CREATING NEW IDENTITIES: A POSTCOLONIAL STUDY OF THE SELECT NOVELS OF ABDULRAZAK GURNAH

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in

English

By

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DECLARATION

I, hereby declare that the presented work in the thesis entitled "Creating New Identities: A Postcolonial Study of the Select Novels of Abdulrazak Gurnah" in fulfilment of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)** is the outcome of research work carried out by me under the supervision of Dr. Ajoy Batta, working as Professor, in the Department of English, School of Liberal and Creative Arts (Social Sciences & Languages) of Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India. In keeping with the general practice of reporting scientific observations, due acknowledgements have been made whenever the work described here has been based on the findings of other investigators. This work has not been submitted in part or full to any other University or Institute for the award of any degree.

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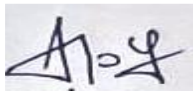
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work reported in the Ph. D. thesis entitled "Creating New Identities: A Postcolonial Study of the Select Novels of Abdulrazak Gurnah" submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)** in the Department of English, School of Liberal and Creative Arts, is a research work carried out by Shalini, 12106400, is a bonafide record of her original work carried out under my supervision and that no part of the thesis has been submitted for any other degree, diploma or equivalent course.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the creation of new identities in postcolonial East Africa by critically analysing selected works by Abdulrazak Gurnah, the 2021 Nobel Laureate in Literature. The research explores the complex process of identity formation in the context of displacement, exile and diaspora, tracing the historical roots of postcolonialism in East Africa. By applying key concepts from Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial theory, particularly hybridity and the third space, this study investigates the challenges encountered by Gurnah's characters in constructing their identities amidst cultural dislocation and colonial legacies. The research aims to contribute to postcolonial studies by offering insights into the processes of identity creation as reflected in Gurnah's portrayal of East African experiences.

The study employs qualitative research methodology to understand how Gurnah's characters deal with identity in a postcolonial world. It starts with a close textual analysis of selected Gurnah's novels. This allows for a deeper exploration of the characters' experiences and their world. Historical research is also included to provide context for Gurnah's postcolonial East Africa setting, which is important for understanding the characters' struggles and the effects of colonialism on their identities. Additionally, the research applies postcolonial theory, particularly the ideas of Bhabha, to interpret the stories and characters' development. This combination of methods provides a thorough examination of Gurnah's literary world and offers important insights into postcolonial studies.

The research is firmly rooted in postcolonial theory, particularly the ideas put forth by Bhabha. His concepts, such as hybridity, third space, ambivalence, mimicry and stereotype, have become important tools for understanding Gurnah's characters.

These characters exist in landscapes where cultures have collided and intermingled. Bhabha's notion of hybridity helps to understand how the characters develop identities that are a blend of their pre-colonial heritage and the influences of colonialism. The concept of the third space refers to the in-between zones where these cultural mixtures occur and where characters grapple with a sense of not fully belonging anywhere. Ambivalence captures the characters' complex emotions towards their situation, where they might feel both attraction and repulsion to the coloniser's culture. Mimicry, where the colonised adopt elements of the coloniser's culture in a subversive way, becomes a strategy for survival and even resistance. Finally, Bhabha's analysis of stereotypes allows to see how Gurnah's stories challenge simplistic portrayals of colonised people and reveal the richness and complexity of their experiences. By applying these concepts, the research sheds light on how Gurnah's characters navigate the challenges of forging new identities in a world forever marked by colonialism.

This study argues that Gurnah's novels provide an understanding of how individuals navigate the complexities of cultural hybridity and construct new identities in the aftermath of colonialism. Gurnah's works offer a portrayal of identity formation in postcolonial East Africa, highlighting the complexities and challenges faced by individuals navigating multiple cultural influences. His characters exemplify the concept of hybridity, demonstrating how new identities emerge from the blending of diverse cultural elements. The creation of new identities in Gurnah's works reflects a broader postcolonial condition, where identity is constantly negotiated and reconstructed in response to historical, cultural and personal experiences. The third space in Gurnah's narratives serves as a site of negotiation where characters

reconstruct their identities, challenging both colonial impositions and traditional constraints. Gurnah's portrayal of multicultural interactions reveals both the tensions and the creative possibilities that arise from cultural encounters in postcolonial societies.

Furthermore, the research underscores the persistence of racism, even in a globalised world. Gurnah's characters often confront racial prejudices and discrimination, illustrating how these issues remain deeply ingrained despite global interconnectedness. This aspect of his work is crucial for understanding the ongoing challenges of identity formation in contemporary times, where individuals must navigate not only cultural hybridity but also the enduring legacies of racism and colonialism. The research contributes to postcolonial studies by offering a detailed analysis of identity formation processes in East African literature, demonstrating the ongoing relevance of Bhabha's theoretical concepts in interpreting contemporary postcolonial narratives. It also highlights the significance of Gurnah's work in giving voice to marginalised experiences and challenging dominant narratives about postcolonial identities. By examining the dynamic nature of identity in Gurnah's novels, this study provides valuable insights into the complexities of postcolonial existence and the ongoing struggles for cultural and personal identity in a postcolonial world.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Introduction

Identity, a fundamental concept in personal and social contexts, signifies how individuals define and present themselves. It involves various cultural, social, ethnic, and personal factors that contribute to a person's sense of self. The development of identity is a complex and ongoing process influenced by family, culture, society, experiences and personal decisions. Understanding this process is crucial, as it shapes behaviour, interactions and how individuals navigate the world. Identity shapes perceptions, informs decisions, and colours interactions with others and the environment. It can be understood on multiple levels, including personal, social, cultural and national dimensions. In an increasingly interconnected global landscape, the concept of identity has gained even greater significance, as individuals often find themselves at the intersection of multiple cultural and social contexts.

Identity is not static but evolves over time, reflecting the dynamic nature of human experience. From early childhood through adulthood, individuals continuously integrate new experiences and insights, reshaping their understanding of who they are. This fluidity allows people to adapt to changing environments and circumstances, further enriching their personal narratives. In the context of globalisation, identity becomes even more complex, as individuals are exposed to a broader range of cultural influences and must reconcile these with their existing self-concepts. This interplay between the local and the global, the personal and the communal, makes the study of identity particularly relevant in contemporary society.

Since identity is a complex concept, it is important to look more closely at its various aspects. Although these dimensions are interrelated, they each provide distinct perspectives on how people and communities define themselves and are defined by

others. Through exploring these various aspects of identity, one can gain a more comprehensive understanding of its complexity and significance in individual growth and social interactions. Personal identity, which forms the core of an individual's self-concept and plays an important role in shaping one's interactions with the world, is among the most essential components of identity. It refers to the unique traits and attributes that distinguish one person from another. It includes personality traits, such as being introverted or extroverted, optimistic or pessimistic. It also encompasses beliefs and values, including moral principles and religious beliefs that guide actions and decisions. Additionally, personal identity is shaped by experiences, life events, and memories, and the lessons learned from them. Interests and hobbies, the activities one enjoys and is passionate about, further define personal identity. Personal identity is a dynamic construct, evolving as one grows and experiences new things. It is the internal understanding of who we are, shaping our self-esteem and self-worth.

While personal identity focuses on individual characteristics, human beings are inherently social creatures and our sense of self is significantly shaped by our interactions with others and our place within various social groups. This brings us to the concept of social identity. Social identity is the aspect of an individual's self-concept derived from their membership in social groups. These groups can be based on various factors, such as race and ethnicity, which reflect cultural heritage and shared history or gender, involving the roles and expectations associated with being male, female or non-binary. Religion also plays a part in social identity, connecting individuals to faith communities. Occupation and social class contribute to social identity, shaping professional identity, workplace culture and economic status, along with the associated lifestyle. Social identity helps individuals feel a sense of

belonging and connection with others. It can influence behaviour, as people often conform to the norms and values of their social groups.

As social identity covers various group memberships, the sense of self is also influenced by the broader cultural context in which one lives and interacts. The concept of cultural identity involves the shared characteristics and customs that define a particular group. This includes language, the primary means of communication within the culture and traditions and customs, practices passed down through generations. Art and music, as cultural expressions, reflect the group's heritage, while beliefs and values constitute collective ideologies and moral systems. Cultural identity provides a sense of continuity and belonging, linking individuals to their ancestry and heritage. It plays a significant role in shaping worldviews and interactions with other cultures.

Identity is also relational and contextual. How one perceives oneself can shift depending on one's social environment and the specific situation one is in. For instance, an individual might emphasise different aspects of their identity when at work versus when with family. Moreover, identity is not merely self-constructed but is also influenced by how others perceive and categorise them. This interplay between self-perception and societal recognition can sometimes lead to tension, particularly when there is a mismatch between how one sees oneself and how society views them.

Identity formation is a lifelong process influenced by various internal and external factors. It begins in childhood and continues throughout life, shaped by personal experiences, social interactions and cultural contexts. Early life experiences and family dynamics significantly impact identity formation, as do formal and informal learning experiences through education. Peer influence, through

relationships with friends and social circles, also plays a crucial role. Media and technology, with their vast exposure to information and cultural narratives, further influence identity development. As individuals encounter new experiences and challenges, their identities continue to develop and transform, involving exploration, self-reflection and sometimes, identity crises.

In today's interconnected world, identity has become increasingly fluid and multifaceted. Globalisation has led to cultural exchange, migration and blending of traditions resulting in more complex hybrid identities. Individuals are exposed to a rich tapestry of cultural influences, often adopting and integrating elements from various cultures into their own identities. This has resulted in the formation of identities that are not bound by geographical or cultural borders, reflecting a more global perspective. The concept of identity is central to many fields of study, including psychology, sociology, anthropology and cultural studies. In literature studies, particularly within the field of postcolonial literature, the exploration of identity often focuses on how individuals and communities negotiate their sense of self in the face of cultural displacement, historical trauma and power imbalances.

Postcolonialism, as both a historical period and a critical approach, significantly influences identity formation in formerly colonised societies. The colonial experience has left lasting imprints on cultural, social and individual identities. The legacy of colonialism can be seen in the way identities are shaped and perceived, often involving a struggle between traditional practices and the influences of the colonisers. Postcolonial identities are marked by a continuous process of negotiation and redefinition, reflecting the complexities and contradictions of the colonial legacy. Even in the postcolonial era, identities continue to be shaped by the

lingering effects of cultural hybridisation. This results in complex, often conflicted identities that navigate between traditional and colonial influences, as well as contemporary global cultures.

The concept of cultural hybridity, as articulated by Homi K. Bhabha, suggests that cultures are not discrete, pure entities but are constantly in flux, influencing and being influenced by other cultures. In postcolonial contexts, this hybridity is particularly marked due to the historical forced mingling of coloniser and colonised cultures. This ongoing process of cultural mixing creates what Bhabha terms the third space, a liminal area where cultural meanings and identities are negotiated and reconstructed. Individuals in postcolonial societies often find themselves inhabiting this third space, where their identities are neither wholly aligned with their indigenous cultural heritage nor fully assimilated into the formerly dominant colonial culture.

The result is a dynamic, often tension-filled process of identity formation. People may experience feelings of 'in-betweenness,' struggling to reconcile diverse cultural influences. This can lead to a sense of displacement or alienation, but it can also be a source of creativity and innovation, allowing for the emergence of new cultural forms and identities. Moreover, in the increasingly globalised world, this hybridity is further complicated by the influx of global popular culture, transnational movements and digital connectivity. Individuals must now navigate not only the binary of coloniser/colonised cultural influences but also a multitude of global cultural flows, leading to increasingly complex and multilayered identities.

Abdulrazak Gurnah's novels provide a rich terrain for exploring these concepts of identity formation in postcolonial contexts. His characters often embody the complexities of creating new identities amidst the intersections of colonial

histories, cultural displacements and globalised realities. Gurnah, born in Zanzibar and living in exile in England since the 1960s, brings a deeply personal understanding to the themes of displacement, exile and cultural hybridity. His work is deeply rooted in the historical and cultural specificities of East Africa, particularly the Swahili coast, while also engaging with broader themes of migration, belonging and the legacy of colonialism.

In novels such as *Desertion*, *Gravel Heart* and *Afterlives*, Gurnah crafts characters who are often uprooted from their homes, either by choice or circumstance and must forge new identities in unfamiliar and sometimes hostile environments. These characters exemplify the in-betweenness of the postcolonial condition, across multiple cultures and struggle to define themselves to both their African heritage and the Western influences that have shaped their lives. Gurnah's narratives often span multiple generations and geographical locations, allowing him to explore how identities evolve over time and across space. He delves into the ways in which colonial histories continue to shape present realities, examining how the traumas and disruptions of the past echo through families and communities.

Moreover, Gurnah's work is notable for its exploration of multiculturalism. His characters navigate complex social landscapes where Arab, African, Indian, and European cultures intersect and influence each other. This reflects the historical reality of East Africa as a crossroads of cultures, while also serving as a microcosm for our increasingly interconnected global society. Through his sensitive and insightful portrayals, Gurnah illuminates the challenges and possibilities inherent in creating new identities in a postcolonial, globalised world. His work provides a

valuable lens through which to examine the theoretical concepts of hybridity, the third space and identity formation in concrete, human terms.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to a deeper understanding of identity formation in the context of globalisation and postcolonialism. By examining the processes involved in identity construction, particularly through the lens of Gurnah's novels, the study provides valuable insights into the complexities and challenges faced by individuals in postcolonial societies. It highlights the dynamic nature of identity, shaped by historical, social and cultural factors and the continuous negotiation and redefinition required in a globalised world. Furthermore, by focusing on Gurnah's work, this research brings critical attention to East African narratives, which have often been underrepresented in postcolonial studies. The application of Bhabha's theoretical concepts to Gurnah's texts demonstrates the continued relevance of postcolonial theory in analysing contemporary literature. This work not only enriches the academic discourse on identity and postcolonialism but also offers practical implications for fostering cultural sensitivity and inclusivity in increasingly diverse societies. It contributes to ongoing discussions about cultural hybridity, displacement and the formation of new identities in the aftermath of colonialism, themes that resonate with contemporary social and political issues.

This thesis examines the complex process of identity formation in postcolonial East Africa through a critical analysis of selected works by Gurnah. It argues that Gurnah's narratives offer insights into the creation of new, hybrid identities shaped by the intersecting forces of colonial history, cultural displacement and globalisation. By tracing the historical roots of postcolonialism in East Africa and applying Bhabha's key concepts of hybridity, mimicry and the third space, this study explores how

Gurnah's characters, often displaced, exiled, or diasporic, navigate the challenges of cultural dislocation and identity fragmentation. Furthermore, this research contends that Gurnah's portrayal of multicultural interactions and conflicts illuminates the ongoing negotiation of selfhood in postcolonial societies, revealing how individuals construct fluid, multifaceted identities that transcend traditional boundaries of nation, culture and belonging. Through this analysis, the thesis aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the postcolonial condition and its impact on individual and collective identities in the contemporary, globalised world.

The selection of *Admiring Silence*, *Desertion, The Last Gift*, *Gravel Heart* and *Afterlives* from Gurnah's broader oeuvre is a deliberate attempt to trace the evolution of identity formation across different historical, geographical, and generational contexts. These novels span both pre- and postcolonial periods, as well as multiple locations, from East Africa to Europe, thereby offering a rich spectrum of diasporic experiences and cultural negotiations. Each work foregrounds the complexities of migration, memory, and displacement while engaging with themes of hybridity, multiculturalism, and the third space. Importantly, they reflect Gurnah's deep engagement with the personal and political consequences of colonialism, exile, and globalisation, making them particularly suited for an in-depth postcolonial analysis focused on identity creation and transformation.

The study is structured into five chapters: The first chapter, "Abdulrazak Gurnah and the Foundations of Postcolonial Theory," explores Gurnah's background and experiences, emphasising how his life as a displaced individual, shaped by colonialism and migration, influences the themes of identity and belonging in his

works. The chapter examines how Gurnah's experiences inform his portrayal of characters who struggle with fragmentation and dislocation.

Additionally, this chapter includes a literature review that engages with scholarly perspectives on Gurnah's work, situating him within the broader field of postcolonial literature. It presents key critical voices and helps establish the academic context for the study. The chapter also outlines the research objectives, goals and scope, while addressing the gap in existing research on Gurnah's works, highlighting the significance of this study in postcolonial literary criticism.

The second part of the chapter delves into postcolonial theory, focusing on key concepts such as hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence, and the third space, primarily drawing on Homi K. Bhabha's theoretical framework. This section sets the theoretical foundation for understanding how Gurnah's characters navigate complex identity formations, both within the context of colonial legacies and in the contemporary postcolonial world.

The second chapter, "Colonial Legacy and Postcolonial Identity," analyses how colonial histories and postcolonial experiences shape identity formation in Gurnah's narratives. It traces the historical roots of postcolonialism in East Africa, with a particular focus on Tanzania, and investigates the lasting impact of colonial rule and the struggles for independence on personal and collective identities. Additionally, this chapter analyses how Gurnah's characters grapple with the legacies of colonialism and how these historical contexts influence their identities. It discusses the dynamics of postcolonial life, such as the tension between tradition and modernity, the impact of migration, and the struggle for cultural identity. Through a

discussion of key examples from Gurnah's works, this chapter sheds light on the interplay between history, culture, and identity in postcolonial settings.

The third chapter, titled "Mimicry and Resistance: Redefining Colonial Stereotypes" investigates the themes of mimicry and resistance in Gurnah's selected works. Drawing on Bhabha's concept of mimicry, it examines how characters adopt and adapt colonial behaviours and attitudes as a subversive strategy to challenge colonial authority and redefine their identities. The chapter analyses key moments in the novels where mimicry embodies an inherent ambivalence, functioning as both compliance and resistance. This ambivalence underscores the dual role of mimicry in perpetuating colonial stereotypes while simultaneously dismantling them by exposing their fragility and artificiality. Through these narratives, the chapter highlights how Gurnah's works challenge simplistic portrayals of colonized individuals and present perspectives on postcolonial experiences.

Chapter fourth, titled "Identity Formation in Third Space," applies Bhabha's concept of the third space to analyse how characters in Gurnah's novels navigate hybrid cultural spaces to form new identities. It discusses the fluid and evolving nature of identity in postcolonial contexts, emphasising the negotiation and transformation processes that characters undergo. The chapter delves into moments where characters reconcile diverse cultural influences, examining the roles of memory, language, and cultural practices in shaping their identities. It also considers the psychological and emotional dimensions of living in the third space, providing a deeper understanding of how identity is continuously constructed and reconstructed in a globalised and interconnected world.

The final chapter, titled "Multiculturalism and Cultural Hybridity," focuses on the themes of multiculturalism and hybridity as portrayed in Gurnah's narratives. It explores the depiction of multicultural societies, analysing the interactions and conflicts arising from cultural diversity. The chapter examines how characters blend elements of various cultures to forge hybrid identities, addressing both the opportunities and challenges inherent in this process. Additionally, it discusses cultural hybridity as a response to colonial legacies and a means of resisting cultural homogenisation. By analysing Gurnah's portrayal of multiculturalism, the chapter highlights the transformative potential of cultural hybridity in reshaping identities and fostering resilience in postcolonial contexts.

Chapter 1

Abdulrazak Gurnah and the Foundations of Postcolonial Theory

From the sun-drenched shores of Zanzibar to the bustling streets of London, Abdulrazak Gurnah's novels map the journey of displacement, identity, and the enduring legacy of colonialism. A Zanzibar-born novelist writing in English, Gurnah occupies a unique space in postcolonial literature, his voice shaped by both his deep roots in his native island and his decades-long experience as a diasporic writer in Britain. He received a Muslim upbringing and early Islamic schooling, followed by a colonial education, on the island of Zanzibar. At the tender age of 18, political turmoil in his newly independent homeland forced him to seek refuge in England, an experience that profoundly shaped his literary voice and themes. Drawing upon both his Zanzibari heritage and his diasporic experience in Britain, Gurnah's novels delve into the complexities of displacement, cultural hybridity, and the search for belonging, offering readers a powerful exploration of the postcolonial condition.

At the age of 15, Gurnah witnessed the chilling brutality of the 1964 Zanzibar Revolution, an experience that profoundly shaped his future. Years later, in "Writing Place" (2004), he recounted the "calculated humiliations" and "state terror" that drove him to seek refuge in England at the tender age of 18 (26). Gurnah's displacement, mirroring the plight of many Zanzibaris, became a cornerstone of his literary explorations. His novels feature characters wrestling with fractured identities, navigating the complexities of exile and seeking new anchors in a world where belonging remains an elusive quest.

Gurnah's education under British rule in Zanzibar and later at Christ Church College, Canterbury, exposed him to diverse viewpoints and ignited his intellectual curiosity about colonial legacies and cultural identities. His early teaching career, spanning from a secondary school in England to Bayero University in Nigeria, further deepened his understanding of postcolonial realities and interpretations of belonging. The pivotal moment of his return to Zanzibar in 1984, after nearly two decades of exile, proved deeply transformative. This renewed connection with his birthplace, coupled with his academic expertise in West African literature, resonated profoundly in his subsequent writings. In his novels, it can be witnessed characters struggling with displacement, navigating the complexities of cultural hybridity and searching for meaning in the aftermath of colonial upheaval.

Uprooted at eighteen, Gurnah found solace in the memories of his Zanzibar childhood. These memories became a refuge for his literary voice, fuelled by a profound sense of "marginality and difference" (Gurnah, "Writing Place" 28). His pen became a bridge between the vanished shores of his homeland and the alien landscape of his new life, each stroke etching not just personal chronicles but explorations of identity in flux. In novels like *Desertion* and *Memory of Departure*, characters mirroring Gurnah's own predicament, their journeys riddled with questions of belonging, the bittersweet ache of lost roots, and the arduous quest for self-definition in a world where they are perpetually "strangely weightless" (26). The next chapters delve deeper into this potent confluence of memory, displacement, and the search for belonging in Gurnah's work, revealing how his odyssey translates into a universal tapestry of human experience.

As a postcolonial author, Gurnah can be regarded as a thoughtful, deep and serious storyteller whose narratives revolve around the impact of war and imperialism. His stories delve into the inner anguish and hardships experienced by various characters as they strive to settle in foreign lands, assimilate into new cultures, create fresh identities, and thereby take control of their destinies. Gurnah's fictions diverge from the erasure of memory often associated with the imposition of new linguistic and cultural standards. Instead, his characters embark on a quest for home in unfamiliar spaces, navigating new social modalities of existence, leading to the formation of ambiguous identities. Erik Falk, in *Subject and History in Selected Works by Abdulrazak Gurnah, Yvonne Vera, and David Dabydeen* (2007), notes, "Gurnah's fiction evokes a transnational Indian Ocean and British world that emphasises the subject's involvement in familial and economic networks, which channel the circulation of property and determine social identity" (9).

