discuss the different the tactics, different groups, people had for dealing with these colonizers the book also looks at tribalism and racism. The book is populated by Indian merchants. Arab traders and multiple ethnicities of locals even the book also talks about slavery and Yusuf is victim of this form of slavery.

The concept of paradise throughout novel is of critical issue, events about Hindu Kalasingh and the Muslim Hamid. But the paradise is also visualized and concertized in the gardens. But in this novel it was violent paradise of slavery, secret life, and disastrous trading expedition in the uncultured natural scenery. The paradise is in realty, reflection of social and racial oppression. Aziz and his wife, who haunts the garden, is facially disfigured and morally degenerated. Her walks in the garden represents prison yard exercises, her lustung for young Yusuf, approaches a pedophilic perversion. And Aziz youngest child-wife Amina, with whom Yusuf is in love, is another pawn given by Aziz tenants. What might look like Paradise and is designed according to the Qur’anic scriptures, proves to be pure hell for the members of Aziz’s Household. The end of the reveals the falsity of paradisiacal harmony of pre-colonial Africa. Here Gurnah, draws the picture of East-Africa society that is on the verge of drastic change. Yusuf story is like Bildungsroman’s while history tells decay and degeneration of pre-colonial African society. The paradise is metaphor here. The novel has similarity like Joseph with African Darkness even the novel is compared to V.S. Naipauls ‘A Bend in the River’.

The novel has dark elements of the geography. In the 19th century, Hameed Bin Mouhamad, known as Tippu Tip, whose story Aziz recounts to Yusuf while Journeying in Tayari and whose biography supplies the novel with some of its historical information, controlled the area east of Lake Tanganyika as far as Kaongo. He starts by describing the Geohistorical blocks that characterize Eastern Africa, the great lakes and the mountains.

“Those mountains on the other side of the lake are the edge of the world we know... But the west is the Land of darkness, the land of Jinn’s and monsters. (*Gurnah* 83).

So, the novel, describes the Geohistorical aspects of Arab life. Even some people don’t know the language so foolishly they are worshipping god.

“To make you stupid natives hear the ranting God worship... If will be my crusade. Can you understand what if says in Arabic? A little perhaps, but most of your brothers don’t. That’s what makes u all stupid natives. Well, maybe if you did understand, you would see how intolerant your Allah is and instead of worshipping him you would find something better to do.... Because I have to care for my fellow human beings, ignorant Allah-Walla’s is this a religion for grown up people? May be I don’t know what God is or remember all his thousand names and his million promises, but I know that I can’t be this big bully you worship.

(*Gurnah* 84-85)

This is the acute picture of religion, darker side of most of the worlds observant Muslims do recite Quranic Arabic without understanding the language. You will see that the world is ranged with mountains which give the green tint to the sky. Those mountains on the other side of the lake are the edge of the world we know. Beyond them, the air has the color of Plague and Pestilence, and creatures who live in it are known only to God. The east and the north are known to us, as far as the Land of China in the East and Magog in the North. But the west is the land of darkness, the land of Jinn’s and Monsters” (*Gurnah*-1994, 83) Here, ‘west which for Arabs of the East African Coast,

heartland of Africa, with their meaningless Armies, their false accusations, their violent redrawing of boundaries. Either way, there is a space on the map which is filled with darkness, a world of plague and pestilence, from which monsters emerge. It is that space which generates the Monstrous German officer, who, 'Yusuf' at first thinks, looks, but on her closer inspections,

Yusuf realized that the officer was not as young as he had looked from a distance. The skin on his face was stretched tight and smooth, as if he had suffered burning or a disease. His smile was fixed grimace of deformity. His teeth were exposed as if the tightly starched flesh on his face had already begin to rot and slough off round his mouth. It was the face of cadaver, and Yusuf was shocked by its ugliness, and its look of cruelty. (*Gurnah*, 245)

Here, it seems that, the suffering inflicted by the colonialists and the military itself, is the product of previous cruelty, and is the saga of violence. The paradise is strong point of displacement, memory and Nostalgia. In this way *Paradise* the novel, shortlisted for booker prize in 1994 is the depiction of post-colonial imaginings and alien inauthenticity. The Journey to recapture the West Africa, its tradition, imperial domination Islamic culture, are the themes of the book. So, I would like to conclude my paper by articulating that it is articulate description of colonial arbitrary and geo-historical articulation of experience. It means, Africa was shown as 'Dark Continent', a Land deprived of education, religion Industry and progress.

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