The themes of relocation and the quest for belonging, whether from Zanzibar to the African mainland or to England, or even within the East African coastal region itself, consistently take centre stage in Gurnah's narratives. Drawing from his personal experience of dislocation, Gurnah reflects, "I know I came to writing in England, in estrangement, and I realise now that it is this condition of being from one place and living in another that has been my subject over the years" (Gurnah, "Writing Place" 27). His writings often revolve around Tanzanian history, highlighting the cultural contacts that predate the intrusion of Western powers. Gurnah's stories ". . . of migration or exile are part of the grand-scale demographic movement initiated by British imperialism, and yet Gurnah's fiction shows that they also belong to a multi-faceted past that predates the intrusion of Western powers"

(Falk 25). The narratives provide insights into the social instability of East African coastal civilisations and highlight the complexity of overlapping identities in the region. Influenced by Tanganyika's and Zanzibar's colonial past, Gurnah's narratives carry the weight of history. Gurnah writes, "Power forgets the past and constructs a new one" ("Idea of Past"). He believes in silencing certain African narratives of the past to make way for more genuine accounts that accurately reflect the reality and history of the nation. This engagement with the past in Gurnah's works traces how memory, identity, and the struggle for voice collide within the complex web of history and displacement, offering a poignant testament to the human spirit's resilience in the face of exile and reinvention.

Gurnah's life and, quite possibly, his narratives, are deeply rooted in the events leading up to the Zanzibar revolution. The atrocities and oppression committed by revolutionaries have left an indelible mark on his personal and literary journey. Recollecting the horrors that compelled him to flee to Britain, Gurnah shared in an interview with *The Guardian* (2001):

> I came from Zanzibar, a small island of Africa which in 1964 had seen a violent uprising that led to catastrophic upheaval. Thousands were slaughtered, whole communities were expelled and many hundreds imprisoned. In the shambles and persecutions that followed, a vindictive terror ruled our lives. At 18, the year after I finished school, I escaped. Many others did the same; some were captured and disappeared, most got safely away.

His writings not only delve into individual experiences during political shifts but also communicate how post-colonial identities have been moulded by traumatic historical events. Despite the shattered environments of his characters, they resiliently strive to

construct lives that are complete, valuable, and beautiful. Gurnah's profound connection with his native country permeates all his stories. However, in contrast to this affectionate portrayal, his criticism of post-independent Zanzibar's socio-political conditions is unmistakably depicted in his works. As Falk notes, "In Gurnah's fiction African nationalism is constantly ridiculed and critiqued - often through savagely ironical turns" (30). Gurnah vividly portrays a post-independence government in his country comprising corrupt leaders who neglect their responsibilities. His narratives extend beyond the submerged history of his island, exploring the theme of migration and its profound impact on the lives of his characters.

Gurnah has etched his identity in the literary realm with a rich body of work spanning fiction, non-fiction, and essays. Despite Swahili being his first language, he has chosen English as his literary medium, skilfully incorporating elements of Swahili and Arabic into his writings. His literary journey commenced with the publication of a short story, "Cages" in *African Short Stories* in 1984. Notably, he has authored seven more short stories, including "Bossy" (1994), "Escort" (1996), "The Photograph of the Prince" (2012), "My Mother Lived on a Farm in Africa" (2006), "The Arriver's Tale" (2016), and "The Stateless Person's Tale" (2019). In the realm of non-fiction, Gurnah has contributed essays and criticisms, and he has served as the editor of anthologies such as *Essays on African Writing: A Re-evaluation* (1993), *Essays on African Writing: Contemporary Literature* (1995), and *A Companion to Salman Rushdie* (2007). His literary repertoire also boasts eleven novels including *Memory of Departure* (1987), *Pilgrims Way* (1988), *Dottie* (1990), *Paradise* (1994), *Admiring Silence* (1996), *By the Sea* (2001), *Desertion* (2005), *The Last Gift* (2011), *Gravel*

Heart (2017), *Afterlives* (2020) and *Theft* (2025). His works have been translated into Swedish, French, and German.

Gurnah's literary prowess gained prominence when his fourth novel, *Paradise*, secured a spot on the Man Booker Prize shortlist in 1994. The novel also earned nominations for the Whitbread Book Awards (now the Costa Book Awards) and the Writer's Guild of Great Britain Prize. The Danish translation of *Paradise* clinched the ALOA Prize. Subsequently, his sixth novel, *By the Sea*, earned a place on the Man Booker Prize longlist and was shortlisted for the Los Angeles Times Book Prize. In 2007, *By the Sea* was honoured with the RFI Témoin du Monde (Witness of the World) award in France.

On October 7, 2021, Gurnah was honoured with the Nobel Prize in Literature "for his uncompromising and compassionate penetration of the effects of colonialism and the fates of the refugee in the gulf between cultures and continents" (*Nobel Prize*). The historic achievement resonated across the literary community, with Wole Soyinka, the first African Nobel laureate in Literature in 1986, noting, "The Nobel returns home," as quoted in "103 African Writers Respond to Abdulrazak Gurnah's Nobel Prize Win" by Ainehi Edoro. Nigerian author Chimeka Garricks praised Gurnah's win, describing it as "deserving" and highlighting its impact on African and Black writing. Simon Gikandi, a Kenyan novelist, hailed Gurnah as a prolific figure in East African writings, emphasizing how his novels sensitively meditate on questions of exile, memory, and cosmopolitanism in the diasporic fiction tradition (Edoro). Anders Olsson, Chairman of the Nobel Committee, commended,

Gurnah's dedication to truth and his aversion to simplification are striking.

This can make him bleak and uncompromising, at the same time as he follows

the fates of individuals with great compassion and unbending commitment.

His novels recoil from stereotypical descriptions and open our gaze to a

culturally diversified East Africa unfamiliar to many in other parts of the

world. (*Nobel Prize*)

In the presentation speech for the 2021 Nobel Prize in Literature, Ellen Mattson

lauded Gurnah's unique approach, highlighting that he writes not about historical

processes but about individuals subject to history, each with a distinctive narrative.

Mattson emphasises that "Gurnah's writing is about the genesis of writers and how

stories emerge as a means of understanding what has happened, but also creating an

alternative: an improved or simply different version to offer loved ones and use as a

shield against revealing light" (*Nobel Prize*).

In his Nobel Prize lecture, Gurnah reflects on his serendipitous entry into

writing and the inherent joy he found in the craft during his youth. As time

progressed, his writing evolved into a more organised form. Upon relocating to

England and experiencing the upheaval of homesickness and cultural adjustment,

Gurnah began contemplating a myriad of thoughts that propelled him to adopt a

distinct writing style. He recollects, "It was out of that period, that prolonged period

of poverty and alienation, that I began to do a different kind of writing. It became

clearer to me that there was something I needed to say, that there was a task to be

done, regrets and grievances to be drawn out and considered" (*Nobel Prize*).

In the early years of residing in England, Abdulrazak Gurnah contemplated the

fragmented nature of African narratives, recognizing them as ". . . the lies and

delusions with which we had comforted ourselves" (*Nobel Prize*). The racial

revolution of 1964 left an indelible mark on his life, as he witnessed the racialised

politics of the nation leading to oppression, where ". . . fathers were slaughtered in front of their children and daughters were assaulted in front of their mothers" (*Nobel Prize*). Gurnah found the written history to be oversimplified, erasing, and rearranging the realities of the day. This realisation propelled him to reject those narratives, and through his writings, he aimed to articulate his understanding of history and reality.

After a brief return to his homeland, Gurnah observed the deterioration of the surroundings he grew up in, coupled with the fading memories of the past as people aged. Motivated by a desire to preserve the memory of his community, he embarked on an effort to document their experiences and recall the events and stories they had encountered. Beyond personal history, Gurnah aimed to illuminate the era of colonial rule on the island, exposing the atrocities committed by colonial authorities. He emphasised the importance of preserving the collective memory, as the upcoming generation might struggle to grasp the profound changes brought about by colonial encounters, facing their own "post-colonial disappointments" and "self-delusions to comfort them." Gurnah acknowledged "…that our corruptions and misrule were in some measure also part of that colonial legacy" (*Nobel Prize*). Influenced by his experiences in England, he felt compelled to write "… in refusal of the self-assured summaries of people who despised and belittled us" (*Nobel Prize*), emphasising the need to give a voice to those who had been denigrated.

Gurnah's body of work can be broadly categorised into two groups. The first group comprises novels such as *Pilgrims Way, Dottie, Admiring Silence, By the Sea, The Last Gift* and *Gravel Heart*. These works collectively explore the themes of exile and displacement, depicting the challenges faced by characters as they move from East Africa to the United Kingdom. Gurnah sheds light on the harsh realities of life in

a racially discriminated society, particularly in England. The narratives in this group of novels are critically examined against the backdrop of the identity crisis experienced by Africans in their new homeland.

The second group of novels, including *Memory of Departure, Paradise, Desertion* and *Afterlives*, unfolds in the setting of East Africa. These works provide comprehensive narratives spanning the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-independence eras. They highlight the dynamics of African society, the socioeconomic interactions among indigenous populations, and the immigrant communities of Arab and Indian descent. The central theme of these novels revolves around the profound impact of imperialism on the lives of ordinary people, providing an exploration of African history and society.

Existing Scholarship on Gurnah's Works

Gurnah, a distinguished postcolonial author, has crafted a rich tapestry of narratives that explore the intricacies of displacement, identity, and the enduring legacy of colonialism. His works, spanning a diverse array of novels, offer profound insights into the complexities of the postcolonial condition. As embarking on a comprehensive review of the existing literature, it becomes apparent that Gurnah's works occupy a unique space in postcolonial literature. The narratives not only unravel the personal and societal ramifications of migration and cultural hybridity but also delve into the historical complexities of East Africa during different epochs. Previous scholarship has delved into Gurnah's masterful storytelling, shedding light on the various dimensions of his narratives. However, a critical examination of the existing literature reveals potential research gaps that this study seeks to address. The review will synthesise the wealth of critical analyses and academic discussions

surrounding Gurnah's oeuvre, laying the foundation for an exploration into uncharted

territories and unaddressed questions within the existing discourse.

 Dirk Göttsche's research paper "German Colonialism in East Africa and its

Aftermath in Abdulrazak Gurnah's Novels *Paradise* and *Afterlives* in Contemporary

German Literature" published in 2023, explores Gurnah's treatment of German

colonialism's impact on the local Swahili society and his critical perspective on this

historical period in both *Paradise* and *Afterlives*. Göttsche emphasises how Gurnah's

works contribute to postcolonial memory discussions in contemporary German

literature, particularly in the realm of "Afro-German life-writing" (269). The paper

also highlights the absence of such experiences, viewpoints, and voices in German

literature with relevant postcolonial themes available in English. Specifically

focusing on *Afterlives*, Göttsche explores into how the Germans left their marks on

Swahili society, subsequently overshadowed by the British. The analysis extends to

the character Hamza's journey during World War I, illustrating his struggle to

survive amidst brutalities on both physical and mental levels. Additionally, "Ilyas's

tragic fate symbolises the radical disillusionment of African hopes invested in

German colonial rule and culture" (280).

 The second analysed work, Yaditra Nazareth Hinojosa Valle's Master's thesis

(2022) *The Postcolonial Mapping of Migrant Identities in Abdulrazak Gurnah's*

Paradise (1994) and Afterlives (2020), examines the connection between Africa's

colonial history and the portrayal of identities in the protagonists of Gurnah's novels.

Valle's research aims to uncover how the characters in *Paradise* and *Afterlives*, who

inhabit East Africa, had their sense of identity disrupted first by German and then by

British colonialism. Within this study, Valle emphasises the identities of the

characters as victims of white colonial violence. She sheds light on ". . . how the characters of Paradise and Afterlives, dwellers of East Africa, were denied a fixed sense of identity by German first and then by British colonialism" (8). Valle goes on to analyse the physiological and psychological impacts of oppression on the characters within the stories, elucidating how Gurnah portrays the heart-wrenching effects of colonialism on the subjects' offspring, leaving them in a perpetual state of incompleteness, forever caught between "imaginative and real borders" (105). Valle's examination extends to the characters' identities based on individualism, status, age, sex, gender, and their perceptions of national identity. Her conclusion posits that, owing to the influence of colonial authority, the main characters' identities are inherently hybrid or incomplete. Valle's research focuses on Gurnah's exploration of migrant identities in the context of postcolonial East Africa.

The complexities of human migration, a fundamental concern in Gurnah's narratives, have been thoroughly examined in the Ph.D. thesis titled *Complexity of Migration in the Novels of Abdulrazak Guranh a Socio Literary Study,* authored by Rajesh Thakur from Jiwaji University, India, in 2018. Thakur's study highlights that, ". . . the significant changes come through the migratory experience of life caused often by the situation and how the people deal with these progressions" (191). The research encompasses a comprehensive exploration of issues related to migration, including its psychological impacts and the contemporary status of migration worldwide. Thakur's analysis extends beyond merely highlighting the realities of migrants, delving into the dilemmas they face upon returning home. The thesis concludes by shedding light on the global ". . . occurrence of human rights violation on the basis of colour and race against migrants is not only in fiction, but same thing

we can find all over the world" (196). Despite Gurnah's remarkable narrative skills, Thakur notes that the author remains relatively less recognised among scholars in the contemporary literary landscape, suggesting a continued need for scholarly attention to Gurnah's works for their literary and social relevance.

Gurnah's selected texts have undergone a comprehensive analysis from the perspective of subalternity and agency in Mohineet Kaur Boparai's Ph.D. thesis, *Subalternity and the Emergence of Agency in Selected Novels of Toni Morrison, Amy Tan and Abdulrazak Gurnah* completed in 2017. Boparai's research unfolds that "…through the struggles of the various characters who tried to recuperate and reform their damaged subjectivities, that agency is ultimately a complex goal to reach" (212). The study identifies elements crucial for restoring subjectivity, emphasizing how these components are depleted by various forms of oppression. Subaltern individuals, as portrayed in Gurnah's works, can attain agency through "specific linguistic, cultural, social, and mnemonic functions" (214). The research explores subalternity, its impact on individual subjectivity, the emergence of agency, and its role in fostering self-reliance. By analyzing selected works of Gurnah alongside those of Toni Morrison and Amy Tan, the study sheds light on the functioning of oppression and the transformative journey of characters from subaltern positions to agency. Furthermore, the research advocates for non-violent actions as a mean to attain agency over subalternity. Gurnah's characters in *Desertion* and *Paradise* specifically undergo scrutiny, exploring the complexities of their subaltern existence. This endeavour to interpret Gurnah's characters through the lens of subalternity contributes to a broader exploration of his works within the framework of postcolonialism.

In her 2016 thesis titled *Reading Abdulrazak Gurnah: Narrating Power and Human Relationships*, Anne Ajulu Okungu, a researcher from the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, delved into the narrative strategy employed by Gurnah. According to her investigation, Gurnah strategically utilises narrative techniques to depict the ways in which power manifests in various facets of human interactions (iv). The study aimed to trace how power is gained, solidified, and contested within different human relationships by the characters in Gurnah's works. Okungu employed Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical theory to analyse the dysfunctionality of human relations in relation to early life, growth, and development. The research explored how Gurnah portrays the universality of human nature in his works and how characters employ various strategies to regain a sense of selfhood. Okungu identified additional avenues for studying the issues highlighted by Gurnah. Notably, the research recognised subjectivity in Gurnah's works, attributing it to the author's personal experiences, stating, "Gurnah's narration of relationships and the powers that come to be have actually arisen out of his personal experiences" (163).

In her 2015 article titled "Gurnah and Naipaul: Intersections of *Paradise* and *A Bend in the River* published in the journal *Twentieth-Century Literature*, Fawzia Mustafa, a professor at Fordham University, explores the works of Gurnah and V. S. Naipaul through the lens of postcolonial articulations. Mustafa draws a parallel between the novels of the two postcolonial writers, revealing that Gurnah's work highlights the transition from decolonisation to the socialist and neocolonial phases, providing a unique diasporic perspective. The article particularly analyses Gurnah's *Paradise* as a historical novel that challenges conventional postcolonial rewritings of the precolonial East African past, stating that it "challenges many first-generation

postcolonial rewritings of the precolonial past" (233). Additionally, Mustafa

compares Gurnah's work with Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness, highlighting the

concurrent events depicted in both novels.

However, this comparison and the characterization of Paradise have been

contested by Joseph Hodapp in his 2015 article "Imagining Unmediated Early Swahili

Narratives in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Paradise*," published in the journal *English in*

Africa. Hodapp argues that Gurnah draws references from early Swahili and Arabic

prose texts like *Safari Yangu na Bara Afrika* (My Journey Up-Country in Africa) and

Yangu ya Urusi na ya Siberia (My Journey to Russia and Siberia). According to

Hodapp, "Paradise at once creates for itself a localised self-referential African literary

genealogy, not dependent on European canonical texts," (104) challenging the notion

that Gurnah relies on a Eurocentric perspective and embracing the complexity of

African narratives beyond Kurztian horror.

In her 2014 thesis titled *Encountering Strange Lands: Migrant Texture in*

Abdulrazak Gurnah's Fiction, Ezekiel Kimani Kaigai from the University of Nairobi

employs a socio-political approach to delve into the diverse migrant experiences

presented in Gurnah's literary works. This approach introduces ". . . new insights into

relocation and raises new questions about what it means to be a migrant or a stranger

in inhospitable circumstances and how such conditions call for a negotiation of

hospitable space" (iii). The research emphasises the thematic elements of migration

and the quest for sociable and hospitable spaces within foreign lands. It particularly

underscores the significance of storytelling in Gurnah's narratives, revealing how it

fosters an awareness of history among readers. According to Kaigai, "Gurnah's

narratives draw our attention to how monologic versions of reality are exposed and

challenged by encounters brought about by travel and narration" (211). This analysis
sheds light on the exploration of migration and the sociopolitical dimensions within
Gurnah's literary works.

In her article "Locating Abdulrazak Gurnah: Margins, Mainstreams,
Mobilities" (2013), published in *English Studies in Africa*, Sally Ann Murray
addresses the bias that often categorised Third World fiction writers, placing them
under labels such as Black British writers or African writers' resident in Britain, often
framed within -isms like postcolonialism. Murray examines the positioning of
Abdulrazak Gurnah in the literary world, exploring how some critics view him as a
literary critic, while others consider him a critic of African literature and a writer.
Evaluating Gurnah's writing career, Murray concludes that, rather than succumbing to
a 'postcolonial exotic' categorization, Gurnah actively seeks to fill in gaps, explaining
discrepancies and creating disconnections to reshape the boundaries of his cultural
affiliations. She notes that Gurnah's approach honors his challenging view of identity
as divergent aggregates that simultaneously cling to roots and strive for reinvention
(152). The article recognises Gurnah as a remarkable postcolonial writer, emphasizing
his widely acknowledged status as a cultural figure. Furthermore, Murray highlights
Gurnah's distinctive literary skills and his exploration of various settings and genres.

In "Postmodern Materialism in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Dottie*: Intertextuality as
Ideological Critique of Englishness" (2013), Simon Lewis conducts a critical analysis
of Gurnah's novel *Dottie* through the lenses of materialism and postmodernism.
While many of Gurnah's narratives focus on the plight of African refugees seeking
refuge in Europe, *Dottie* stands out as the first novel featuring a female protagonist
who is English-born, adding a unique dimension to Gurnah's body of work. Lewis

emphasises that Gurnah's narratives, despite avoiding overt political didacticism, achieve a profound level of deconstruction concerning ". . . race, nation, reading, writing, etc." (40) making them inherently political. He interprets Gurnah's writings as a form of humorously dispassionate postmodern commentary on a globalised society. The protagonists in Gurnah's stories strive to develop unique, self-authored solutions to overcome the "race deficit" left by racialised English literature. (48). Whether born in Zanzibar or England, these characters confront existing scripts that have either written them out or excluded them from the narrative.

In "Becoming Foreign: Tropes of Migrant Identity in Three Novels by Abdulrazak Gurnah," a chapter published in *Metaphor and Diaspora in Contemporary Writing* in 2012, Felicity Hand, a senior lecturer in the English Department of the Autonomous University of Barcelona, analyses Gurnah's novels *Admiring Silence*, *By the Sea*, and *Desertion*, where the theme of migration takes center stage. Despite the extensive exploration of issues like alienation, loneliness, and the search for home by many migrant writers, Hand contends that Gurnah's novels still offer a unique perspective on the migrant experience in our postcolonial times (39). She suggests that these stories delve into the lives of less fortunate migrants- individuals who have moved for economic, political, or emotional reasons but have fallen short of their aspirations. Emphasizing the concept of 'home,' Hand notes that Gurnah's approach is neither overly optimistic nor filled with success stories. Instead, his narratives transmit positive messages of friendship and perseverance, breaking the silence surrounding the experiences of those in-between, whether migrants, refugees, or asylum-seekers (57). Hand points out that Gurnah

shares tales of despair, failure, and unfulfilled dreams, leaving room for further research to identify optimistic elements in his works.

In the paper titled "Writing 'Wider Worlds': The Role of Relation in Abdulrazak Gurnah's Fiction" (2010) published in *Research in African Literatures*, Tina Steiner analyses Gurnah's novel *Desertion* using the theories of relation proposed by Martin Buber and Edouard Glissant. The importance of relationship in the development of human identity and the necessity of understanding the politics and poetics of "accommodation and hospitality" (127) according to Buber and Glissant are applied to comprehend Gurnah's narrative. The paper provides glimpses of ". . . rhizomatic alternatives to the dystopic narratives of inhospitable 'root identity' for which Gurnah's fiction is perhaps better known" (127). It underscores that Gurnah's stories offer an opportunity to explore the diversity of the East African coastal region and its position within the Indian Ocean world. Steiner examines in the paper the consequences of failing to see the other as human, with a focus on the dreadful results of this denial at the core of Gurnah's narratives. The paper highlights the rare gestures of intimate, affective moments between characters who manage to build relations where they are least expected. Gurnah, according to Steiner, tells tales that speak of relationality with the 'Other' in opposition to the universalisms of both colonial supremacy and African nationalisms. The author also emphasises that Gurnah employs relational space to redefine East Africa, portraying geography as fluid and ever-changing.

Marco Neil Ruberto's 2009 doctoral thesis, titled "Itinerant Narratives: Travel, Identity and Literary Form in Abdulrazak Gurnah's Fiction," offers an in-depth investigation of Gurnah's seven novels published from 1987 to 2005. This

comprehensive work provides a theoretical exploration of the human and textual

journeys delineated in the stories, delving into themes of dislocation and subject

construction through the application of theories by cultural scholars Edward Said,

James Clifford, and Caren Kaplan. The study underscores the relationship between

travel and the author's narratives, emphasizing Gurnah's exilic perspective. The thesis

notes Gurnah's adept utilization and transformation of various literary forms,

including ". . . the bildungsroman, the pilgrimage narrative, the homecoming journey,

the immigrant novel, and the historiographic metafiction," (256) all employed to

represent diverse experiences of dislocation. Ruberto observes that specific works like

"*Paradise*, *By the Sea*, and *Desertion* offer a diverse perspective on East African

society and its turbulent history" (258). These works, according to Ruberto, contribute

to a more comprehensive understanding of the link between literary representation

and "historical retrieval" (259). They notably share a thematic focus on the history of

trade and cultural interactions between East Africa and the Indian Ocean, addressing

the gaps in earlier literary representations of these connections. Ruberto's thesis

contributes to the evolving literary viewpoints evident in Gurnah's published fictions.

Erik Falk's 2007 thesis, *Subject and History in Selected Works by Abdulrazak

Gurnah, Yvonne Vera, and David Dabydeen*, conducted at Karlstad University,

Sweden, focuses on three contemporary postcolonial writers to analyse the

development of the postcolonial subject in society and the role power plays in

influencing this development. Falk's examination includes Gurnah's three novels,

namely *Desertion, By the Sea*, and *Admiring Silence.* The thesis provides a thoughtful

analysis of these works, exploring their connection to history and the creation of

subjects. Falk emphasises that the history of cultural encounters is central to Gurnah's

novels, revealing the ". . . instability and multiple overlapping identities" inherent in East African coastal society (25). He highlights how Gurnah's characters engage in initiatives to organise themselves and society ". . . through forms of storytelling" (151), demonstrating that extended familial networks serve as the arena for subject construction in a setting where nation and race are not the primary determining variables.

In the article "Abdulrazak Gurnah on Afterlives and Colonial Hypocrisy" (2021), Samir Jeraj illuminates the thematic richness of *Afterlives*, emphasising the exploration of choice, love, dislocation, memory, and history within the narrative. Jeraj's analysis delves into how the novel centres on the individual impact of colonialism, portraying how specific characters navigate, adapt and construct the lives and families they desire in the aftermath of colonial rule. According to Jeraj, Gurnah's novels serve as captivating narratives that prompt readers to reassess their own choices and contemplate the repercussions of those choices. Notably, he observes that Gurnah skilfully mediates historical events through personal experiences in his writing. Jeraj also underscores Gurnah's ". . . books bring together the cultural influence of Islam, ethnicity and mixed ethnicity, together with the widespread trauma of colonialism and dislocation to the West." This cultural amalgamation, as depicted by Gurnah, provides a lens through which readers can engage with the broader themes of the novels, adding layers of complexity and depth to the exploration of identity and history.

Several articles have provided insightful reviews of Abdulrazak Gurnah's novel *Afterlives*. In David Pilling's review in the *Financial Times* (2020), the focus is on how the "colonial tussle over the land" has significantly shaped the lives of the

main characters in the story. Filling commends Gurnah as a "master storyteller," acknowledging the novel's exploration of forgotten aspects of Africa. Jane Shilling, in her review titled "*Afterlives* by Abdulrazak Gurnah: Entrancing Storytelling and Exquisite Emotional Precision" (2020), writes ". . . this is a novel that demands to be read and reread, for its humour, generosity of spirit and clear-sighted vision of the infinite contradictions of human nature." Maaza Mengiste, in her review "*Afterlives* by Abdulrazak Gurnah Review - Living through Colonialism" (2020) for *The Guardian*, portrays "*Afterlives* is a compelling novel, one that gathers close all those who were meant to be forgotten, and refuses their erasure". Mengiste commends the novel for depicting the generational effects of colonialism and reflecting on the aftermath of such devastation. These reviews collectively emphasise Gurnah's skill in storytelling, his exploration of forgotten narratives, and the novel's ability to engage readers with the complex legacies of colonialism.

      Shalini Saxena's research paper titled "Bursting the Bubble of Colonialism in Gurnah's *Afterlives*" (2021), offers a penetrating analysis of the novel's exploration of colonialism's impact on local populations. Saxena astutely examines how Gurnah's narrative exposes the profound ". . . wounds of those left behind" (22) in the wake of colonialism, emphasising the gravity of their experiences. Saxena contends that Gurnah's storytelling brings attention to the plight of the oppressed, conveying their stories in a simple yet compelling manner that illuminates their struggles. Gurnah, according to Saxena, narrates the ordinary yet profound tales of individuals facing extreme adversity, showcasing their small victories against oppressive forces (20). In Gurnah's works, Saxena notes a thematic exploration of identity and displacement as characters navigate between their present lives and past identities. This dynamic

portrayal is rooted in Gurnah's personal experience of being compelled to leave his

native Zanzibar, fostering an understanding that one's identity is in a perpetual state

of flux (20). Saxena's analysis contributes valuable insights into Gurnah's depiction

of colonialism's far-reaching consequences and the resilience of individuals in the

face of adversity, adding depth to the scholarly discourse on *Afterlives*.

     The New Indian Express (2021) review by Anuja Chandramouli "'*Afterlives*'

Book Review: Hope Flowers in a Field of Carnage," describes "*Afterlives* is quietly

brilliant and a stirring saga of hope". Chandramouli emphasises that Gurnah's writing

provides a voice to the voiceless. In *The Hindu's* review titled "The Still, Silent

Heart: Abdulrazak Gurnah's '*Afterlives*' Reviewed by Vaishna Roy" (2021), the

novel is portrayed ". . . as much a chronicle of Germany's violent colonial legacy"

intertwining with the stories of ordinary lives. Imbolo Mbue's review in *The New

York Times* (2022) notes that Gurnah depicts colonialism not just as a physical but

also a psychological phenomenon. "Gurnah knows that what the European

imperialists did to African bodies in many ways pales in comparison to what they did

to African minds." Mbue underscores that the story is not only about war and

imperialism but also a love tale, capturing lives that persist despite ongoing conflict.

     Chloe Pfeiffer's review on Book Browse (2022) commends Gurnah's slow-

moving portrayal of colonial ties, enabling him to capture the complexity of colonial

relations. The narrative explores the challenge of maintaining independence in the

face of external pressures. Overall, these reviews highlight Gurnah's emphasis on the

effects of colonialism on innocent people, praising his literary prowess and

exploration of complex historical and personal themes in *Afterlives.* In an interview

with Jeffery Brown and Alison Thoet published in *PBS News Hour* "Gurnah's Latest

Novel *'Afterlives'* Explores Effects of Colonial Rule in East Africa," Gurnah shares his concerns about writing *Afterlives*, expressing the importance of addressing several inquiries that are significant to him. He focuses on understanding ". . . primarily, how it is that people cope in these situations, how, when people are caught in these conflicts that are nothing to do with them, how they hang onto something, how they retrieve something perhaps from the traumatic events that they are part of." Gurnah is also concerned about exploring the ". . . callousness and disregard of those others who are fighting their own wars and then go home, how it is that that is something that needs to be revisited and to be remembered and for responsibility to be taken for that." Moreover, Gurnah mentions that, given the undeniable nature of historical events, he aims to provide a clarification of what happened. His writing is an effort to comprehend these complex situations and events, offering a means to grapple with and understand them.

Research Gap: Unexplored Dimensions in Identity Formation

The literature reviewed sheds light on postcolonial identity formation in Gurnah's works, with a predominant focus on the plight of refugees, migrant assimilation, migration complexities, and diasporic journeys. However, there is a notable gap in the exploration of characters' identities amid political uncertainties. This research aims to delve into the ways in which identities are shaped, considering the diverse possibilities, tensions, and ambivalences arising in contexts where individuals do not belong to any definite space. The study will investigate how various environments contribute to identity formation, particularly examining postcolonial subject identity in migrant settings.

Furthermore, while Gurnah's stories vividly portray the experiences and multicultural aspects of immigrants, there is a dearth of scholarly attention to the immigrant's notion of identity. This research will predominantly focus on unravelling the concept of immigrant hybridity and their negotiation of identity within postcolonial spaces. Additionally, Gurnah's narratives extend beyond individual experiences to offer a critical lens on the effects of colonialism in East Africa and the socio-political landscape of newly independent East African nations. This aspect remains underexplored in existing research. Hence, the research aims to fill this gap by examining postcolonial experiences in Gurnah's fiction from a comprehensive postcolonial understanding, providing a holistic perspective on the interplay of identity, migration, and colonial legacies.

Objectives of the Research Work

Across a selection of Gurnah's masterfully crafted novels, including *The Last Gift, Admiring Silence, Desertion, Gravel Heart* and *Afterlives,* this research explores the formation of postcolonial identity as it emerges from the turbulent history of East Africa. The research embarks on a multifaceted journey, traversing the experiences of characters confronting the shadows of colonial legacies, navigating the complexities of diaspora and displacement, and reimagining their place within a globalised world. Employing the lenses of memory, resistance, and the negotiation of power within postcolonial spaces, this study unpacks the ways Gurnah's narratives dismantle simplistic notions of self and belonging, revealing the ongoing quest for autonomy and connection in a world still struggling with the consequences of past injustices. Ultimately, this exploration of Gurnah's literary landscape illuminates the dynamics of self-construction, historical reckoning, and resistance within the landscape of

postcolonial realities, offering valuable insights into the enduring human spirit's quest

for understanding and connection in a world forever marked by the echoes of the past.

The objectives of this research work include:

- To trace the historical roots of postcolonialism in East Africa

- To explore the problems encountered in the identity formation of the
  displaced, exiled, and diasporic characters of Abdulrazak Gurnah

- To apply the key concepts of postcolonial theory of Homi K. Bhabha in
  exploring the idea of creating new identities

- To examine the elements of multiculturalism in select novels of Abdulrazak
  Gurnah

Examining Gurnah's Narratives with Postcolonial Theory

"Creating New Identities: A Postcolonial Study of the Select Fiction of

Abdulrazak Gurnah" aims to investigate how Gurnah's characters negotiate the

formation of selfhood within the landscapes of postcolonial East Africa. Drawing

upon central concepts from Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial theory, particularly his

notion of hybridity and the third space, the study will employ close textual analysis to

explore how Gurnah's narratives dismantle simplistic notions of identity and

belonging. Through meticulous examination of key scenes, character development,

and recurring motifs in a selection of novels, the study will reveal the complex

processes of identity formation as characters struggle with colonial legacies, diaspora,

and the ongoing struggle for agency in a globalised world. This analysis will

contribute to a deeper understanding of Gurnah's literary contribution and offer

valuable insights into the dynamics of identity construction within the broader context

of postcolonial realities.

Understanding Postcolonialism: Theoretical Perspectives

The mid and latter decades of the 20th century witnessed the dismantling of vast colonial empires, particularly in Africa and Asia, paving the way for independent nations to emerge. Colonialism, a multifaceted phenomenon, not only entailed political dominance but also left enduring imprints on the social, cultural, and economic landscapes of these regions. As Pramod K. Nayar defines it in *The Postcolonial Studies Dictionary*, colonialism refers to ". . . the European conquest, settlement, and systematic administrative control" encompassing governance structures, ". . . legal apparatuses, and military dominance, over territories in Asia, Africa, South America, Canada, and Australia" (31). Despite gaining political independence, formerly colonised nations continue to grapple with neocolonialism, where economic control persists even after political emancipation. Nayar notes, "While many nations in Africa, Asia and South America acquired political independence from European nations in the 20th century, economic control over the new nations has continued" (115).

Colonised countries or former colonies of European power are now divided into settler and non-settler countries. Major settlers are Canada and Australia, and many countries in Asia and Africa fall under the non-settler category. While the USA was under European colonial rule once it is not the focus of postcolonial studies as mentioned in *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) by Bill Ashcroft et al. ". . . the United States might also be described as a postcolonial country, but it is not perceived as such because of its position of power in world politics in the present, its displacement of native American populations, and its annexation of other parts of the world in what may be seen as a form of colonization" (24).

The Enduring Impact on Culture

During the period of colonisation, colonies across the globe, including those in East Africa, underwent significant cultural transformations. Colonisers often viewed the natives as inferior and imposed their own cultural norms, values, and beliefs under the guise of a 'civilizing mission.' This cultural imposition, as Elleke Boehmer highlights in *Colonial and Postcolonial Migrant Metaphors* by quoting Jamaica Kincaid, resulted in a homogenisation where colonised spaces became pale imitations of the coloniser's culture. "And so everywhere they went they turned it into England; and everybody they met they turned English. But no place could ever really be England, and nobody who did not look exactly like them would ever be English" (58). Edward Said, in his seminal work *Orientalism,* further explores this concept by demonstrating how colonisers created a binary opposition between the 'rational' West and the 'irrational' East. Said laid the foundation for understanding how the West constructed the Orient as its cultural and political 'other'- an entity that was inferior, irrational, static, and feminised in contrast to the rational, progressive, and masculine West. Ania Loomba in *Colonialism/ Postcolonialism* (2005) elaborates on this binary, stating ". . . if colonised people. . . are barbaric, sensual, and lazy, Europe is civilisation itself, with its sexual appetites under control and its dominant ethic that of hard work; if the Orient is static, Europe can be seen as developing and marching ahead" (Loomba 45). This cultural domination extended to education systems, where young minds were indoctrinated with the coloniser's perspective. As Ashcroft et al. argue that this often led to a process of cultural hybridisation or even a loss of indigenous cultural practices (73). After colonies attained independence, concerns

were raised regarding whether the colonies' culture is original or merged with other cultures, as well as what remained of the original culture.

> The colonialist presence was felt differently by various subjects of the Empire-
> some never even saw Europeans in all their lives, and for them authority still
> wore a native face. For others, the foreign presence was daily visible but space
> was still divided into 'their' sphere and 'ours.' For others still, colonialism had
> penetrated still deeper into their everyday existence. Thus the resonances of
> both 'hybridity' and mimicry are enormously variable. (Loomba 150)

Defining Postcolonialism

Postcolonialism addresses the long-lasting effects of colonialism, focusing on the struggles and challenges faced by nations transitioning to independence. A key concern within postcolonial studies is the uncertainty surrounding cultural identity in the aftermath of colonial rule. The term 'postcolonialism' broadly refers to theoretical perspectives that analyse the immediate and lasting impacts of colonisation. It is more than just a historical marker; it is an intellectual movement that examines the ongoing influence of colonialism. Ashcroft et al. define postcolonialism as encompassing ". . . all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day" (2). This highlights the lasting impact of colonialism and the need for ongoing analysis. Nayar further clarifies the evolution of the term:

> The term was originally meant to convey a historical-material change in the
> political status of a country: 'after colonialism.' But with the 1980s it became
> identified with a way of reading and interpretation, a theory and a
> methodology, that examines the nature of Euro-American nations' conquest,
> domination and exploitation of countries and cultures. (122)

Postcolonialism focuses on the unequal relationship between the Western world and their former colonies. These relationships are all shaped by imperial conquest, particularly of European nations. The term postcolonial not only simply refers to the response to the colonial process and its aftermath but it also investigates the social and cultural transformation that took place during and after colonialism. Further, it investigates the impact on the identity of the colonised. The term refers to works of literature and civilisations that have been affected by imperialism in one way or another since the time of colonisation till the present. Postcolonialism refers to the decolonisation of cultures and lands.

Postcolonial studies explore the enduring impacts of colonialism, particularly the cultural legacies left behind after the colonisers' departure. This has led to a surge of new writing in English from former colonies, offering a rich and influential body of contemporary literature. Postcolonial literature, established by writers from Africa, Australia, Canada, India, and Southeast Asia, challenges traditional literary canons and prevalent cultural assumptions. Central to postcolonial literature is the exploration of how colonialism has affected various cultures and social systems. While some postcolonial works draw on historical events, the genre is not limited to a specific era. It encompasses a wide range of narratives created by authors from formerly colonised nations, giving voice to experiences often silenced or marginalised. Postcolonial theory offers crucial frameworks to analyse these narratives, such as concepts of hybridity, mimicry, and the subaltern voice.

Postcolonial literature emerged as a powerful tool to challenge and dismantle the lingering effects of colonial violence. It actively questions and redefines ingrained cultural perceptions, prompting readers to consider both the coloniser's

gaze and the colonised perspective. These narratives expose the exploitative and oppressive nature of colonialism, while also grappling with its complex cultural legacies. Key concerns within postcolonial literature include hybridity (blending of cultures), creolisation (creation of new cultural forms), and the 'in-betweenness' experienced by those caught between cultures. It also explores the experiences of diasporas, the fluidity of identities, and the crossovers of concepts and identities that colonialism produced. Earlier this category of literature falls under Commonwealth literature, Third World literature:

> However, the term 'post-colonial literatures' is finally to be preferred over the others because it points the way towards a possible study of the effects of colonialism in and between writing in English and writing in indigenous languages in such contexts as Africa and India, as well as writing in other language diasporas (French, Spanish, Portuguese). (Ashcroft et al. 23)

The narratives were written during the colonised period when writers mostly focused on imperial brutality or anti-colonial struggle. Indian writers like Mulk Raj Anand whose work *Coolie* have glimpses of British rule in India, and Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* which has the theme of nationalism and colonialism are a few examples other famous writers are R K Narayan and Sri Aurobindo. "In Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938), the women of the village respond to imperial police brutality with long-suffering passive resistance. In Mulk Raj Anand's *Coolie* (1936), there are bold but unrealised plans for a Bombay workers' strike against the colonial authorities" (Boehmer 172). Engaging with these themes necessitates a framework for analysing power dynamics and the complexities of identity formation. Postcolonial theory offers

vital concepts like Homi K. Bhabha's notion of the 'third Space,' which describes the in-between spaces where colonised subjects negotiate their identities.

Postcolonial writers frequently emphasise and value the cultural, political, and social identities of postcolonial nations. Prominent figures like Chinua Achebe, Salman Rushdie, Hanif Kureishi, Jhumpa Lahiri, Bharati Mukherjee, Rohinton Mistry, Amitav Ghosh, Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, V. S. Naipaul, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Monica Ali, Caryl Phillips, Wole Soyinka, and of course, Gurnah, have explored a wide range of themes in their narratives. These include migration, hybridity, multiculturalism, identity formation, the tension between modernity and tradition, the experience of rootlessness, suppression and resistance, racial discrimination, and the complexities of postcolonial governance.

Postcolonial literature is not simply a platform for criticizing colonial powers. It also offers a critical lens to examine the challenges faced by newly independent nations. Many nations grappled with internal conflicts and disillusionment after independence, such as the partition of India and Pakistan, the 1964 Zanzibar revolution, and apartheid in South Africa. Writers like Gurnah often engage with these issues, critiquing not only the legacies of colonialism but also the failures of postcolonial governments. Gurnah, for example, explores how these governments can betray the dreams of independence, as seen in his work Paradise Lost. These narratives challenge the official versions of history and highlight the ongoing struggles for justice and equity within postcolonial societies. As Gurnah himself states, "Power forgets the past and constructs a new one" ("Idea of Past"). Postcolonial literature works to counter these efforts at erasure and rewrite history from the perspectives of the marginalised.

Colonialism not only drove European migration overseas but also displaced countless Asians, Africans, and others who were forced into migration as slaves, labourers, or even through voluntary movement. "The most extreme consequences of imperial dominance can be seen in the radical displacement of peoples through slavery, indenture and settlement" (Ashcroft et al. 217). This displacement or dislocation leads to, ". . . cultural and social alienation experienced by the migrant when seeking to adapt to a new society/country" (Nayar 52).

Following World War II, economic and political factors further fuelled large-scale migration from former colonies to the West. Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek et al. in *Perspectives on Identity, Migration, and Displacement*, point out that cultural diasporas and the displacement of migrant workers reached a peak in the 19th and 20th centuries. This global migration continues in the 21st century, leading to complex social, political, and cultural negotiations (2). The narratives produced by postcolonial migrants often explore themes of collective memory, the anxieties of acceptance in new societies, and the idealisation of a lost homeland. As Nayar states, these narratives can be characterised by ". . . the anxiety over acceptance by receiving societies, the idea of an original homeland, idealization of this homeland and the existence of an ethnic-communal consciousness" (48). Postcolonial theory offers valuable frameworks to analyse the experiences of these migrants. Concepts like Bhabha's notion of 'hybridity' can be used to understand how migrants negotiate their identities within new cultural contexts. Similarly, the concept of mimicry can be used to explore how migrants might adopt the dominant culture's mannerisms to navigate social spaces, all while critiquing the power structures that necessitated such mimicry.

In the contemporary world, the presence of postcolonial migrants serves as a constant reminder of the enduring legacies of colonialism and the need for critical engagement with the postcolonial present and future. Gurnah's novels significantly contribute to this discourse by exploring the experiences of migrants navigating displacement and cultural alienation. Works like *Pilgrims Way Dottie, Admiring Silence, By the Sea, The Last Gift* and *Gravel Heart* which depict the journeys of East African characters to the United Kingdom, exemplify this focus. As Obaidullah observes, Gurnah's portrayal of migration is grounded in his own experiences and his ". . . literary works are largely about diaspora and portray a sense of self-realization" (151). This is evident in the protagonist of *Pilgrims Way*, Daud, a man who struggles to find his place in British society after arriving as a student from Zanzibar. Daud's initial optimism is gradually eroded by the harsh realities of racism and economic hardship, highlighting the complexities of navigating a new cultural landscape. Gurnah's exploration of the migrant experience resonates with postcolonial theory's focus on identity formation in the aftermath of colonialism. Concepts like Bhabha's notion of the 'in-betweenness' aptly describe the state of Gurnah's characters who are caught between their cultural heritage and the demands of the new society.

Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Lens

The definitions of postcolonialism explored earlier provide a springboard for delving deeper into postcolonial theory. At its core, postcolonial theory is a body of thought that emerged in response to colonialism and its enduring legacies. It centres on the unequal power dynamics at play during and after the colonial period, emphasising how both the coloniser and the colonised were profoundly affected.

One of the fundamental goals of postcolonial theory is to give voice to those who were silenced during the colonial era- the colonised people whose experiences and perspectives were often marginalised or ignored. It challenges the traditional academic knowledge base, which postcolonial theorists argue is often rooted in a colonial mindset that privileges Western perspectives. In essence, postcolonial theory is more than just a historical analysis; it is a critical perspective that dismantles Eurocentric viewpoints and offers alternative ways of understanding power, knowledge, and identity in the aftermath of colonialism.

While postcolonial theory has carved its unique path, it also acknowledges its intellectual debts to earlier critical traditions. Marxism, with its emphasis on class struggle and critique of imperialism, has been a significant influence. Postcolonial theorists recognise the value of Marxist analysis, as Loomba suggests, "We need to consider the utility of both Marxist as well as post-structuralist perspectives for thinking about colonialism and its aftermath" (210). However, as Ashcroft et al. point out, Marxism has its limitations, particularly its historical Eurocentrism that often overlooked the specificities of colonial experiences in non-Western contexts. "Marxist theory has been limited, until recently, in its dealings with these societies by its own unconscious Eurocentrism" (Ashcroft et al. 171).

Leela Gandhi further argues in *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* that postcolonial theory's theoretical framework is significantly shaped by "poststructuralism and postmodernism" with their complex and sometimes contradictory relationship to Marxism (25). These various influences have enriched postcolonial theory, allowing it to develop an approach to analysing the complexities of power, representation, and identity formation in the postcolonial world. While

Marxism offered a valuable critique of imperialism by highlighting the economic exploitation of colonies, its limitations became apparent. The focus on class struggle often overlooked the specificities of colonial power dynamics. Marxist analysis tended to view power as a one-way flow, with the West dominating the East. Additionally, the economic emphasis of this approach neglected the cultural and ideological dimensions of colonialism.

In the late 1960s, the limitations of a purely Marxist approach led many scholars to explore post-structuralist and postmodernist theories. The work of Michel Foucault significantly influenced how scholars conceptualised power. Foucault's focus on knowledge production and the ways in which knowledge is used to exert power resonated with postcolonial studies. His ideas helped scholars understand how colonial powers constructed knowledge about colonised societies, often through a process of 'othering' that reinforced their dominance. Said's seminal work *Orientalism* exemplifies this approach, demonstrating how Western scholarship produced a stereotypical and distorted view of the East (Loomba 34). Postcolonial theory draws upon various influences, including Marxism, post-structuralism, and postmodernism. This rich intellectual foundation allows postcolonial scholars to analyse the complexities of colonialism beyond just economic exploitation. It allows them to examine how power operates on cultural, social, and ideological levels, and how these diverse forms of power continue to shape the postcolonial world.

A central aim of postcolonial theory is to deconstruct the dominant narratives of colonialism and create space for alternative voices and perspectives. It challenges the idea that Western knowledge systems are neutral and objective, revealing how they were often complicit in perpetuating colonial power structures. This critique

extends beyond academia, as postcolonial theory encourages an understanding of history, culture, and identity in the postcolonial world.

The interdisciplinary nature of postcolonial theory allows scholars from various fields to engage with these critical questions. Literary critics, historians, sociologists, and philosophers all contribute to the rich tapestry of postcolonial thought. Among the leading figures in postcolonial theory are Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Homi K Bhabha. Frantz Fanon, a psychiatrist from Martinique, is considered one of the foundational figures. His work, particularly *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), explores the psychological impact of colonialism and the concept of "colonial psychosis," the sense of alienation and self-doubt experienced by colonised subjects. Fanon emphasises the trauma and psychic violence inflicted by colonial rule, and in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), he argues for decolonization through revolutionary violence as a path to reclaiming identity. Edward Said, through his groundbreaking work *Orientalism* (1978), exposed how Western scholarship consistently misrepresented and stereotyped the East, reinforcing colonial power dynamics. Gayatri Spivak's concept of the 'subaltern voice' draws attention to the silenced experiences of those who were marginalised under colonialism, particularly women and the working class.

Edward Said (1935- 2003), a Palestinian American scholar and literary critic, is widely considered a founding figure of postcolonial theory. His groundbreaking work, *Orientalism* (1978), argued that colonialism was not just about physical and economic domination; it also involved the creation of a false and stereotypical image of the 'Orient' (the East) by Western powers like Britain and France. Said demonstrates how Western scholarship consistently misrepresented the East as

irrational, weak, and feminised, in stark contrast to the West's self-image of strength, reason, and masculinity.

Orientalism is a foundational text in postcolonial studies, offering a powerful critique of Eurocentric prejudice against Eastern cultures. As Loomba points out Said's work exposed "colonialist thought" and laid the groundwork for a new field of study - "colonial discourse" (41). Said argues that Western colonial powers relied on a binary worldview, dividing the world into a clear 'us' versus 'them' structure. He uses the term 'orientalism' to describe how the West 'othered' the East, portraying Eastern cultures as fundamentally different and inferior to their own. These Western narratives characterised the East as irrational, backward, and helpless, in stark contrast to their self-perceptions of being civilised, rational, and modern. Loomba further emphasises that *Orientalism* ". . . points out the extent to which 'knowledge' about 'the Orient' as it was produced and circulated in Europe was an ideological accompaniment of colonial 'power'" (42). By constructing the East as inferior, the West simultaneously reinforced its own perceived superiority. Said also highlights the interdependence of coloniser and colonised. The very definition of the West relied on the existence of an opposing East, demonstrating the interconnectedness of these power dynamics. Said's work provides a strong foundation for understanding how postcolonial theory critiques colonial knowledge production and power structures.

Gayatri Spivak (born 1942), a scholar of Indian origin, is another prominent figure in postcolonial theory. Her work, particularly her influential essay "Can the Subaltern Speak" (1988), has significantly shaped discussions about power, representation, and agency in the postcolonial world. Spivak's concept of the

'subaltern' refers to marginalised and voiceless groups who exist outside of the dominant power structures within a society. She emphasises the experiences of subaltern women, who are doubly silenced due to their gender and social status.

Spivak's work has introduced important concepts like 'strategic essentialism' and 'epistemic violence' to postcolonial studies. Strategic essentialism refers to the temporary use of a unified identity category (e.g., women) to achieve political goals, even though the category itself may not fully represent the diversity within the group (Grosz). Epistemic violence refers to the ways in which colonial knowledge systems silence and erase the experiences and perspectives of the colonised ("Can the Subaltern Speak?").

While acknowledging the groundbreaking nature of Said's work in bringing attention to Western misrepresentations of the East, Spivak critiques the idea that scholars can simply 'speak for' the subaltern. She argues that the power dynamics inherent in colonialism make it difficult, if not impossible, to truly recover the voices of the subaltern. This focus on the limitations of representation is a key aspect of Spivak's contribution to postcolonial theory.

Aijaz Ahmad (1941-2022) critiques postcolonial studies, in *Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (1992), for what he sees as its detachment from material conditions, particularly class and political economy. He argues that postcolonialism often becomes too abstract, overly textual, and disconnected from the historical and economic realities of formerly colonised nations. Ahmad specifically criticises Said's use of the term 'Orientalism,' arguing that it reduces complex geopolitical relations into a binary of representation and ignores the material practices of imperialism. He also takes issue with Bhabha's and Spivak's turn to poststructuralist language, which

he finds opaque and inaccessible, and sometimes politically impotent, especially for addressing issues like poverty, neo-imperialism, and capitalism in the global South. Ahmad believes that Marxist frameworks offer a more grounded and globally relevant approach to understanding postcolonial realities. He calls for attention to nation, class and labour as real, lived structures of oppression and resistance, rather than purely discursive or psychological ones.

While the contributions of Said, Spivak, Fanon and Ahmad offer critical insights into colonial discourse, subaltern agency, racial alienation and class-based critiques, Bhabha's theoretical framework proves particularly effective in examining the identity struggles depicted in Gurnah's novels. Gurnah's characters often occupy liminal spaces - geographically, culturally, and psychologically- navigating the complexities of exile, migration, and displacement. In this context, Bhabha's concepts of hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence and the third space offer a compelling lens to analyse how identities are negotiated rather than fixed. Unlike theories rooted in binary oppositions or structural silencing, Bhabha's ideas accommodate the fluid, evolving, and often contradictory nature of diasporic identities. His framework allows for a reading of Gurnah's narratives as sites of cultural translation, where identity is not merely lost or recovered but continually reshaped through intercultural interaction and resistance. Hence, Bhabha's postcolonial approach aligns closely with the thematic concerns of Gurnah's fiction and enables a dynamic understanding of postcolonial identity formation.

Homi Kharshedji Bhabha (born 1949) is a prominent scholar and theorist whose work has significantly impacted the field of postcolonial studies. Currently, he the Anne F. Rothenberg Professor of the English and American language and

literature, as well as Director of the Humanist Center at Harvard University. He received Padma Bhushan Award in the field of literature and education in 2012. Bhabha's research interests span various areas, but postcolonialism remains a central focus. His influential works include *Nation and Narration* (1990) and *The Location of Culture* (1994). *Edward Said Continuing the Conversation* (2005), "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse" are few of his other works, he has written many journal articles and book chapters. David Huddart in *Homi K Bhabha* considers him as, "… one of the most important thinkers in the influential movement in cultural theory called post-colonial criticism" (1).

Bhabha emphasised that the relation between colonisers and colonised is not limited to domination and submission. He suggests that colonialism was not only "… political and economic relationship, but it has importantly depended on cultural structures for its coherence and justification" (Huddart 24). His works emphasise on cultural interaction between colonisers and colonised, which was not much discussed earlier by other postcolonial theorists. His theory starts with an analysis of "… the nature of post-colonial societies and the types of hybridization their various cultures have produced" (Ashcroft et al. 32).

Bhabha's theoretical framework is deeply influenced by the work of key thinkers like Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida. These theorists' ideas on language, power, and representation significantly shaped Bhabha's approach to analyzing cultural interactions in the colonial context. Bhabha acknowledged it in an interview with W. J. T. Mitchell that for Lacan he, ". . . was struck by his ability to provide a linguistic register for affective desire and identification" and how "the notions of repetition and iteration in Lacan's work and using them for questions of

cultural translation." He was impressed with, "Derrida's ability to demonstrate the textual, inscriptive, and institutional practices of deferral and displacement" (Bhabha). Bhabha challenged the western implementation of binary oppositions and for this he took Foucault's idea of power "… I was contesting polarized and binary notions of constructing subjects within the play of power. I was persuaded by my reading of Foucault to rethink the very nature of power outside the polar or binary model" (Bhabha).

Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994) is a foundational text in postcolonial studies. This collection of essays explores key concepts that challenge the simple categorization of the world into self and other, a common feature of colonial discourse. "In *The Location of Culture* (1994), a collection of his most important essays, Bhabha creates a series of concepts that work to undermine the simple polarization of the world into self and other" (Huddart, 4). The major concepts given by Bhabha in this work are hybridity, stereotype, ambivalence, and mimicry. According to Bhabha, culture does not exist in present nor in future, it is a dynamic process characterised by change and hybridity. He argues that cultural production is always most productive where it is most ambivalent. Bhabha states that colonialism should not be viewed solely as a period of oppression, domination, violence but also as a period of complex and varied cultural contact and interaction.

The subject of identity and culture is one of the important aspects of postcolonialism. As all identities are somehow shaped by colonialism, it is important to understand what happens to people and how they forge their identities both during and after colonialism. Moreover, with the rise of immigration numbers, hybrid nations, and the formation of countries with different cultural diversity, the subject of

identity has come to the surface in the modern world. The concept of hybridity, along with Bhabha's other ideas like ambivalence and mimicry, will be instrumental in analyzing the works of Gurnah. Gurnah's novels often explore the experiences of migrants and characters caught between cultures. Bhabha's framework allows to understand how these characters negotiate their identities within the complexities of the postcolonial world.

Third Space

Bhabha's concept of the third space is a crucial concept in postcolonial studies. It refers to the in-between space that emerges when cultures encounter and influence each other (Fay and Haydon 43). This space is not simply a neutral zone; it is a dynamic and contested site where new identities and cultural forms are produced. Bhabha writes, ". . . Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meanings and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity" (*Location of Culture* 37). This notion of the third space underscores the absence of a singular, fixed cultural identity, emphasising instead a continuous process of negotiation and reinterpretation. Similarly, Michel Foucault, as analysed by Sheikh Mehedi Hasan in *The Vortex of Postcolonial Identities in the New World Order with Reference to Select South Asian Novels in English*, analyses the idea of a fixed self, proposing that identity is shaped and reshaped in relation to discursive formations and the surroundings individuals encounter (13). Together, these perspectives challenge the notion of static identities, suggesting that identity formation is an ongoing and dynamic interplay between cultural, historical, and discursive contexts.

The concept of the 'third space' has become a powerful tool in literary and cultural studies. It looks beyond traditional boundaries to understand how colonialism, mixed cultures, and global identities work. The third space refers to a zone where different cultures meet and clash, creating new forms of expression and understanding. It is the space ". . . where cultural boundaries are the most blurred . . . to both subvert and uphold colonial ideology" (O'Neal). It is not a physical place, but rather a space of ideas that challenges the usual categories of centre vs. edge, self vs. other, or coloniser vs. colonised. This concept helps us explore how cultural identities form and dismantle simplistic ideas like 'East' versus 'West.' Hybridity, ambivalence, mimicry, uncanniness are some key aspects of the third space.

Hybridity

Bhabha's concept of hybridity is central to understanding cultural identities in the postcolonial world. It refers to the mixing or merging of cultures that occurs as a result of colonial encounters. It typically refers to the emergence of new transcultural forms within the colonial contact zone. "This term refers to an original mixed-ness within every form of identity. In the case of cultural identities, hybridity refers to the fact that cultures are not discrete phenomena; instead, they are always in contact with one another, and this contact leads to cultural mixed-ness" (Huddart, 4). Bhabha argues that cultures are not pure or isolated entities; instead, they are constantly interacting and influencing each other. This process of cultural mixing is not passive; colonised cultures do not simply adopt the coloniser's culture. Instead, they create new and hybrid forms of cultural expression that challenge the binary oppositions imposed by colonialism. For Bhabha, "Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of

colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal

of the process of domination through disavowal" (*Location of Culture* 112).

Bhabha emphasises that hybridity is an ongoing process. Cultures are

constantly evolving and adapting as they come into contact with others. This ongoing

process of cultural mixing has a significant impact on how to understand identities. In

the context of postcolonial studies, hybridity helps us to see cultural identities as fluid

and dynamic, rather than fixed or static. Bhabha argues that colonised cultures do not

simply adopt the coloniser's culture. Instead, they create new and hybrid forms of

cultural expression that challenge the binary oppositions imposed by colonialism.

> Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the
>
> repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It displays the necessary
>
> deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination. It
>
> unsettles the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power but
>
> reimplicates its identifications in strategies of subversion that turn the gaze of
>
> the discriminated back upon the eye of power. (Bhabha, *Location of Culture*
>
> 112)

This process of cultural mixing can be seen as a "deformation and displacement" of

the coloniser's attempts to impose their identity. Colonised cultures rework and

reinterpret these influences, creating something new and unique.

Ambivalence

Ambivalence is another key concept in Bhabha's work. It refers to the

complex mix of contradictory feelings that can characterize the relationship between

coloniser and colonised. "Bhabha argues that the European colonial wishes at once to

reform the native into being more like him. This stems from the colonizer's

fascination with the native and the belief that the native can be reformed" (Nayar 8). Colonisers might simultaneously view the colonised as both exotic and inferior, while the colonised might see the colonizers as both admirable and corrupt. This mixture of attraction and repulsion creates a sense of uncertainty and ambiguity.

Aschcroft et al. in *Post-Colonial Studies and the Key Concepts* explains ambivalence as which, ". . . describes the complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterizes the relationship between colonizer and colonized" (10). Ambivalence is the ambiguity and uncertainty in which colonisers and colonised view one another. Bhabha argues that ambivalence is a fundamental feature of colonial discourse, as it is ". . . central in the colonial discourses of stereotyping" (Huddart, 24). Colonial powers often struggled with how to represent and categorize the colonised. While they sought to establish their superiority, they were also sometimes fascinated by the colonised cultures. This ambivalence disrupts the clear-cut binaries (superior/inferior, civilized/uncivilized) that colonialism often relies on. Instead, it creates a more complex and fluid understanding of the power dynamics at play.

Ambivalence is a viewpoint or a subjectivity that is open to receiving or adopting influences from either side of the colonial divide but does not adhere to or believe in any form of rigid binary systems of self or cultural identification. "Bhabha's argument is that colonial discourse is compelled to be ambivalent because it never really wants colonial subjects to be exact replicas of the colonizers - this would be too threatening" (Ashcroft et al. *Post-Colonial* 11).

Mimicry

Mimicry is a concept central to Bhabha's work on colonialism. It refers to the imitation of the coloniser's culture by the colonised. Nayar describes mimicry as, ". . .

the reconstruction of natives on the lines of their European masters through an assimilation of European religion, education, literature and cultural practices" (Nayar 104). Bhabha argues that mimicry is more than just simple copying; it is a "double articulation" (Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 86). The colonised subject may adopt the language, customs, and ideas of the coloniser, but this imitation is never perfect. There is always an element of "difference or recalcitrance" (86) that disrupts the coloniser's expectations.

Bhabha sees mimicry as a potential form of subversion. While the coloniser might hope to produce docile subjects who simply imitate their ways, mimicry can become a site of resistance. By engaging with the coloniser's culture in their own way, the colonised can challenge the power dynamics at play and create new, hybrid identities. According to Bhabha, colonial strategy encouraged mimicry in order to produce subjects who merely imitated the customs, aesthetics, and possibly even the political views of their masters rather than developing into independent thinkers. Like English education, the goal of English education was to produce people who could serve as translators between the masters and their native servants or colonised people rather than necessarily creating critically conscientious thinking people. As Bhabha quotes Macaulay, ". . . Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, opinions, in morals, and in intellect" (Bhabha, *Location of Culture*125). That kind of education was then intended to produce uncritical individuals who would idealise the language and skills, and would see it as a sign of progress or advancement in contrast to their own native counterparts. As a result, that kind of mimicry created a human subject who could be English by performance but who might not always have the same rights and privileges as the textual Englishman had. As ". . . mimicry does not merely

'rupture' the discourse, but becomes transformed into an uncertainty which fixes the colonial subject as a 'partial' presence. . . mimicry is at once resemblance and menace" (Huddart 41).

Bhabha contends that imitating colonists' ideas and culture does not automatically transform a person into an Englishman; rather, it creates a hybrid identity. This identity demonstrates the conquerors' desire to create native subjects who assimilated some colonial masters' demands but did not necessarily view them as equals. The colonial subject is defined as mimic man by the Eurocentric performative identities and actions. For Bhabha, however, it has positive connotations since, in the writings of postcolonial authors they mimic the English language, disrupt it, and inject phrases that a Eurocentric readership would not understand. As Bhabha argues that mimicry is not a straightforward acceptance of the coloniser's culture but a strategic imitation that carries an element of subversion.

Stereotype

Stereotype is another key concept in Bhabha's work on colonialism. It refers to the oversimplified and generalized representations of colonised people created by colonisers. These stereotypes rely on pre-conceived notions about race, culture, and behaviour. Bhabha argues that stereotypes are ambiguous. "Bhabha argues that stereotypes emerged in colonial discourse because of the unavoidable fact that colonial domination was not a 'natural' occurrence; it required an ideological structure to justify it" (Fay and Haydon 41) While they serve to fix the colonised within a limited category, they are also unstable. The colonised person may not always conform to the stereotype, creating a sense of uncertainty for the coloniser.

Stereotypes are a form of colonial knowledge used to justify and legitimise colonial rule (Huddart 37). By portraying the colonised as inferior or barbaric, the coloniser can present themself as the civilising force. This reinforces the power imbalance between coloniser and colonised. However, Bhabha emphasises that stereotypes are not entirely static. The colonised person can mimic the stereotype in unexpected ways, subverting its intended meaning. This mimicry can expose the limitations and contradictions within colonial ideology.

The Uncanny

In the essay "The World and the Home" (1992) Bhabha borrows from Sigmund Freud's concept of the 'uncanny' ('unheimlich') to explore the experience of dislocation felt by colonised subjects and migrants. Freud has used the term 'unheimlich,' in his famous 1919 essay "The Uncanny", the term, ". . . unheimlich is what was once heimlich, homelike, familiar; the prefix 'un' is the token of repression" (15). Bhabha argues that the 'uncanny' arises when the familiar becomes strange, often due to a blurring of boundaries between the private and the public spheres. This 'unhomely' feeling is a defining characteristic of the postcolonial experience, where individuals grapple with identities formed between cultures. Bhabha states in the essay that unheimlich arises when this boundary disappears or collapses and ". . . the private and the public become part of each other. . ." (Bhabha 141), making once familiar home strange. The familiar becomes unfamiliar, home becomes unhomely, and this journey through the unheimlich is an emotional departure from something intimately familiar. According to Bhabha, the space between the heimlich (homely) and the unheimlich (unhomely) is a post-colonial space, a space in which one can

observe formation of an individual's identity with a combination of the strange and the familiar events (Shalini and Batta).

The notion of unhomely lives, given by Bhabha, refers to growing up between two cultures, living on the margins and on the edges, and not feeling at peace on either side eventually evokes uncanniness (Huddart 53). The uncanny becomes particularly relevant for migrants and those in diaspora, "First, this is a half-life, like the partial presence of colonial identity; second, it repeats a life lived in the country of origin, but this repetition is not identical, introducing difference and transformation; further, this difference-in-repetition is a way of reviving that past life, of keeping it alive in the present" (Huddart 53). Living between cultures and not fully belonging to any one place creates a sense of estrangement. Bhabha describes this as a 'half-life,' where the past is constantly reinterpreted in the present, creating a complex and ever-evolving sense of self.

Gurnah Through Bhabha's Lens

Bhabha's concepts provide valuable tools for analyzing the complexities of identity and power in Gurnah's postcolonial novels. Bhabha's ideas on hybridity can help to understand how Gurnah's characters navigate cultural mixing and forge new identities in the face of colonialism. Ambivalence will be crucial in exploring the characters' feelings of attraction and repulsion towards both their colonised and coloniser cultures. Furthermore, the concept of mimicry sheds light on how characters might adopt the coloniser's language or customs, but in ways that subvert or challenge colonial power. Through an analysis of stereotypes and the uncanny experience of dislocation, insight can be gained into the characters' struggles with displacement and the search for belonging. Finally, the concept of the third space will

be instrumental in examining how Gurnah's characters construct their identities within the dynamic and contested zones where cultures meet. Bhabha's concepts provide with the tools to understand the complexities of identity formation and the ongoing legacy of colonialism in Gurnah's literary world.

The narratives of Gurnah stand out in this dynamic as engaging tales that shed light on the challenges of identity development in the postcolonial era. The following chapters set out on a quest to uncover the complexities of influence, resistance, and hybridity that shape the identities of the characters in Gurnah's works. By drawing on Bhabha's postcolonial theory, the chapters seek to decode the complex layers of identity that Gurnah portrays in his works.

Chapter 2

Colonial Legacy and Postcolonial Identity

Colonialism's enduring impact significantly influences the social fabric and cultural identities of postcolonial societies. Emerging in the 15th century, European powers established colonies across the globe, exerting dominance over indigenous populations in Africa and elsewhere. Through economic exploitation, political control, and cultural imposition, they reshaped the colonised territories. Colonial legacies shape the complex interplay of power, resistance, and cultural compromise. These dynamics shape the experiences of postcolonial societies. As Bhabha aptly observes, the influence of colonialism often manifests as a ". . . desire for a reformed, recognizable Other" (Bhabha, *Location of Culture* 86). This intricate dance, where colonised subjects adopt and subvert aspects of the coloniser's culture, fosters the emergence of new identities and narratives within a framework of cultural hybridity. To fully grasp the enduring effects of colonialism, it is crucial to engage with the diverse voices that emerge from postcolonial societies.

This enduring influence of colonialism is a central theme explored by contemporary writers from postcolonial societies. Gurnah delves into these complex legacies in his captivating novels set in East Africa. His narratives often depict the lasting effects of colonial ideologies, policies, and power structures on individuals and communities. This chapter delves into the profound connections between colonialism and the literary works of Gurnah, focusing on his exploration of East Africa, mainly Tanzania. It examines how Gurnah's novels portray the lasting effects of colonial ideologies, policies, and power structures on individuals and communities. By analysing how characters grapple with these legacies, the chapter explores the

complexities of resistance, adaptation, and transformation in the face of colonial rule.

Through in-depth analysis of select novels by Gurnah, the chapter aims to provide a

comprehensive understanding of how postcolonial elements and dynamics shape the

narratives and identities within his literary world.

A critical understanding of colonialism begins with an examination of how the

term itself has been historically defined and contested. While defining the term

'colonialism' Loomba condemns the *Oxford English Dictionary's* definition, as she

quotes *OED* ". . . a settlement in a new country. . . a body of people who settle in a

new locality, forming a community subject to or connected with their parent state; the

community so formed, consisting of the original settlers and their descendants and

successors, as long as the connection with the parent state is kept up" (7). According

to her, this definition fails to acknowledge the presence of any people other than

colonisers. She writes that the meaning in the *Oxford English Dictionary* erases the

histories and experiences of the people who were already living in the places where

colonies were established. She emphasises that the meaning of the word neglects the

aspect that how original communities must be destroyed or reorganised to make way

for the creation of a new community in a distant country. Furthermore, she states,

colonialism generates a complex relation between colonisers and colonised,

"Colonialism was not an identical process in different parts of the world but

everywhere it locked the original inhabitants and the newcomers into the most

complex and traumatic relationships in human history" (7-8).

In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) Said defines the relationship between the

colonised and colonisers is complex and mutually reinforcing. As both cultures

interact with and are influenced by one another, however in different ways and with

different power structures. It highlights the complexity and contradictions present in colonial and postcolonial contexts, where ideas of agency, identity, and power are linked. "Life in one subordinate realm of experience is imprinted by the fictions and follies of the dominant realm. But the reverse is true, too, as experience in the dominant society comes to depend uncritically on natives and their territories perceived as in need of *la mission civilisatrice*" (xix). The colonised become a source of labour, resources, and other types of support for the colonisers. This dependency causes the colonisers to take the colonised people for granted or to treat them more like objects than as humans.

Colonialism had wide-ranging impacts that extended across various aspects of society. In the terms of economics, colonisers exploited the resources of the colonies, extracted wealth, and left behind economic dependencies. "Colonialism and its legacies. . . playing an important role in the rise of the development and dependency paradigm" (Bernhard et al. 225). Socially, colonialism disrupted existing indigenous social structures, imposed European cultural norms, and enforced hierarchies based on race and ethnicity. Additionally, politically, colonial powers established systems of governance that marginalized and excluded the indigenous populations, denying them agency and self-determination.

The writers and thinkers come ahead to challenge the dominant discourse surrounding colonial history, and to shed light on the significance of understanding the past. By delving into historical events, postcolonial writers reveal how these events continue to shape the trajectory of formerly colonised nations and influence their future. While defining colonialism, Nayar discusses the works of postcolonial writers such as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, and

Derek Walcott. Nayar notes that these authors explore the cultural consequences of colonialism in their works. For example, they depict how colonialism results in the loss of ". . . territory, language, religion, and belief systems" for native populations (Nayar 31). Additionally, the writings of Naipaul, Rushdie, and Walcott illuminate the lasting impact of colonialism by showcasing the presence of "hybridized native" identities influenced by colonial legacies (Nayar 32). These writers strive to raise awareness about the often neglected or misrepresented aspects of colonial history, bringing attention to the injustices, struggles, and cultural transformations that resulted from colonial rule. By doing so, they aim to rectify historical biases and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities and lasting impacts of colonialism.

Postcolonial Origins: Zanzibar and Tanzania

The history of East Africa is a tapestry woven from centuries of trade, conquest, cultural exchange, and colonial exploitation. Long before European colonisers arrived, the region was a crossroads of civilisations. The shores of Zanzibar, Gurnah's birthplace, whisper tales of ancient Arab traders and Persian navigators, their legacies mingling with the rhythms of Indian merchants and the echoes of Portuguese conquerors. This interplay of cultural influences and historical upheavals provides the backdrop against which Gurnah's characters navigate their journeys of identity and belonging.

This fertile mingling, however, sits alongside darker chapters. After the Portuguese left the island, it came under the control of the Sultanate of Oman in 1698 and Zanzibar became the Sultanate of Zanzibar. For centuries, Zanzibar served as a hub in the Indian Ocean slave trade, a brutal era etched into the island's soul. Yet,

even as Britain's colonial grip tightened in the late nineteenth century, attempting to eradicate the stain of slavery, the underlying social fabric- with its stark power dynamics and lingering divisions- remained largely unchanged. As Ruberto has rightly quoted British historian John Iliffe's words, "British colonial policies not only preserved the Arab community's status as an economic and political elite, but they also endowed the entire racial pattern of stratification with a remarkable degree of continuity" (17). This complex inheritance, a blend of vibrant cultural exchange and persistent inequality, is woven into the very fabric of Gurnah's fiction, shaping the landscapes his characters inhabit and the questions they struggle with.

The historical roots of colonialism in East Africa can be traced back to the late 19th century when European powers began to compete for control of the region. "The German and British governments (in 1885 and 1895 respectively) took over the administration of these territories" (Knappert 32). Germany established its presence in the region, leading to the formation of German East Africa, which encompassed present-day Tanzania, Rwanda, and Burundi. In 1885, Germany established a protectorate over the territory known as Tanganyika, primarily interested in exploiting its resources for economic gain. German colonial rule in East Africa was characterised by violence, exploitation, and racism. "By 1871, German firms had secured 24% of the island's trade" (32). German policies focused on establishing large plantations, often using forced labour from local communities. This dispossessed them of their land and traditional livelihoods. A hierarchical administration was established with minimal participation from the indigenous population. Germans held all positions of power, marginalising local leaders. "Their churches and colonnaded offices and crenellated fortresses were built as much to

provide a means for civilised life as to awe their newly conquered subjects and impress their rivals" (Gurnah, *Afterlives* 16).

Throughout the colonial period, there were instances of resistance against German and British rule, like the famous Maji Maji Rebellion (1905) (Iliffe 495). These movements, while often localised, challenged the established power dynamics, and expressed the desire for self-determination. The reasons that lead to Maji Maji Rebellion was "The imposition of taxation and brutal methods of collection, forced labour on road construction or European plantations, the replacement of indigenous leaders by alien agents (akidas)" (Iliffe 497). German and British colonialism fundamentally reshaped Tanzania's social, political, and economic landscape. The legacies of this period, particularly the unequal power dynamics established during colonial rule, continue to have a significant impact on the country today. Understanding this historical context is crucial for analysing how postcolonial writers like Gurnah explore the complex experiences of individuals and communities grappling with these legacies in their work.

After World War I, Tanganyika became a British colony until 1961. While some German policies continued under British rule, there were also changes. The British introduced a system of indirect rule, working through existing local authorities in some areas while maintaining ultimate control. "The British administration in Zanzibar would no longer allow the sultan to handle the island's finances or the income from his plantations" (Knappert 34). The British prioritised resource extraction. They also developed a network of railways and infrastructure to facilitate this exploitation. "British imperialists to build the railway line that was supposed to link all of the British protectorates in East Africa" (Ruberto 262). British

rule further impacted traditional social structures and cultural practices. The introduction of Christianity and Western education systems aimed to assimilate the local population into colonial culture. ". . . schools were opened, intended to offer an elementary education to more of the subject people" (Gurnah, *Afterlives* 16). The colonisers came to civilise the colonised people and make education and health their priority. "In the 1950s the colonial administration introduced a new radio service. It aired news and music programmes and features on improvements in health, agriculture and education" (Ruberto 266).

Within this complex tapestry of cultural influences and historical upheavals, Gurnah's characters forge their identities, their stories echoing the island's vibrant rhythms and bearing the scars of its volatile past. The legacies of Portuguese explorers, Arab traders, and British colonisers blend in the daily rhythms, yet beneath the surface, simmer tensions brewed by the bitter trade in human lives and the persistent inequalities woven into the island's social fabric.

The period, when the region came under the control of European colonial powers, was not only characterised by administrative and territorial changes but also by a systemic dehumanisation of the local populations through racist discourses that sought to justify colonial rule. Gurnah's *Desertion* captures this colonial ethos with disturbing clarity. In one extract, Burton and Frederick discuss the "civilising mission" (Gurnah, *Desertion* 84) in openly racist and supremacist terms, reflecting how colonisers viewed Africans as obstacles to progress. Burton, asserts:

> This continent has the potential to be another America. . . But not as long as
>
> the Africans are here. . . The savage African in the interior. . . is doomed. . .
>
> He will just pine and starve and die off in the encounter with civilisation. . .

There is no cruelty in this outcome, and it has happened everywhere, again

and again, in exactly the same way. (83)

This chilling perspective reveals the ideological violence that underpinned colonial

expansion. Africans were seen not only as inferior but as disposable, and their

erasure was framed as "inevitable" and "scientific" (84). The comparison to America

invokes the colonial settler model, one that required the displacement and

annihilation of Indigenous populations to create so, called "prosperity" (84).

The setting of Zanzibar during the early years of colonial intrusion is

significant. As Gurnah's characters discuss European involvement in East Africa,

they also acknowledge the prior Arab presence and its exploitative legacy. Burton's

attack against both Arabs and Africans underscores the racial hierarchies constructed

to legitimise conquest and occupation. His belief that African societies could only be

brought to order through European intervention, "coercion and manipulation" (84) as

he calls it mirrors the real-world paternalistic and brutal policies enacted by colonial

administrations.

The novel thus becomes a powerful narrative archive, illustrating how

colonial ideology operated not just through policies but through everyday

conversations, worldviews, and interactions. Gurnah exposes how colonisers

constructed the African subject as either passive or dangerous, inherently incapable

of self-governance, and in need of discipline and erasure for the advancement of

'civilisation.' These historical attitudes are central to understanding the legacy of

colonialism in Zanzibar and Tanzania and lay the foundation for postcolonial identity

struggles that Gurnah explores throughout his work. Such dehumanising colonial

ideologies, coupled with the lingering inequalities they left behind, continued to

simmer beneath the surface of Zanzibar's social fabric well into the mid-20th century.

As the hopeful dawn of independence in 1963 yielded to the brutal realities of the 1964 Zanzibar Revolution, these tensions erupted, shattering dreams and reshaping the island's social landscape. Don Petterson accounts in *Revolution in Zanzibar: An American's Cold War* that "The hopeful expectations that came with independence have vanished for the most part, replaced by popular despair or discontent" (271). It was a racial revolution where the proletariat rebelled against the ruling and trading classes represented by the Arabs and South Asians. ". . . beneath the island's beauty and apparent tranquillity were ethnic and class hatreds that had existed for years and had occasionally led to bloodshed" (xvi).

Through his novels, Gurnah exposes readers to the emotional chaos of this upheaval, showcasing the shattered dreams of those caught in the vortex of the revolution and the profound disorientation it causes. His characters experience the despair that settled in the wake of violence, a sentiment mirrored in the displacement and disillusionment- individuals struggling with fractured identities and searching for new anchors in a world turned upside down. Examining the reverberations of this tumultuous period, Gurnah's characters navigate the shifting sands of identity and belonging in the aftermath of the revolution, revealing the enduring impact of history on their evolving sense of self and place.

The brutal realities of the 1964 Revolution irrevocably altered the island's social fabric, leaving wounds that festered in the hearts of countless Zanzibaris. Marie-Aude Fouéré's account in "Remembering the Dark Years (1964–1975) in Contemporary Zanzibar" vividly portrays the fear and violence inflicted upon Arabs

and South Asians, forever scarring the island's memory. "From the perspective of those targeted by the revolutionaries, that is, Arab families considered foreign, the revolutionary days of mid-January 1964 in Zanzibar Town speak of fear, violence, and death" (119). Beyond the immediate bloodshed, the revolution ignited complex questions about identity and belonging. As Gurnah pointed out in the article "An Idea of the Past" (2003), the Shirazis are those who identify as the original inhabitants of Zanzibar. He called Abeid Amani Karume's party a hate-driven government: ". . . government under Karume had used the category 'Arab' to dispossess, expel, and murder thousands of people who had a different idea of who they were. They thought they were Zanzibaris."

In the aftermath, who would claim the mantle of 'Zanzibari'? How could a society reconcile its rich multicultural heritage with the trauma of ethnic conflict? This turmoil was further complicated by Zanzibar's 1964 union with Tanganyika, mainland Tanzania- a merger fuelled by political calculations that offered Karume's newly established regime protection but did little to ease the anxieties and tensions brewing within the island. This merger just ". . . provide Karume the protection of the stronger mainland government and its military and police forces" (Petterson 207). In Gurnah's narratives, characters navigate these treacherous waters, wrestle with fractured identities, and search for new anchors in a society irrevocably changed. The next chapters delve deeper into these anxieties, tracing Gurnah's exploration of how his characters negotiate the shifting sands of belonging in the post-revolutionary landscape, revealing the enduring impact of history on their evolving sense of self and place.

The revolution's brutal hand extended beyond targeting solely Arabs. Individuals of Arab descent, alongside Asians and Comorians, were labelled 'foreign' and forced to navigate a precarious existence (Fouéré 114). Fearful exodus became the only refuge for many, with Arabs and Asians fleeing the island in droves. "Arabs and Asians who could emigrate continued to leave the island" (Petterson 231). This exodus reverberated within Gurnah's own Yemeni-descended family, who lived under the constant shadow of violence.

Representations of Postcolonial Identity in Gurnah's Works

Gurnah's novels delve into the complexities of identity and belonging in the postcolonial setting. Themes of colonial legacies, cultural hybridity, displacement, and the ongoing negotiations of selfhood permeate his narratives. As Falk observes, Gurnah's characters struggle with an identity that is not fixed or singular, reflecting the realities of a postcolonial world. "At no point do his works represent a zero point of identity and belonging" (Falk 25). These narratives offer an opportunity to re-examine the historical context of colonialism in Tanzania and its enduring impact on individual lives. Gurnah's narratives provide an opportunity to reexamine the historical context of colonialism, encompassing themes of colonial legacies, cultural hybridity, displacement, historical injustices, and the complex interactions between cultures (Falk 27). Richard Bauerle in *World Literature Today* (1989) commended, "Clearly Gurnah has great narrative powers" (356). Bauerle noted Gurnah's acute awareness of the plight of his countrymen, adding another layer to the novel's (*Memory of Departure*) thematic richness.

Gurnah's characters navigate a world where cultural traditions confront external influences, creating tensions and a sense of dislocation. They embark on

journeys of self-discovery amidst the complexities of postcolonial society. Falk argues that Gurnah's work transcends mere historical reflection. He suggests that Gurnah's fiction ". . . offers perspectives on subject formation that contest prevailing models based on nation, family, or race" (27). Ultimately, Gurnah's stories challenge conventional notions of identity and belonging, providing a portrayal of postcolonial experiences and the lingering effects of colonial history.

The history that Gurnah presents, through his stories, is a transmission of memories, which is crucial as archives are full of history told by colonisers. These memories are a way of saving culture and history, through them generations will realise that colonisation not only transformed the lives of people but it also transformed how the world works. Moreover, revisiting the past through narratives also reveals how the identities performed. Gurnah's story interacts with history, as a writer he has not even seen but those stories have been handed down to him from predecessors through memories and emotions. Falk notices, "Gurnah's fiction, although entrenched in and concerned with the history of a geographical area, is more than a reflection of that history and place. It offers perspectives on subject formation that contest prevailing models based on nation, family, or race" (27). Gurnah has rewritten the past through his power of storytelling. His story takes reader to re-visit history and memory that are anchored in colonialism and how characters negotiate and articulate their identity. Bhabha describes the necessity of the restaging past:

> It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation. Such art does not merely recall the past as social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent 'in-between' space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. (*Location of Culture* 7)

Bhabha further adds that the "past-present" becomes a component of life's necessity rather than its nostalgia.

Gurnah examines the complex nature of colonisation's effects on individual identities, bringing to light the difficulties that people and communities encounter when navigating and protecting their cultural heritage in the face of Western dominance. This is most apparent in *Afterlives*, which is an intriguing story that throws light on what colonialism did to individuals, what it took from them and how it altered their identities. Saxena rightly notes, "What makes this historical novel a 'tour de force' is the blatant portrayal of reality of colonialism about which most of the people in Germany show little awareness" (19). *Afterlives* exemplifies Gurnah's exploration of the complex impact of colonialism on individual identities. He explores beyond the grand narratives of colonialism to portray the human cost, particularly the struggles individuals face in navigating and protecting their cultural heritage in the face of Western dominance.

This engagement with colonial history is also evident in *Paradise* (1994), a novel set in the late 19th century when southeast Africa came under German colonisation. The story follows Yusuf, a young boy sold by his father to an Arab merchant to repay a debt. As Yusuf matures in the service of the merchant, the reader witnesses a vivid portrayal of a transforming East African society. Interestingly, *Afterlives* (2020), which begins where *Paradise* ends, has been interpreted by some critics as a continuation of the earlier narrative. As Valle notes, "*Afterlives*, whose beginning can be regarded as the ending of *Paradise*" (8), suggests a subtle intertextual link.

While *Afterlives* is set just before World War I during German rule in Zanzibar, it shares remarkable parallels with *Paradise*. The character Hamza in *Afterlives* mirrors Yusuf in several ways: both are given away by their fathers to traders, work under merchant guardians, Uncle Hashim and Uncle Aziz, respectively and eventually join the German *schutztruppe* in an attempt to escape servitude and settle debts. These narrative echoes, despite different names and specific circumstances, suggest that Gurnah may be intentionally drawing attention to the recurring patterns of exploitation and displacement endured by ordinary East Africans. Though he never explicitly connects the two novels, the mirrored trajectories invite readers to consider the shared destinies of colonial subjects whose lives are shaped and often fragmented by systems of power and economic desperation.

In *Afterlives* Gurnah has effectively portrayed the story of European colonisation and a close-up glimpse of village life in one of the world's least known locations. His narrative reveals how the colony that the Germans establish in East Africa have an impact on many people's lives, illuminating readers with both historical and emotional aspects. While quoting Berman, Valle writes that how Gurnah's ". . . work is noteworthy because 'he is one of the few contemporary East African authors to comment on the short period of German colonialism'" (8). The novel focuses on the historical atrocities carried out in Africa by colonial regimes and their troops, particularly in the coastal region of East Africa, as well as the brutality shown by some of these regimes towards both the native population and their soldiers. The author also emphasises how following German colonialism, Britain begins to

colonise the area. As for Europeans, the nation must be administered under their supervision.

Ron Charles in his review "Never read Nobel winner Abdulrazak Gurnah? Start with *Afterlives*" aptly describes Gurnah's work as assembling "pieces of people's broken lives" into a "print mosaic." This metaphor resonates with the fragmented identities Gurnah portrays. The 'broken lives' represent the disruption colonialism caused in the characters' sense of self, while the 'print mosaic' suggests their attempts to piece together identities amidst the wreckage. He further adds:

> '*Afterlives*' demonstrates how gracefully Gurnah works in two registers simultaneously. The story is at once a globe-spanning epic of European colonialism and an intimate look at village life in one of the many overlooked corners of the Earth. Both parts - reclamations of history and heart - are equally revelatory.

The opening chapters of *Afterlives* establish three significant historical events that cast a long shadow over the characters' lives: the Al Bushiri revolt, the Wahehe war, and the Maji Maji uprising as a significant historical event, even though the characters might not be directly involved. Khalifa begins his education ". . . the year the Germans arrived in the town (Gurnah, *Afterlives* 5), suggesting that the rebellion and its aftermath likely impacted educational opportunities and the overall environment, as ". . . the German claim that they were the rulers of the land" (5).

The narrator highlights the futility surrounding the uprising, as he describes how various European powers have already established their claims on different territories through the diplomatic processes. "The Germans and the British and the French and the Belgians and the Portuguese and the Italians and whoever else had

already had their congress and drawn their maps and signed their treaties, so this

resistance was neither here nor there" (5). This emphasizes the powerlessness faced

by the indigenous population and might contribute to a sense of cautious resistance

among the characters.

The German response to the uprising is characterized by relentless brutality.

The suppression of the rebellion and the public execution of al Bushiri: "They had

taken care of al Bushiri and the protests and resistance of the caravan traders on the

coast... captured al Bushiri and hanged him in 1888" (8). The military tactics

employed by the schutztruppe involved burning villages, destroying crops, and

executing civilians (Gurnah, 11-12). Germans subdued the Wahehe, after eight years

of conflict, through brutal tactics of ". . . starving and crushing and burning out their

resistance" (10). In a gruesome display of dominance, the Germans even ". . . cut off

the head of the Wahehe leader Mkwawa and sent it to Germany as a trophy" (10).

This act of barbarity likely instils a sense of horror or despair among the natives,

highlighting the ruthlessness of the colonial regime.

These brutalities likely instil a sense of horror and despair among the

characters, even those who have not directly witnessed the events. The passage

mentions ". . . bodies. . . left hanging on roadside gibbets" (12). This is a chilling

reminder of the consequences of resistance likely instilled a sense of fear or

simmering anger among the characters, shaping their outlook on life under colonial

rule. While Khalifa and Asha experience the uprising only through "shocking

stories" (11), the impact is undeniable. Khalifa and Asha's marriage occurs in 1907,

". . . the final throes of its brutalities" (11), highlighting the ongoing impact of the

rebellion. "Though their lives seem outwardly quiet, it doesn't imply that they have

escaped the physical and emotional ravages of colonialism" (Saxena 19). The threat

of German retribution creates a sense of unease and oppression. The "clenched fist of

German power" (Gurnah, *Afterlives* 13) is felt by the characters, highlighting the

constant pressure of colonial rule.

The aftermath of the uprising brings some changes. The immense loss of life

through starvation and violence underscores the brutality of the colonial project. "It

was clear to them that violence alone was not enough to subdue the colony and make

it productive, so clinics were proposed and campaigns against malaria and cholera

initiated" (16). The Germans, however, do institute some reforms like clinics and

schools. These reforms are a calculated strategy to maintain control and legitimize

their colonial rule. As these reforms are initially intended for the Germans

themselves, eventually extend to the African population. This hesitant step towards

improvement is likely met with a mix of scepticism and a flicker of hope among the

characters. As for schools ". . . intake was small and limited to a subordinate elite. . .

Amur Biashara was one of the first to send his son to one of them" (16). The limited

intake of the schools effectively highlights the restricted nature of the educational

reform.

The description of the schutztruppe consisting of African mercenaries adds

another layer of complexity: ". . . the army of African mercenaries known as askari

under the direction of Colonel Wissmann and his German officers... Nubi soldiers

who had served the British against the Mahdi in Sudan and Shangaan 'Zulu' recruits"

(8). This detail highlights the divide-and-conquer tactics employed by the colonisers

and raises questions about potential feelings of disillusionment or alienation among

the characters.

Finally, the transformation of Bagamoyo from a symbol of resistance to a German command post underscores the destruction of the indigenous power structure and the imposition of colonial dominance: ". . . a fitting token of their mission to bring order and civilisation to these parts, they turned the fortress in Bagamoyo. . . into a German command post. . . Winning and holding it was an important demonstration of German control of their colony" (8-9). This act likely contributes to a sense of loss or a yearning for the past among the characters. As they witness their cultural heritage being replaced by symbols of colonial power.

The establishment of the schutztruppe and the recruitment of askaris like Hamza and Ilyas offer a deeper look into the complexities of German colonialism in *Afterlives*. While the al Bushiri revolt and Wahehe war might not have achieved its objective, it serves as a reminder of the potential for resistance against colonial dominance. However, the askaris represent a different kind of struggle - one of navigating a system that exploits their people. The characters' experience as askaris likely shapes their identities in profound ways. Valle writes, the ". . . identities as askari are the epitome of the tragedy that German colonialism inflicted upon natives" (104). Hamza grapples with a sense of betrayal towards his community, as he has taken up arms against his people. And Ilyas sees it as a chance for upward mobility within the colonial hierarchy, albeit a precarious one. "As another hybrid, Ilyas mistakenly thinks of himself as another 'superior' German whose mission was 'civilising' his own peers" (Valle 104).

In *Violent Intermediaries: African Soldiers, Conquest, and Everyday Colonialism in German East Africa*, Michelle R. Moyd gives the elaborative social history of askaris, who states that askaris, ". . . became part of a recognizable

community that, for all its flaws, also benefited from its enmeshment in the colonial state. In exchange, however, askari expected their dependents to work and to be obedient. Failure to do so could, and did, result in abuse" (206). Moyd further ascertains how askaris were subjected to harsh treatment, including physical abuse, torture, and even execution. This mistreatment that askaris went through because of the racist attitudes of the German colonial authorities towards the African soldiers, who were seen as inferior to their European counterparts.

In the German camp it is instructed to everyone that, "… on no account - ever - to make eye contact with a German officer" (Gurnah, *Afterlives* 56). In the camp "Punishment was constant and public, and every few days the whole troop, recruits and veteran askari alike, were marched into the boma to witness the hamsa ishirin, the twenty-five lashes, a public flogging" (60) for any error committed by askaris. The harsh treatment they endure, as evidenced by the constant threat of punishment and public floggings, underscores the racist ideology of the German colonial regime. The fact that beatings are administered by other askaris, rather than Germans, further highlights the divide-and-conquer tactics employed by the colonisers. "It was beneath the dignity of a German officer to strike an askari, and he expected the ombasha, who was present at all the sessions, to step in with blows when his words needed emphasising" (59). This experience likely creates moral ambiguity for the askaris.

Gurnah's depiction of the askaris' experiences resonates with Bhabha's concept of colonial violence. By enforcing colonial rule and suppressing resistance, the askaris become part of a system built on cultural and physical violence, "For Bhabha, colonialism produces uncanniness because it is built on cultural or physical violence while styling itself as civilized and ordered" (Fay and Haydon 40-41).

However, their story also suggests a form of resistance through survival. Joining the askaris might have been the only viable option for some characters, a way to navigate the brutal realities of a colonised world.

The askaris in *Afterlives* occupy a morally complex position within the German colonial system. While their primary duty is to enforce colonial rule and suppress dissent, their experiences likely create a sense of internal conflict. They are caught between their loyalty to the colonial power and their connection to their people. The harsh treatment they endure, as evidenced by the constant threat of punishment and public floggings, likely fuels a sense of resentment towards the Germans. Furthermore, their participation in colonial violence against their own people, such as burning huts and confiscating supplies (Gurnah, *Afterlives* 94), might create a sense of moral ambiguity. "This complex position of the askaris reflects Bhabha's concept of postcolonial subjects encountering ". . . themselves contingently at the point at which the internal difference of their own society is reiterated in terms of the difference of the other" (*Location of Culture* 82). So, the askaris while enforcing colonial rule, confront the internal divisions of their society while simultaneously embodying and enforcing the 'otherness' imposed by the colonial system.

Characters like Gefreiter Haidar al-Hamad readily endorse the colonisers' achievements, stating, "The Germans built this road, just so you don't have to struggle through the jungle" (53). This reinforces, as Conrad highlights "The myth of benevolent German rule," perpetuated through the figure of the "loyal askari" (*German Colonialism* 188). These askari, like Unteroffizier Ali Nguru Hassan, are used to enforce colonial policies, protect colonisers' interests, and suppress local

resistance. As the passage highlights, an askari tells a villager, "This is mzungu's camp. Everything is clean here. He does not want your shit inside his boma. It is not allowed to follow your savage ways here" (Gurnah, *Afterlives* 54). Their perceived superiority, a result of privileges granted by the colonisers, creates division among the colonised population. This strategy aligns with the concept of "unconscious oppression" (Ashcroft et al., *Empire* 9), where a supposedly superior group (the askari) enforces the dominance of the colonisers. However, it is important to note that not all askari characters conform to this model. Hamza, for instance, demonstrates resistance through desertion.

During World War I, many askaris started deserting the German army for various reasons. One of the main reasons was mistreatment and abuse by their German superiors. As Moyd points out "Indiscipline began to manifest among the troops, with soldiers and porters deserting in large numbers as the company continued to march" (1) and askaris were forced to work long hours in terrible conditions, and they were often subjected to physical and emotional abuse:

> They were exhausted by the relentless pursuit, by the heavy loads and the degrading work they were required to carry out. They were porters for hire but they had not been paid and in addition many of them had been coerced into work they did not want to do. . . most of them barefoot and dressed in whatever rags they could loot or steal. They died from disease and lack of care. (Gurnah, *Afterlives* 112)

This resulted in "The sharp rise in askari desertions after 1916 bespeaks their recognition that the Germans were no longer credible as long-term patrons" (Moyd 147).

In addition to that askaris start to believe the Germans lost their strength and power as ". . . many askari had deserted the Schutztruppe during the war because they felt the Germans had lost their nguvu" (Gurnah, *Afterlives* 207). Gurnah has highlighted the same scenario in the narrative during World War 1 how askaris ". . . had been deserting day by day in small numbers… an admission that the schutztruppe could no longer ensure their survival or well-being" as "Causalities were high among them. They were poorly fed and badly equipped" moreover ". . . they must have been desperate to get away from an army facing defeat" (112).

The askaris' desertion, largely a result of harsh treatment and fighting against fellow Africans, caused great concern and frustration among the German officers in the story. When the Germans realized the desertions were becoming more frequent, they resorted to brutal punishments, with "Feldwebel and the under-officers who used their canes and guns to force the askari into silence and then obedience" (113). The askaris' decision to break away from the Germans in the middle of the war is an act of resistance against the colonisers' brutality, which the Germans do not appreciate because they see the askaris as their property and always demand their submission. The colonisers' ruthlessness is demonstrated by this terrible behaviour towards the askaris because ". . . they really believed that the ragged troop they beat and despised and overworked owed them loyalty" (112). Many remains loyal till the end and many resist by leaving the war in-between. Ilyas and Hamza have different experiences and interactions with colonised officials, while serving as askaris, and hence created their identities accordingly. Ilyas circumstances makes him loyal towards colonial system, whereas Hamza acknowledges oppression of colonial system and hence resist towards it.

Afterlives portrays the harsh realities of colonialism through characters like the German officers who embody systematic oppression. These characters are depicted as responsible for suppressing indigenous knowledge and culture, exploiting resources, and subjugating the local population. In her discussion of this suppression, Gandhi echoes Gyan Prakash's analysis, emphasizing how colonialism established ". . . enduring hierarchies of subjects and knowledges- the colonizer and the colonized, the Occidental and the Oriental, the civilized and the primitive, the scientific and the superstitious, the developed and the developing" (15). The subsequent war scenes, where a German commander like Feldwebel attempts to execute Hamza for indiscipline, "In accordance with schutztruppe rules, what the Feldwebel did to Hamza was a crime, yet nobody complained about that dehumanised behaviour" (Valle 78), further underscore the inherent brutality of the colonial system.

Hamza's relationship with the Oberleutnant exemplifies the complex dynamic between coloniser and colonised. The Oberleutnant perceives himself as inherently superior and views it as his duty to 'enlighten' Hamza, whom he sees as a 'savage' (65). In their initial encounter, he speaks of his role as a bringer of 'civilization,' "Zivilisierungmission," promising ". . . to bring. . . mathematics and many other clever things that you would not have without us" (65). This perspective mirrors a common colonial belief ". . . the assumed moral superiority of the dominant group, a superiority which is reinforced when necessary by the use of physical force (Ashscroft et al., *Empire* 170). The Oberleutnant's characterization of the indigenous population as "backward and savage" (Gurnah, *Afterlives* 85) drives his efforts to impose German language, customs, and behaviours onto Hamza, a process akin to what Bhabha describes as "disciplinary double" (*Location of Culture* 86). This assimilation

strategy serves to render the colonized population more compliant and easier to govern.

This strategy of imposing cultural norms, also seen in the attempts by some characters in *Desertion* to impose their cultural norms, serves to render the colonized population more compliant and easier to govern. During a conversation between Burton, Frederick, and Martin, Burton expresses a strong belief in the civilizing mission of colonialism (Gurnah, *Desertion* 83). He views Africans as "corrupted" and "doomed" in the face of "civilisation" (83), mirroring the racist and dismissive attitudes we saw from the Oberleutnant in *Afterlives*. Burton believes the Africans need to be guided *i*nto "obedience and orderly labour" (84), mirroring the Oberleutnant's approach. Furthermore, Burton views "force and coercion" (84) as necessary to control the colonized, a perspective that aligns with the use of "physical force" to maintain colonial dominance (Ashcroft et al., *Empire* 170). He even dehumanizes the Africans, portraying them as content with a primitive lifestyle, ". . . they still wear skins and live in huts made of leaves and dung. They are quite content with that and will kill to defend that way of life. You can talk as much as you like about responsibility, but if you want prosperity and order in Africa you have to have European settlement" (Gurnah, *Desertion* 84) justifying their subjugation.

However, it is important to note that not all colonial figures share Burton's extreme views. As Martin's perspective offers a necessary counterpoint. He "feels ill" and "nervous" (85) listening to these racist views, highlighting his strong disapproval. Interestingly, he observes similar attitudes ". . . between other Europeans, the French and the Dutch, or even Poles or Swedes" (85), suggesting this mentality is not limited to the British. Martin also challenges the romanticized view of colonialism. He

believes future generations will see these actions "less heroically" (85) and even with shame. While he does not propose solutions, Martin's dissent introduces the possibility of change and a more critical perspective on colonialism.

Furthermore, Gurnah's novels have characters who serve as a powerful illustration of the gendered impact of colonialism. In *Afterlives,* characters like Afiya and Asha offer a compelling example of the power dynamics and social effects of colonialism. Throughout the novel, Afiya is subjected to the loss of agency and the disruption of traditional family structures often associated with colonial rule. Abandoned by her father and exploited by her relatives, Afiya finds a temporary refuge with her brother Ilyas. "For Afiya it had felt like the happiest time of her life ever since her brother came back and found her and filled her days with laughter" (42-43). However, his decision to join the askari forces her back into a precarious situation. Afiya's yearning for education is brutally suppressed by her uncle, highlighting the colonizers' attempt to control knowledge and maintain their dominance. The war further intensifies Afiya's vulnerability, as Ilyas's absence leaves her unprotected. Despite the hardships, Afiya demonstrates resilience. She finds solace in reading and writing, a skill the colonisers attempt to deny her. Ultimately, she finds a sense of belonging through her relationship with Hamza.

Asha's character in *Afterlives* also exemplifies the complex gendered impact of colonialism on women in traditional Muslim societies. Her arranged marriage to Khalifa, negotiated entirely by men ". . . Bwana Amur Biashara as a senior male relative gave consent in her name" (12), highlights the intersection of patriarchal traditions and colonial influences that often reinforced women's lack of agency. Asha's lack of knowledge and her absence from her own wedding negotiations reflect

the educational disparities and confinement to the private sphere that colonial systems typically exacerbated for women. The description of Asha as a gift, "Khalifa knew that the merchant was making him a gift of her, and that the young woman was not going to have much say in the matter" (12) and a responsibility "he (Amur Biashara) was making her someone else's responsibility" (14) underscores her objectification and economic dependence, conditions often intensified in colonial contexts where women were viewed as symbols of cultural preservation. This preservation itself can be seen as a response to colonial pressures, with stricter adherence to traditional gender roles serving as a form of cultural resistance. Asha's silence throughout her marriage mirrors the historical silencing of colonised women's voices, embodying the concept of double colonisation where she faces oppression both from the colonial system and from patriarchal structures within her own society. Her experience is shaped by the intersection of her gender, religion, and colonial context, creating a complex web of power relations that limit her autonomy and self-determination. Through Asha, it can be seen how colonialism not only reinforced existing gender inequalities but also created new forms of gendered oppression that persisted well into the postcolonial era. Valle rightly condemns, "Poor Asha becomes 'Other' in this scenario" (89).

   Afterlives offers a powerful critique of colonialism by shifting the focus away from the colonisers and towards the experiences of the colonised communities in East Africa. The novel exposes the devastating effects of colonialism on the lives of ordinary people, highlighting the displacement, exploitation, and disruption of traditional ways of life. This erosion of cultural identity also contributed to the ethnic and class tensions that ultimately boiled over in the 1964 Zanzibar Revolution. Afiya,

Ilyas, Hamza, Khalifa, and other characters from the Swahili region experience these

consequences firsthand. Even German characters like the Oberleutnant and the

pastor embody the arrogance and brutality inherent in the colonial project. Gurnah's

portrayal serves as a stark reminder of the enduring impact of colonialism, not just on

the colonised but on the colonisers as well.

After the Germans, British rule in Zanzibar exacerbated existing ethnic and

class tensions within the multicultural society, culminating in the bloody 1964

revolution. This uprising shattered the optimistic hopes that often accompany

independence. As Petterson writes the revolution replaced "hopeful expectations"

with "popular despair or discontent" (271). Sparked by a desire to overthrow the

Sultan's rule, the revolution aimed to dismantle the political and economic

dominance of Arabs and South Asians. Petterson highlights the simmering ethnic and

class hatreds that fuelled the violence, stating that beneath Zanzibar's beauty lay ". . .

ethnic and class hatreds that had existed for years and had occasionally led to

bloodshed" (xvi). These tensions, a legacy of colonialism, profoundly impacted

ordinary Zanzibaris' lives, as reflected in instances within the novel *Gravel Heart*.

In *Gravel Heart*, Salim's maternal grandfather embodies the spirit of

resistance against colonial rule in Zanzibar. His vocal opposition, evident in his

statement "No one bid the British to come here" (Gurnah, *Gravel Heart* 17),

challenges their legitimacy and highlights the resentment towards ". . . conquerors

who ruled by coercion and punishment (17). His active involvement in political

movements, including organizing rallies, reflects the struggle for independence.

However, his character also highlights the complexities of the postcolonial era. The

grandfather's death due to belonging to the wrong political party, "He was killed

during the revolution because he did all that he did for the wrong political party" (18), foreshadows the potential for violence and unforeseen consequences after the revolution. Though as it is argued by Fouere "Politicians were not the only victims of the repressive excesses of the Karume years, but ordinary people in the thousands were also affected" (115).

The story portrays the brutal aftermath of the Zanzibari revolution, shattering any illusions about a utopian future. The violence is evident in the soldiers' ". . . banging on the door with their gun butts" (Gurnah, *Gravel Heart* 19), contrasting sharply with the peaceful instructions Salim's grandfather had given.

> . . . their father's instructions were that if soldiers or gunmen appeared at the house, which they were certain to do as he was such a well-known campaigner for the other party, there was to be no yelling and screaming. Everyone but him was to lock themself in an inner room because there were rumours of assault and violence and he did not want his wife and his children to be exposed to insult or harm. (19)

This chilling portrait of the revolution's brutal aftermath in Zanzibar highlights that the idealistic independent country's dreams are gone. Instead, it can be witnessed the dehumanization of the grandfather through his disappearance, "They did not realise the violence the victors had in mind and how quickly cruelty begets more cruelty. Their father was taken away by the revolutionaries and they never saw him again, nor was his body returned, nor any announcement made of his death. He disappeared" (19), and the violence inflicted on the family. Their immediate displacement and the mother's paralyzing fear (20) highlight the human cost of the upheaval.

This new form of oppression also connects to the legacy of colonialism. The confiscation of the family's property mirrors the economic dispossession experienced under colonial rule, suggesting a shift in power rather than liberation. "The family land and the house were confiscated and became state property, to be given away to a zealot or a functionary of the revolution, or to his mistress or cousin" (19). Social disruption reigns supreme, with rumours spreading fear and armed men patrolling the streets. The mother's emphasis on the power of "words" (20) to imagine the atrocities becomes a poignant call to remember the silenced experiences of those who suffered.

Despite the terror, the family's attempt to appear harmless and the Bibi's (grandmother) act of foolishness illustrate the human desire to survive under oppression. "They stayed indoors at first, afraid of the dangers of the streets, except for Bibi, who went out to check on neighbours and to go to a shop whose keeper she knew . . . Anyone could see that she was a foolish old woman and not worth the trouble of terrorising" (20). However, this survival comes at a cost, with fear dictating their behaviour and potentially leading to self-effacement, Fouere calls it "the traumatic past of the island" (10). Salim's understanding of the revolution is likely shaped by his mother's trauma.

The stories his mother narrated about the revolution's aftermath and his father's desertion cast a long shadow over Salim's childhood. However, as time passed, he found refuge in the world of books discovered in his father's collection. His love for reading introduces a fascinating connection to the postcolonial themes. While the books initially provide escapism, the limited representation of Africa highlights the lasting impact of colonialism on cultural narratives. ". . . there was no story with a beautiful princess set in an African jungle" (Gurnah, *Gravel Heart* 36).

Salim's attachment to stories like "Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, and the Arabian Nights stories" (37) and his awareness of the lack of African narratives, the author suggests this underlying desire for cultural connection. Interestingly, the shared experience of reading with his father (37), despite the challenges in their relationship, becomes a bridge that transcends communication gaps and offers a sense of connection within the postcolonial context.

The theme of cultural disruption is also central to *Admiring Silence*. First, the corruption that the unnamed narrator experiences in Zanzibar can be seen because of the island's colonial history. The British colonial regime left behind a legacy of corruption and inequality, and this has continued to plague the country in the postcolonial era. Within the oppressive system established by colonialism, societal norms and expectations are often reshaped. The narrator highlights how the British may have physically left, but their legacy continues to impact the social fabric, "When the British . . . got tired of all that ruling and the ungrateful bad-mouthing of the sullen and no longer silent people they had come to work for, and so they went away and left the unruly hordes to their own havoc" (Gurnah, *Admiring Silence* 46).

The narrator's experience in *Admiring Silence* exemplifies how education, a crucial aspect of any society, becomes a tool for the colonisers to disrupt cultural practices and impose their values. This aligns with the theme of cultural disruption explored in both *Afterlives* and *Admiring Silence*. In *Afterlives,* while the German farmer's statement that "The German did not come to make slaves" (Gurnah, *Afterlives* 39) might seem like a positive gesture, his offer to Ilyas to attend church school reflects reality. This limited form of education, likely focused on religious conversion and basic literacy, served the dual purpose of encouraging German

cultural influence and controlling the population. Ilyas's access to this limited

education highlights the selective disruption caused by colonialism. The colonisers

might have offered some education to those they deemed compliant as ". . . intake

was small and limited to a subordinate elite" (16) while restricting access to a more

comprehensive and empowering education for the majority of the colonised people.

    The limited opportunities for qualified locals, the focus on the coloniser's

culture, and the economic burden placed on the colony all contribute to the

dismantling of traditional education systems and the imposition of colonial values.

Phrases like ". . . the majority of the secondary-school teachers in the country were

European" and "My father never did get to go to Makerere" exemplify this lack of

access for qualified locals (Gurnah, *Admiring Silence* 71). The curriculum, with

subjects like "Shakespeare and Romans in Britain" (71), prioritizes the coloniser's

culture and history. This neglects the local context and fails to prepare students for

their own lives and societies. Hence disrupts the transmission of traditional

knowledge and values.

    In both *Admiring Silence* and *The Last Gift*, the protagonists grapple with the

act of concealing significant relationships and aspects of their identities, highlighting

the complex interplay of personal, cultural, and historical influences in shaping their

actions. In *Admiring Silence,* the narrator's decision to conceal his relationship with

Emma likely stems, in part, from the potential disapproval she might face due to

cultural norms is also shaped by colonialism. This highlights the enduring impact of

colonialism, even in the seemingly personal realm of relationships. ". . . I had not

written home about Emma, . . . To my mother, Emma would be something

disreputable, a mistress" (100). The narrator's constructed reality, where he leads a

double life, reflects a deeper sense of exile. He is not only separated from his family

by geographical distance but also by the cultural norms instilled, in part, by the

legacy of colonialism. These norms create a barrier between him and his family,

making it difficult to share his life with them openly. His internal conflict and fear

of judgment highlight the weight of these cultural expectations and the sense of

alienation they cause.

      This secrecy reflects not only the narrator's personal struggles but also the

broader influence of colonial legacies that create tensions between cultural

expectations and individual desires. The narrator's silence becomes a metaphor for

the broader silences imposed by colonial histories, where identity and relationships

are often fractured and concealed in the face of external pressures. Similarly, in *The

Last Gift*, Abbas's choice to hide key aspects of his past, including his first marriage

and the family he left behind in Zanzibar, underscores the emotional and

psychological weight of secrecy. Abbas's reluctance to share his history with

Maryam and their children, Jamal and Hanna, creates a gap in their understanding of

his identity: "Why did Zanzibar have to be such a secret? Whenever she had asked

him where his home was, he said East Africa" (Gurnah, *Last Gift 1*47)*.* This

concealment, driven by personal guilt and the pain of abandonment, also resonates

with the fragmented identities that emerge from diasporic experiences. Abbas's

avoidance of his past reflects the struggle to reconcile his present life with the

unresolved complexities of his history.

      As Abbas's health deteriorates, the necessity of confronting these hidden

truths becomes unavoidable. The act of revelation, while painful, serves as a means

of navigating the fractures in his identity and relationships. Both narratives illustrate

how secrecy functions as both a protective mechanism and a source of alienation, influenced by cultural expectations and the shadow of colonial displacement. In exploring these hidden dimensions of identity, Gurnah's works highlight the ways in which personal histories are intertwined with the broader socio-cultural and historical contexts of postcolonial existence.

The narrator of *Admiring Silence* also navigates the complexities of concealing his relationship and cultural differences, he encounters another layer of challenge- the postcolonial gaze of Emma's parents. This gaze, shaped by their experiences as colonized subjects, adds another hurdle to his quest for acceptance. For Mrs Willoughby, the narrator ". . . often felt like a third person" (Gurnah, *Admiring Silence* 82), and "Mr Willoughby was only interested in my Empire stories" (82). Mrs Willoughby's sense of Otherness towards him reflects the lasting impact of colonialism on the colonised. Mr Willoughby's racist ideology, however, seeks to erase this history and reinforce a power dynamic where the coloniser sees themself as superior. These contrasting perspectives highlight the postcolonial experiences and the complexities of navigating cultural differences in a relationship.

The narrator's tales for Mr Willoughby unveil a postcolonial subjectivity forged in the aftermath of colonial rule. These stories, often detailed accounts of life under imperial rule, cater to Mr Willoughby's romanticized view of the colonial past, "He'll believe anything about the Holy British Empire" (84). Mr Willoughby's expressions like ". . . his eyes lit up as usual at the prospect of an Empire story" (28) confirm his enjoyment of these narratives. The narrator positions his stories to appeal to Mr Willoughby's sense of British superiority, evident in phrases like "It was a simple story of everyday imperial heroism" (33). He appeals to Mr Willoughby's

sense of British superiority and the glory of colonialism. However, the narrator

cleverly subverts this romanticised view:

> Under the Empire we had firm and fair rule, governed by people who
>
> understood us better than we understood ourselves . . . The modest and mild-
>
> mannered colonial rulers politely but firmly curbed our petty princes from
>
> displays of capricious authority. They brought medical knowledge . . . to lift
>
> from our shoulders the yoke of the witch-doctor. . . Instead of being left in our
>
> degenerate darkness for centuries to come, within a few decades we were
>
> opened up and dragged into the human community. (82)

The narrator strategically weaves in words like "curbed," "despotic," and "yoke"

implying a loss of agency for the colonised people. The description of the aunt's

ailments ". . . a complex amalgam of bush yaws, leprosy, bilharzia and infectious

boils" paints a more complex picture than the romanticised view of colonialism (33).

These diseases are not simply the result of moral failings, but likely caused by factors

like poverty and lack of proper sanitation, issues that colonialism might have

exacerbated. This creates a more complex picture than simply "fair rule," (82) and

subtly pushes back against the coloniser's narrative. The narrator portrays the

colonised as passive recipients of these improvements, rather than active participants

in their development. This intricate storytelling reflects the narrator's complex role.

He tailors his stories to Mr Willoughby's expectations, but also injects subtle hints

that challenge the simplistic narrative of benevolent colonialism.

     The character of Mr Willoughby exemplifies how racism attempts to erase the

messy realities of history. His expression of regret, "'Oh why," he would say in the

end, "did they abandon those poor people? It was a blockhead idea'" (83), expresses

regret over the end of colonialism. He still sees the colonised people as "poor" and in need of saving, reinforcing the paternalistic view, and highlighting the enduring power dynamics of colonialism. Mr. Willoughby's racist ideology presents itself as existing outside of history, relying on unchanging stereotypes and prejudices. This aligns with the concept of "ahistorical" racism (Bhabha, *Location of Culture* 249). Furthermore, his character exemplifies how racism attempts to erase the messy realities of history and create a mythical "homogeneous empty time" for the nation (249). This erasure further eliminates the 'liminal spaces' where marginalised groups exist. These liminal spaces are crucial as they represent in-between zones, cracks in the dominant narrative, and sites where resistance and alternative perspectives can emerge. By compelling everyone into this "homogeneous empty time," racism undermines the potential for intervention at the very heart of these spaces (249).

   The encounter with Mr. Willoughby affects the narrator. His physical state ". . . my tongue felt leaden and discoloured, my head pounding with discontent" (33) reflects an internal conflict. He is hesitant to tell these stories, perhaps because they go against his own beliefs or because they simplify the complexities of his past. While Mr Willoughby *is* "hungry for an Empire story" (33), the narrator feels a "twinge of disappointment" (33) when his stories do not resonate as strongly. This disappointment could stem from a desire for truthful storytelling or a frustration with having to tailor his experiences to fit Mr Willoughby's romanticized view. Constantly catering to these expectations might lead to a sense of *loss of agency* for the narrator. He feels pressured to frame his stories as ". . . simple stories of everyday imperial heroism" (33), even though this might not reflect his own experiences. Encountering Mr Willoughby's limited perspective could erode the narrator's sense of self and

make him question the value of his own cultural identity. The frustration and discontent he feels might lead to anger or resentment towards Mr Willoughby's views. However, this encounter might also motivate the narrator to resist these simplistic narratives. Despite the challenges, he still attempts to tell these stories, perhaps finding subtle ways to inject his perspective and challenge Mr Willoughby's limited understanding. The narrator's storytelling in *Admiring Silence* reveals a complex dance between catering to Mr Willoughby's expectations and subtly pushing back against them. This struggle highlights the postcolonial subjectivity of the narrator and the ongoing negotiation of identity in the aftermath of colonialism.

The postcolonial subjectivity explored in *Admiring Silence*, where the narrator grapples with expectations and identity, finds a broader context in *Desertion*. This novel delves into the systemic power imbalances created by colonialism, where the British officials maintain a sense of superiority over the local population. "Neither he nor his friends nor anyone he knew had any idea who the people who lived in these huge houses were, except that they were the rulers of the land and that they were relentless in keeping themselves separate" (Gurnah, *Desertion* 169). The British officials, representing colonial authority, maintain a sense of separateness and superiority, as depicted in their secluded residences and the way the local inhabitants perceive them.

Desertion delves into the systemic racism and exploitation inherent in colonialism. Burton, a British official in the story, embodies the sense of superiority. He refers to the local population as "savage African[s]" (83), dismissing their culture and agency. His statements perfectly encapsulate the racist ideology and dehumanisation that fuelled colonialism. By referring to Africa as a land of "beasts

and savagery" (86), he justifies their subjugation under the pretext of a civilising

mission, ". . . if you want prosperity and order in Africa you have to have European

settlement (84). This attempt to mask oppression with scientific reasoning highlights

the power imbalance at the core of colonialism.

This chapter has examined the enduring impact of colonialism on the identities

of native people. Power dynamics inherent in colonial rule created a hierarchy where

the colonisers wielded authority and shaped their own narratives. The colonised,

relegated to a state of subjection, faced the marginalisation of their voices and the

potential erasure of their cultural identities. As Gandhi aptly states, ". . . unlike the

colonisers who possess the privileges of citizenship and subjectivity, the colonised

exist only as subjects, or as those suspended in a state of subjection" (169), denied

agency and forced to navigate a reality constructed through colonial discourse.

Bhabha emphasizes the role of colonial discourse in constructing the colonized

identity:

> It is an apparatus that turns on the recognition and disavowal of
>
> racial/cultural/historical differences. Its predominant strategic function is the
>
> creation of a space for 'subject peoples' through the production of
>
> knowledges in terms of which surveillance is exercised and a complex form
>
> of pleasure/ unpleasure in incited. (*Location of Culture* 100-101)

This discourse simultaneously acknowledges and undermines the colonized culture,

which creates a complex space where the colonized individual grapples with an

imposed identity while yearning for self-determination.

Gurnah's novels, like *Afterlives, and Desertion*, challenge the dominant

narrative by portraying the experiences of the colonised. While acknowledging the

"failed hopes and disappointments" (Hand 36) of colonialism, they depict characters navigating the complexities of postcolonial identity. Their struggles highlight the challenges of forging a new national identity in the face of a dominant colonial legacy. Colonialism's legacy continues to shape societies and individual identities long after the colonisers have departed. By analysing colonial discourse and the experiences of the colonised, one can gain a deeper understanding of these ongoing struggles. Gurnah's characters, with their contrasting perspectives, leave with a sense of hope as they navigate the path towards self-determination and the possibilities of forging new identities in a world forever marked by the colonial past.

Chapter 3

Mimicry and Resistance: Redefining Colonial Stereotypes

Shifting the focus to the interplay of mimicry and resistance in Gurnah's narratives, this chapter examines how characters actively challenge and redefine colonial stereotypes. While the earlier chapters established the theoretical framework of hybridity and explored its implications for identity formation, this chapter delves into the subversive strategies employed by characters to confront colonial authority. Drawing on Bhabha's concept of mimicry, the analysis highlights moments where mimicry serves as a tool for both compliance and resistance, destabilising colonial power structures. By investigating these transformative acts, the chapter underscores how Gurnah's characters assert agency, disrupt dominant narratives, and contribute to an understanding of postcolonial identity.

Bhabha's concept of mimicry is a valuable lens for understanding these journeys of identity formation within the liminal space of the third space. Mimicry, according to Bhabha, is not merely passive imitation. It is a complex process where characters adopt elements of the dominant culture, often in unexpected or ambivalent ways. This ambivalent mimicry can become a form of subversion, exposing the limitations and inconsistencies of the imposed stereotypes. The act of subversive mimicry allows characters to navigate the power dynamics of the postcolonial landscape. In the postcolonial context by mimicking the colonisers, the colonised people are also exposing the flaws and contradictions of colonial ideology. Therefore, adopting elements of the dominant culture in unexpected ways, can disrupt the stereotype and challenge its hold on the identities.

Colonial Stereotype

"Obviously colonialism has been a political and economic relationship, but it has importantly depended on cultural structures for its coherence and justification" (Huddart 24). Huddart's statement highlights a crucial aspect of colonialism that often goes overlooked. While the political and economic control exerted by the coloniser is undeniable, it is equally important to consider the role of "cultural structures" in maintaining colonial dominance. These cultural structures include beliefs, attitudes, and representations that legitimise and justify the colonial project. One key element of these cultural structures is the use of stereotypes. Stereotypes are oversimplified and often negative generalisations about a particular group of people. The Oxford Dictionary defines stereotype as "a fixed idea or image that many people have of a particular type of person or thing, but which is often not true in reality." Satyanarayan Tiwari and Ajay K. Chaubey in "Mapping Colonial Stereotypes in the Selected Diasporic Novels of the New Millennium: A Critical Examination" write that stereotype ". . . is a set of ideas or characteristics, exhibiting a prejudiced attitude against an individual or the entire community, with certain kinds of fabricated agendas" (161).

In the context of colonialism, stereotypes about the colonised population play a vital role in justifying and maintaining colonial control. "The colonizer circulates Stereotypes about the laziness or stupidity of the colonized population through racist jokes, cinematic images etc." (Tibile 93). These stereotypes can dehumanise the colonised, making it easier for the coloniser to exploit them. Furthermore, they can be used to justify the coloniser's intervention and control by portraying the colonised as backward or in need of civilisation. Ultimately, stereotypes limit the colonised

subject's ability to define their own identity, forcing them to conform to the pre-defined categories imposed by the coloniser.

Stereotypes create a one-sided picture, ignoring the complexity and diversity of Eastern cultures. They reduce people to simplistic categories. As Said's concept of the Orient-Occident binary highlights, the power imbalance between the West (Occident) and the East (Orient). This binary creates a system where the West is seen as superior and dominant, while the East is stereotyped as inferior and backward. Said's concept of Orientalism argues that the West emphasises difference and inferiority, portraying the East as a place of mystery, exoticism, and stagnation, compared to the supposedly rational and progressive West. These stereotypes are used to justify the exploitation of the Orient's resources, people, and culture. While quoting Said, Tiwari and Chaubey point out, "The relationship between the Occident and the Orient, defined as, "(the) relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony" (Said, 1978/2001, p. 5) displays the exploitation of not only temporal and terrestrial plenitudes but also of its people, culture and society" (158).

Colonial discourse often relied on stereotypes as a tool for control, while simultaneously using them to justify the 'civilising mission.' However, as Bhabha argues, these justifications are ultimately undermined by the very stereotypes they depend on (Huddart 25). Traditionally, stereotypes have been criticised for their tendency to fix identities, denying individuals and groups their complexities. Colonial discourse thrives on such fixed categories, and so do many traditional analyses of these stereotypes. Bhabha, however, points out a crucial element: a coexisting disorder within stereotypes that challenges their rigidity. Though colonial power structures might have unconsciously sensed this, it often went unnoticed in traditional

analyses. Analyses that simply condemn stereotypes as negative fall into the same trap as colonial discourse itself, both assuming a pre-existing normality. As Bhabha argues, an important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of "fixity" in the construction of otherness. However, this fixity is paradoxical: it suggests rigidity and order, but also contains a troubling ". . . disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition" (*Location of Culture* 66). Colonial identities, he suggests, are "multiple, cross-cutting determinations" constantly evolving and defying simple categorisation (67). This implies that both stereotypes and colonial identities are complex, ambivalent, and ever-shifting. There is a need to move beyond normalising judgments and recognise the multifaceted nature. In essence, Bhabha challenges the traditional view of colonial stereotypes as static. He argues that they are inherently contradictory, fluid, and constantly in flux.

Bhabha further emphasises the psychological impact of stereotypes by highlighting the "split" identity imposed on the colonised subject (*Location of Culture* 82). He describes them as caught between contradictory portrayals, for instance, the black person being both "savage" and the "most obedient servant" (82). This inconsistency creates a sense of confusion and undermines the colonised subject's sense of self. The black person is simultaneously dehumanised by being assigned contradictory and often extreme characteristics, denying them any sense of complexity. However, Bhabha's concept of stereotypes offers a glimmer of hope for resistance. He argues that stereotypes are not entirely fixed but rather "polymorphous and perverse" (82). This 'perversity' suggests that the seemingly contradictory nature of stereotypes might contain openings for subversion. While the stereotypes

themselves may be imposed by the coloniser, the colonised subject might find ways to manipulate or exploit these inconsistencies to challenge the dominant narrative.

Colonial discourse relies heavily on stereotypes to categorize and control the colonized subject. These stereotypes create a split identity, forcing the colonized to navigate contradictory portrayals. However, Bhabha's concept of "productive splitting" (83) suggests that these stereotypes might not be entirely fixed. There could be a space for the colonized subject to challenge these imposed categories. This is where the concept of mimicry becomes crucial. Mimicry involves the adoption of elements from the dominant culture by the colonized subject. But this adoption is never complete. There is always an ambivalence- a sense of both similarity and difference. This ambivalent mimicry becomes a powerful tool for the characters in colonial literature to disrupt the stereotypes and forge new, hybrid identities. Furthermore, the erosion of colonial authority, as discussed by Nayar, creates further space for subversion. He argues that, "Colonialism is no longer the confident, strident, all-knowing and coherent set of goals, processes, ideas and policies" (8). Instead, it is riddled with internal contradictions and "ambivalence" towards the colonised subject (8). This ambivalence creates opportunities for the colonised to exploit the weaknesses within the colonial system.

Mimicry as Resistance

Moving beyond mere imitation, Bhabha argues that mimicry is a dynamic and often subversive process. In his words, colonial mimicry is the desire for ". . . a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (*Location of Culture* 86). This statement captures the essence of mimicry's ambivalence, as characters adopt elements of the dominant culture, but this adoption

is never complete. Huddart, in his analysis of Bhabha's work, emphasises this concept by stating that mimicry is ". . . repetition with difference" (39). This means that mimicry is not simply copying the coloniser, but a process that introduces a form of difference or subversion. The colonised subject, through mimicry, appears similar to the coloniser but never fully replicates them. This "partial" and ever-shifting identity disrupts the coloniser's attempt to categorise the colonised through stereotypes. This "slippage" and "excess," is a difference that disrupts the stereotype (66).

Bhabha also emphasises that ambivalence is central to mimicry's effectiveness. By mimicking the dominant culture imperfectly or selectively, characters expose the limitations and inconsistencies of the imposed stereotypes. This act, in turn, undermines the authority of colonial discourse. Bhabha uses the term "indeterminacy" (86) to describe this effect - the power dynamics become uncertain because mimicry both reinforces and disrupts the established order. Furthermore, mimicry inherits "almost the same, but not quite" as nature leads to a "strategic failure" (86) to fully replicate the dominant culture. The coloniser's attempt to fix and categorise the colonised through stereotypes is disrupted by the uncertainty and indeterminacy introduced by mimicry.

The colonised subject adopts elements of the dominant culture - language, dress, mannerisms - but this adoption is never complete. This creates a space for resistance, where mimicry disrupts the coloniser's expectations and exposes the constructed nature of power dynamics. Mimicry can be a powerful tool for the colonised subject. By adopting elements of the coloniser's culture, the colonised subject creates a sense of "resemblance and menace" (Huddart 51). This "menace" disrupts the coloniser's sense of clear-cut superiority. For instance, characters like

Hamza who adopts aspects of the coloniser's culture like the German language, challenge the notion of a fixed identity associated with the coloniser. Their almost successful mimicry highlights the constructed nature of these identities. Furthermore, mimicry can be used to manipulate the coloniser's expectations and carve out a space for agency. Characters like the narrator of *Admiring Silence*, by strategically mimicking the coloniser's "Murmur audibly, smile brightly, say nothing" (Gurnah, *Admiring Silence* 22), might be able to navigate the colonial world on their terms, albeit with limitations. By strategically deploying the coloniser's symbols and expectations, the subject can potentially challenge their dominance.

However, the psychological impact of mimicry on the colonised subject is complex. It can lead to a sense of alienation, as the subject struggles to reconcile their adopted persona with their own cultural roots. Characters like Ilyas of *Afterlives* exemplify this struggle. When Karim asks Ilyas to join in the Maghrib prayer, the latter fakes it as best as he can because he has never been to a mosque. "Karim's invitation to pray was the first time he had been caught out and he faked it as best he could, copying his every gesture and muttering as if he was speaking sacred words" (Gurnah, *Afterlives 25*). His mimicry creates a sense of internal conflict and self-doubt.

It is important to acknowledge the potential dangers of mimicry. Excessive mimicry can lead to a loss of touch with one's own culture and a sense of self-alienation. In some cases, mimicry might become a form of assimilation that ultimately serves the colonizer's agenda. Characters like Ilyas, who prioritize mimicking the colonizer, risk losing their sense of identity and becoming a mere imitation. Germans always consider him as 'Other' and finally punish him for ". . .

defiling an Aryan woman" (275). By mimicking the colonizer, the colonized subject

exposes the constructed nature of racial identities and challenges the colonizer's

assumed superiority. As characters like Ilyas and other askaris demonstrate, despite

their attempts at mimicry, they never fully achieve complete assimilation. This failure

reveals the fragility of the colonizer's identity, built upon notions of racial difference.

Mimicry is a complex phenomenon with both subversive and assimilatory

potential. While it can create a sense of alienation and self-doubt, it also offers a space

for resistance and agency. Even though mimicry has limitations, it can be a stepping

stone towards greater agency and a platform for more overt forms of resistance.

Mimicry and Stereotype in Gurnah's Works

Gurnah's novels expose the limitations and dangers of stereotypes imposed by

the coloniser. These stereotypes can be racial, cultural, or social, and they serve to

dehumanise and disempower the colonised subjects. These stereotypes, often racial

and cultural, serve to belittle the colonised and establish a clear hierarchy of power. In

Afterlives, the German officer, Oberleutnant, embodies this colonial mentality. He

views the colonized as "backward and savage people" (85), believing his culture to be

inherently superior and requiring a "Zivilisierungmission" (civilising mission) to

bring "mathematics and many other clever things" (65) to the colonised. As for him

the colonised are incapable of intellectual pursuits like mathematics.

The Oberleutnant's approach to education is not one of mutual exchange but

rather a tool for cultural assimilation. He encourages Hamza to mimic German

language, customs, and religion, hoping to "civilise" him and elevate him to the

supposed level of the coloniser's culture (65). He says to Hamza "If like me you were

educated and a Christian, you would think differently about whatever" (76). This

aligns with Ashcroft et al.'s observation that in postcolonial contexts, the coloniser establishes a "hierarchical relationship" through the "assumed moral superiority" of their culture (*Empire* 170). This cultural imposition, as conveyed by the Oberleutnant's statement, "I am here. . . to take possession of what rightfully belongs to us because we are stronger" (Gurnah, *Afterlives* 85), reinforces the coloniser's control.

The Oberleutnant plays tricks on Hamza through self-mocking phrases adding another layer to the exploration of mimicry and stereotype. "Sometimes the officer played tricks on him and made him repeat self-mocking words before laughing and explaining them. It was a game for the officer, and it pleased him that Hamza was so responsive and quick" (78). Here, mimicry is not a genuine cultural exchange but rather a tool wielded by the officer to reinforce his dominance. The officer's amusement at Hamza's responsiveness highlights the power imbalance. Hamza's attempts to mimic German language and humour become a performance that validates the officer's stereotypical view of the colonized as simple and eager to please. These games chip away at Hamza's self-esteem and solidify the hierarchy where the colonizer enjoys mockery, and the colonized is expected to perform for their amusement.

Furthermore, the officer's promise of introducing Hamza to German literature can be seen as a deceptive form of mimicry. "I will have you reading Schiller soon, he said, his eyes alight with mischief" (78). While presented as a path towards civilization, it is likely filtered through the officer's lens and serves a deeper purpose of cultural indoctrination.   This manipulation of mimicry reinforces the concept of stereotypes as tools of control. The officer's games rely on pre-conceived notions of

the colonized being easily manipulated. By using mimicry in this way, the officer strengthens the colonial hierarchy and reinforces his position of power.

However, as time progresses, the officer becomes increasingly invested in turning Hamza into a model student "The game of teaching his servant to speak and read German absorbed him and began to turn serious" (81). His challenge to his fellow officers suggests a growing sense of obsession with this project. "He even issued a challenge to his officers, after several drinks, betting them that he would have their young schüler reading Schiller before the monsoons arrived" (81). This shift can be interpreted as the officer genuinely believing he is civilising Hamza, fulfilling the colonial ideal of transforming the colonised. Alternatively, it is possible that Hamza's quick learning challenges the officer's initial stereotypes, forcing him to take this game more seriously. The laughter of the other officers is significant. It mocks the seriousness with which the first officer now approaches the game. Their scepticism highlights the absurdity of the entire endeavour - transforming a colonised subject into a miniature European through mimicry. Their response also foreshadows the limitations of this project. Even if Hamza learns to read Schiller, will he ever be accepted as an equal within the colonial hierarchy. "Which monsoons? The other officers laughed. Maybe ten years from now" (81).

Later the Oberleutnant's gift of Schiller presents a multifaceted exploration of mimicry, power dynamics, and the lingering effects of colonialism. "He handed over a small book with a gold and black cover: Schiller's *Musen-Almanach für das Jahr* 1798" (129). On the surface, it appears to be a gesture of care from the officer who leaves Hamza to get treated in a German mission. This gift encourages Hamza's continued engagement with German culture, a form of ongoing mimicry. Hamza's

reading of Schiller, shared with his wife "He took the first four lines of Schiller's 'Das Geheimnis', and translated them for her" (192) suggests a genuine interest in the literature and his progress even impresses the pastor's wife.

However, a deeper look at the power dynamics is revealed through Hamza's interaction with the Pastor while recovering. The Pastor wrestles with his own biases and anxieties, initially questioning the Oberleutnant's intimate protection of Hamza, suggesting discomfort with defying colonial hierarchies. He even assumes Hamza would not understand the conversation or be able to read the book due to his colonized status, highlighting the stereotypes held by some colonizers about the intellectual capacity of the colonized.

> Do you understand everything I have said? Of course you do. The
> Oberleutnant said your German was very good and I have heard you speak it
> myself. Perhaps it did not seem right to the other German officers that he . . .
> befriended you, that his . . . protection of you was so . . . intimate. I am only
> guessing, I don't know, because of something else the Oberleutnant said.
> Perhaps his behaviour was seen as undermining German prestige. I can
> understand how people might think like that. I also understand that war brings
> about unexpected bonds. (128)

Despite these biases, the Pastor acknowledges the unexpected bonds formed during war and recognizes Hamza's "stoic patience," suggesting a flicker of empathy (128). This internal conflict further emphasizes the complexities of the colonial experience.

The Pastor's initial withholding of the book, claiming it is "too valuable," (128) can be seen as a power play. He controls access to knowledge and culture, albeit briefly. His eventual return of the book signifies a concession, but the exchange also

highlights the power of language. The Pastor's wife's insistence on returning the book challenges his assumptions about Hamza's literacy and emphasizes fairness and respect for Hamza's ownership of the gift.

The Oberleutnant's letter inquiring about Hamza's progress reinforces a sense of control, and interest in the success of his project (82). Yet, Hamza's reading can also be seen as an act of appropriation. He utilizes the knowledge and skills acquired through mimicry to engage with German literature on his terms, exploring authors beyond Schiller. Sharing these stories with others suggests a potential for cultural exchange beyond the confines of colonial control. Mimicry remains a tool with both liberating and constraining aspects. While it allows Hamza a degree of access to the colonizer's culture, it also reminds him of the power dynamics that shaped his experiences. As the officer remains in control, dictating the pace and content of Hamza's education, there is a hint of subversion within this mimicry. Hamza's successful learning, even if orchestrated by the officer, disrupts the stereotype of the simple colonized subject. His potential to master German literature, a symbol of the colonizer's culture, creates tension within the power dynamic.

Mimicry, when recognized, can be seen as a way of taking the colonizer's tools like culture and language, and turning them against them. By adopting these elements in a way that is incomplete or unexpected, the colonized disrupts the colonizer's control over meaning and identity. Huddart writes, "This means that in a way the colonizer 'spooks himself: he fantasizes endless monstrous stereotypes that can only lead to anxiety rather than the desired certainty" (41)

In contrast to Hamza's cautious navigation of mimicry, Ilyas in *Afterlives* embodies the dangers of unchecked cultural appropriation within a colonial context.

Bhabha's concept of mimicry, where the colonized subject imitates the colonizer to gain access to power, proves tragically relevant to Ilyas's story. Kidnapped as a child by a Shangaan askari serving the Germans "He told me to be his gun boy, to carry his gun for him when they marched" (37), Ilyas readily adopts the colonizer's language, mannerisms, and even religion.

Ilyas's initial perception of the Germans as saviours reflects Bhabha's notion of the 'civilising mission,' where colonizers justify their actions as bringing order to 'uncivilised' territories (65). His ardent support for the Germans and his view of his new identity as a gift illustrates the power of colonial influence in shaping hybrid identities. When Mahmudu tries to showcase him German's brutality towards their people, that in the last thirty years, ". . . Germans have killed so many people that the country is littered with skulls and bones and the earth is soggy with blood" (41), Ilyas calls it an exaggeration. Rather than defending his people, he says that Germans fight with savages, and whatever they do is justifiable, as "They had to be harsh in retaliation because that's the only way savage people can be made to understand order and obedience" (42). For him "The Germans are honourable and civilized people and have done much good since they have been there" (42). He becomes an advocate for the colonial regime, a stark contrast to Hamza's more subtle engagement with German culture. This transformation exemplifies internal colonization, where individuals internalize the colonizer's perspectives at the expense of their heritage.

Ilyas's experience highlights the complexities of navigating the contact zone created by colonization. Drawn to the cultural sphere of the Germans, he assimilates their ideology and habits, erasing his connection to his cultural roots. His perception of the Germans as "honourable and civilised" betrays the extent to which he has

internalized colonial narratives of superiority (42). This disconnection becomes evident upon his return home, where he is viewed as a "government man" due to his mimicry and fluency in German. His disassociation is further emphasized by his fabricated Maghrib prayers and lack of familiarity with Islamic practices, despite being Muslim.

The tragedy of Ilyas lies in his complete lack of recognition of the colonizer's influence on his identity. His mimicry produces a compliant subject, one who has internalized the colonizer's perspectives to the point of rejecting his cultural heritage. This internal colonization results in a contradictory identity - he sees himself as aligned with the Germans, yet remains oblivious to the realities of colonial exploitation. Khalifa's observation of Ilyas living in an "illusion" (199) underscores the devastating consequences of such an uncritical approach to mimicry.

Ilyas's story stands in stark contrast to Hamza's. While both characters engage with German culture, Hamza maintains a critical distance. He utilizes mimicry as a tool for survival and even challenges colonial expectations by exploring literature beyond the prescribed canon. Ilyas, on the other hand, allows mimicry to erase his own cultural identity, becoming a cautionary tale about the dangers of unchecked assimilation within a colonial power structure.

While *Afterlives* explores different aspects of the colonial experience, it also touches upon the complex concept of mimicry and its impact on identity. The novel effectively demonstrates how the German colonizers utilised mimicry to create a class of mimic subjects - the askaris. These askaris are trained to adopt German customs, language, and values (62). This not only fosters a sense of superiority among the askaris but also allows the Germans to maintain control over the colony through a

divide-and-rule tactic. Bhabha's concept of ". . . colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha, *Location of Culture* 122) is particularly relevant here. The askaris become a distorted reflection of the colonizers, never fully accepted but used to enforce colonial dominance. This creates a fragile sense of identity for the askaris, caught between their cultural heritage and the imposed colonial identity. Their actions, like "… burning their huts after confiscating all their supplies" (Gurnah, *Afterlives* 94), highlight the internal conflict and alienation they experience. In *Afterlives*, mimicry is imposed by the colonizers for control leading to the askaris struggle with a fractured identity.

Gurnah's *Desertion* also exposes the dehumanizing effects of colonialism through the portrayal of stereotypical attitudes held by some British characters. A conversation between Burton, Martin, and Frederick reveals their prejudiced views towards the African population. Burton and Frederick label the Africans as "beasts" and "savage African" (Gurnah, *Desertion* 86), stripping them of their humanity and cultural identity. This aligns with the prevailing colonial ideology of ". . . the white man's destiny," where the colonizers saw themselves as civilizing forces bringing progress to supposedly inferior societies (93). Burton and Frederick believe it is their responsibility to guide the Africans towards obedience and orderly labour, "I do have a responsibility to the natives, to keep an eye on them and guide them slowly into obedience and orderly labour" (84) reflecting their desire for control and manipulation within the colonial hierarchy.

Further reinforcing these stereotypes, Burton expresses fear of the ungrateful native, suggesting the Africans will exploit any kindness and become reliant on the

colonizers. "The more we do for them, . . . the more they will demand, without having to work for any of it. In time they will expect us to feed them while they carry on with their barbarisms" (84). This fuels the racist image of the colonized as lazy and undeserving. Interestingly, the conversation also touches upon the limitations of mimicry as a strategy for the colonized. Burton suggests that the best the Africans can do is imitate the colonizers, highlighting the one-sided nature of the relationship. Activities like cricket, for instance, are not seen as a genuine attempt at cultural exchange but rather as a form of amusement or a way to assert superiority. When Frederick asks Burton, "If you think they're such beasts, why are you teaching them cricket," to which Burton replies, "For the comedy" (86).

Martin's dissenting voice offers a necessary counterpoint. He acknowledges the disruption caused by the colonizers' intrusion and suggests a responsibility of care towards the Africans. "I think in time we'll come to see what we're doing in places like these less heroically. . . we owe them care for the way we have intruded in their ways of life" (85). His presence reminds us that not all colonizers held the same prejudiced views, and some possessed a degree of empathy for the colonized population. By showcasing this range of attitudes, Gurnah underscores the complexity of the colonial experience and the ongoing struggle for power and identity within that context.

In *Admiring Silence*, Gurnah explores the lingering effects of colonialism and the challenges faced by newly independent African nations. Here, stereotypes resurface, but not solely from the perspective of the colonizer. The character of Mr Willoughby embodies a patronizing attitude towards the narrator. Mr Willoughby's character embodies a stereotypical view of the colonizer, clinging to the past glories

of the British Empire and viewing the newly independent African nation with suspicion. His rapid-fire questioning exemplifies stereotypical assumptions about the colonized (Gurnah, *Admiring Silence* 23-24). His inquiries about the narrator's education and its funding, "Is the British government paying for you?" (23), suggest a perception of African nations as reliant on their former colonizers. This aligns with the stereotype of the dependent native, unable to function independently. He seems to believe that the colonized are perpetually indebted to the colonizers for any progress or opportunities they might receive.

Mr. Willoughby's inquiry about whether independence is too soon "Do you think it's too soon?" and "What's the political situation like?" (24) betray a lack of faith in the nation's ability to govern itself. This aligns with the stereotype of the colonized as incapable of self-rule, a notion often used by colonizers to justify their continued dominance. Moreover, this view undermines the legitimacy of their independence struggle. Mr Willoughby's character and his interaction with the narrator sheds light on the ongoing power struggles and the challenges of forging a new national identity in the shadow of colonialism. The characters' contrasting perspectives highlight the enduring impact of colonial ideology and the ongoing search for self-determination in the postcolonial world.

The narrator's response to Mr. Willoughby's questions ". . . I muttered and smiling heroically" (23) focuses on surviving in the new world, which stands in stark contrast to Mr Willoughby's nostalgia for the colonial past. This internal conflict reflects the complex emotions faced by the colonized. While seeking respect and recognition, the narrator might feel pressure to appease the former colonizer's stereotypical views. It is important to consider the narrator's agency beyond Mr.

Willoughby's stereotypical assumptions. The narrator's presence in England for his studies demonstrates a desire for self-improvement and a future independent of colonial influence. His ability to navigate these encounters, even if with heroic effort, suggests a degree of resilience and determination.

Later in the story, the narrator's disclosure of his relationship with Emma in throws his family dynamic into a state of flux. The family's disapproving reactions, particularly "Akbar's anger" and "Rukiya's despising looks" (200), reflect stereotypical expectations of cultural norms. Their disapproval highlights the limitations of these preconceived notions and exposes the inadequacy of a singular cultural identity in a globalized world. The narrator's relationship with Emma defies these stereotypes, creating a new space where traditional values are challenged.

The narrator's indifference to their reactions can be interpreted in several ways. Perhaps it reflects a sense of detachment from these traditional values, suggesting his transformation due to his experiences in England. However, it is also possible that his indifference masks a deeper internal conflict. The disclosure becomes a moment of self-reflection for the narrator, forcing him to confront the impact of his choices and the evolving dynamic within his family. His disclosure disrupts the established family dynamic, creating a space of tension and negotiation where both traditional values and the narrator's evolving identity must find a way to coexist.

The narrator's situation offers a different perspective on mimicry. His relationship with Emma represents a form of cultural hybridity, a blend of his homeland's culture and his experiences in England. The narrator's decision to be with Emma can be seen as a way of navigating the complexities of a globalized world. He

might be adopting aspects of British culture, but this does not necessarily negate his cultural heritage. His family's reaction (disapproval, anger) exposes the challenges of forging a new identity in a postcolonial context, where traditional expectations clash with the transformative effects of globalization. The narrator grapples with a changing but potentially evolving identity.

The exploration of mimicry and identity within Gurnah's narratives extend beyond the processes of assimilation and cultural appropriation. Resistance, in its various forms, also plays a crucial role in shaping the experiences of the characters. Characters like Salim's grandfather, Ahmed Musa Ibrahim in *Gravel Heart*, embodies a complex negotiation between mimicry and resistance in the face of colonialism. While he adopts elements of European dress and boasts of his travels, his mimicry is playful and incomplete. The white linen suit, for instance, carries both European and religious significance, highlighting his selective adaptation. "The white linen suit was more ambiguous: that it was a suit was a salute to Europe, as were the brown shoes in a sandal-wearing culture, but the suit was white, which when worn with modesty was the colour of homage and prayer and pilgrimage, the colour of purity and devotion." (Gurnah, *Gravel Heart* 16). This playful mimicry allows him to navigate the colonial world without fully submitting to its dominance.

However, Ibrahim's true defiance lies in his resistance to British rule. He associates with anti-colonial intellectuals who yearn for a modern Zanzibar free from British control. His resistance is his statement: "No one bid the British to come here. . . They came because they are covetous and cannot help wanting to fill the world with their presence." (17). This directly challenges the idea of a benevolent British presence and exposes the exploitative nature of colonialism. It highlights his

awareness of the power imbalance and the uninvited nature of British dominance. This sentiment resonates with the historical context of colonialism in Zanzibar, where resentment brewed against a ruling power that imposed itself without consent. This demonstrates that Ibrahim's selective mimicry is not a sign of submission, but a way to navigate a world dominated by the British. This complex portrayal of Ibrahim sets the stage for Salim's struggles in the novel. Salim's education in England and his ambivalent relationship with British culture can be seen as an extension of his grandfather's legacy.

In this vein of challenging dominant narratives, Salim's relationship with literature offers another lens through which to view the themes of mimicry and resistance. As Salim grew older, the passion of reading emerged that further shaped his worldview. "I was about ten when I learnt to read a whole book, all words and no pictures" (36). He starts by reading books left by his father, which are likely Western stories like mysteries, Westerns, and tales of English heroes like "*Riders of the Purple Sage*" (37). This initial exposure can be seen as a form of mimicry, where he engages with the dominant culture's narratives.

However, Salim's reading habits also exhibit resistance. He prioritizes certain stories like "mysteries and Westerns" (37), suggesting a preference for adventure and justice over the stereotypical portrayal of Africa in "*The Tempest Tribes*" (36). Furthermore, his love for stories like "Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, and the Arabian Nights stories" (37) introduces narratives from outside the Western canon. This expands his worldview and challenges the dominance of Western stories. Salim's reading habits demonstrate a complex relationship with the dominant culture. He engages with

Western stories but also resists their limitations. By seeking diverse literature, he challenges stereotypes and actively shapes his understanding of the world.

Salim's immersion in literature is not just about escaping into fantastical worlds; it also provides a space to explore identities and grapple with complex emotions. This yearning for exploration extends beyond the pages of books. His early hero was Uncle Amir, his mother's charismatic younger brother who embodied a life of adventure and travel. "To me as a child Uncle Amir seemed fearless and smart. Afterwards when he left to study, and then to travel everywhere as a diplomat, he became a figure of legend and glamour to me" (45). Uncle Amir, with his travels and sophisticated demeanour, became an object of adoration for Salim. The exotic gifts and travel photographs fuelled Salim's desire to emulate his uncle's seemingly glamorous life (45). This initial adoration mirrored a form of mimicry, a yearning to embody the success and worldliness he associated with Uncle Amir.

Salim's early exposure to literature in Zanzibar ignited a passion for exploration and a yearning for a world beyond his immediate surroundings. This desire to explore different narratives and perspectives would continue to shape his identity as he navigated the complexities of life in London. While his initial fascination with Uncle Amir's glamorous lifestyle mirrored a form of mimicry, Salim's maturing perspective and his own evolving desires would lead him to question these expectations and embark on a more personal journey of self-discovery. His mother's sarcastic remarks, coupled with his own evolving perspective, chipped away at the idealized image of Uncle Amir that he has earlier. "The jerky restless movements . . . He laughed differently, in a more controlled manner" (38) suggests a calculated act of Uncle Amir, replacing the genuine excitement Salim saw earlier.

This shift in perception marked a move away from simply mimicking his uncle and reflected a growing sense of self.

Uncle Amir's insistence on Salim pursuing Business Studies further reinforced the theme of mimicry. "Business Studies is respectable and flexible, . . . In your circumstances, it is the perfect option and it will allow you to work anywhere in the world, because the language of business is the same everywhere" (57). This career path, seen as practical and lucrative, mirrored Uncle Amir's trajectory. However, this focus on practicality clashed with Salim's desires, "I should have preferred to study literature" (57). While Salim does not outright challenge his uncle, his silence regarding his passion for literature can be seen as passive resistance. He recognises his ambitions but lacks the courage, or perhaps the opportunity, to voice them against the dominant expectations set by Uncle Amir.

Salim's relationship with Uncle Amir showcases the complexities of mimicry and resistance within the context of colonialism and displacement. Initially drawn to the illusion of a glamorous life, Salim's maturing perspective exposed the limitations of mimicking external expectations. While his silence regarding his desires reflects a struggle with finding his voice, it also hints at a growing sense of self and a yearning for a path more aligned with his passions. This internal conflict between imposed expectations and his aspirations becomes a central theme as Salim navigates life in London.

In London Salim's initial efforts to adapt to the city's crowds, rudeness, and harsh environment can be seen as a form of mimicry. "I learnt to live in London . . . I learnt to live with the cold and the dirt . . . I learnt to live with the chaotic languages of London" (66). He learns the unspoken rules of navigating the city, a necessary

adaptation for survival. However, this act of fitting in also carries a sense of resistance. By mastering these skills, he asserts a degree of control over his environment despite feeling like an outsider. Salim's struggle to connect with the "angry students" at college further emphasizes his sense of isolation (66). The language barriers and social dynamics create a sense of exclusion. Here, his desire to belong is met with resistance from existing social groups, highlighting the complexities of finding a place in a new environment. While Salim finds solace in friendships with Reshat and Mahmood, the teasing about his "ambassador" uncle highlights the challenges of belonging (66). These stereotypes limit how others perceive him and reinforce his sense of displacement. This encounter showcases the limitations of simply mimicking external appearances - true connection requires acceptance beyond superficial assumptions.

Uncle Amir's pressure to pursue Business Studies forces Salim into a path he finds uninspiring. While he goes through the motions of studying, mimicking expected behaviour, his lack of passion underscores the limitations of simply conforming to external expectations. However, the library becomes a refuge, "It was in that library . . . there was a deep pleasure in the unhurried way I was able to read them" (67-68). Reading novels by Virginia Woolf, Joseph Conrad, and John Dos Passos allows him to explore his interests and forge a connection with a world beyond the limitations imposed on him. This act of choosing his reading material can be seen as a form of resistance against the prescribed curriculum and a way to reclaim a sense of agency.

A constant negotiation between adaptation and resistance marks Salim's experiences, both during his university years in Brighton and after his return. He

develops coping mechanisms for the city's challenges but remains somewhat isolated. The pressure to conform to his uncle's expectations clashes with his desires, leading to a sense of disillusionment with his studies. However, he finds solace and a sense of self-discovery through literature, which allows him to explore his path and interests.

His initial resistance to the limitations imposed by Uncle Amir in London disappears as he settles into a job with the Lambeth, which lures him to return to London. However, this acceptance comes with a sense of internal conflict. "I went to work and performed my duties, biting my lip and letting the moment pass until what I did became routine and I no longer needed to suppress a feeling of uselessness as I did what was required of me" (128). On the surface, he appears to be conforming to expectations. He takes on the role of a local government officer, attends work events, and participates in activities enjoyed by his colleagues. This behaviour can be seen as a form of mimicry, a necessary adaptation to navigate his new life in London. Though he ". . . feared turning into one of England's helots . . ." (127) and think about leaving for a place where his skills are valued, this highlights his sense of resistance. This internal conflict highlights his yearning for a place where he can feel valued for his unique skills and background, rather than simply mimicking the expectations of his London environment. His decision to stay in London remains unresolved. While he mimics certain aspects of British life, his yearning for a more fulfilling path persists. This uncertainty regarding his future underscores the challenges of finding a sense of belonging and forging a personal identity within a new cultural landscape.

The concept of resistance through mimicry is particularly relevant to Gurnah's characters who navigate the complexities of their identities within the postcolonial landscape. Through mimicry, they adopt elements of the dominant culture, but this

adoption is never complete. The "excess" or "slippage" inherent in their mimicry creates an "uncertain" identity - one that is both shaped by and resistant to colonial definitions (Bhabha, *Location of Culture* 90). Furthermore, Bhabha suggests that mimicry's success lies in its strategic failure, "The success of colonial appropriation depends on a proliferation of inappropriate objects that ensure its strategic failure, so that mimicry is at once resemblance and menace" (86). By mimicking imperfectly or selectively, Gurnah's characters expose the limitations of imposed stereotypes and disrupt the colonial project of creating a fixed and controllable Other. This menace to colonial authority paves the way for the characters to redefine their identities and forge new possibilities within the liminal space of the third space.

The analysis of mimicry and identity in Gurnah's narratives aligns with the concept of "resistance as subversion" (Bhandari, "Resistance" 94) outlined in postcolonial discourses. By employing Bhabha's notion of the 'interstitial space,' it can be seen how characters navigate the complexities of colonial power. Their engagement with the colonizer's culture, while a form of mimicry for survival, also becomes a subtle act of subversion. They challenge the colonizer's narrative by utilizing their tools (language, literature) on their terms, creating hybrid identities that defy easy categorization.

While analysing mimicry and identity formation in Gurnah's novels reveals valuable insights into resistance against colonialism, scholars have cautioned against its limitations. Focusing primarily on the 'interstitial space' of cultural encounters, resistance as subversion can overlook the brutal realities of material exploitation and political subjugation. Critics argue that it risks reducing colonialism to a cultural project, neglecting ". . . the economic and ideological structures that perpetuate power

imbalances" (Bhandari, "Resistance" 93). Gurnah's characters often embody the complexities of this form of resistance. Their attempts to navigate the colonial system through mimicry can be seen as a subtle form of subversion, challenging the colonizer's cultural dominance. However, this does not necessarily translate into material liberation or dismantling the economic inequalities imposed by the colonial regime. Gurnah's novels rarely depict open rebellion, but by focusing on the psychological and symbolic resistance through cultural negotiation and identity formation, they highlight the multifaceted ways characters grapple with the oppressive structures of colonialism. Ultimately, Gurnah's work underscores the importance of acknowledging both the strengths and limitations of resistance as subversion within the broader context of colonial power dynamics.

Gurnah's novels not only explore the complexities of colonialism but also shed light on the process of creating new identities under its oppressive structures. Through the lens of mimicry and resistance as subversion, the characters grapple with their cultural heritage while navigating the colonizer's world. Their act of mimicking the colonizer's language, customs, and even religion is not a passive surrender but a tool for survival and agency. However, this mimicry is always accompanied by subversion, as they challenge the colonizer's narrative and utilize their adopted tools for their own exploration. This dynamic results in the birth of 'hybrid' identities, a testament to the resilience and adaptability of the human spirit in the face of oppression. By focusing on the creation of these new identities, Gurnah's work contributes significantly to the understanding of the multifaceted ways individuals resist and adapt to the forces of colonialism.

Chapter 4

Identity Formation in Third Space

In a world often divided along binary lines, the third space emerges as a haven for individuals to embrace their hybridity and craft identities that transcend the politics of polarity. This is because the third space is a liminal space, a space of in-betweenness, where cultural boundaries blur and fixed notions of identity dissolve. Bhabha suggests that the third space challenges binary thinking, providing a space where new and dynamic identities can emerge, distinct from traditional, predefined notions of self ". . . Third Space, . . . elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves" (*Location of Culture* 39). This blurring of cultural boundaries within the third space directly impacts how individuals perceive and construct their identities, particularly those experiencing the complexities of a postcolonial world. So, navigating these in-between spaces is not always a haven. For characters grappling with the realities of colonialism and its aftermath, the third space can also be a site of displacement, disrupting their sense of self and traditional identities. By analysing key moments in Gurnah's selected novels, this chapter examines how the third space becomes both a site of transformation and tension in postcolonial identity formation

While the third space offers possibilities for embracing hybridity, the concept of identity itself is a complex one, especially when considering the historical and cultural baggage of colonialism. Colonial legacies often leave individuals grappling with a fragmented sense of self. Traditional identities, rooted in pre-colonial cultures, are disrupted by the imposition of foreign languages, customs, and power structures. This creates tension within the colonized subject as they attempt to reconcile their past with the demands of the present. Who are they in this new reality? Are they solely

defined by their colonial experience, or can they reclaim elements of their heritage and forge a new sense of self? It is within this context of fractured identities and the search for wholeness that the third space becomes particularly relevant. As a liminal zone, it allows individuals to explore these complexities, navigate conflicting cultural influences, and potentially construct new identities that transcend the rigid categories imposed by colonialism.

The identity of an individual is not only shaped by a combination of internal factors, such as personal experiences, emotions, and self-reflection, but several external factors are also responsible, such as cultural, social, and historical influences. In "Identity Construction New Issues, New Directions" (1997) Karen A. Cerulo discusses identity that it is shaped by a variety of factors, including individual characteristics, social roles, group memberships, the media, and social institutions. While giving the historical background of identity studies, Cerulo discusses the work of Benedict Anderson's work on 'imagined communities,' in which he highlights that identity construction occurs during significant moments when cultural and social factors converge. Further, it explores that identity is not a fixed or static concept but evolves and transforms over time in response to historical, cultural, and social developments (390).

In "Introducing Identity" David Buckingham notes that identity is a complex and multilayered concept that refers to an individual's sense of self and how they understand and perceive themselves. It encompasses various aspects of an individual's existence, including their personal characteristics, beliefs, values, experiences, cultural affiliations, and social roles. Moreover, identity is not fixed or static but is rather fluid and evolving. Buckingham further emphasizes this dynamism

by stating, ". . . when it is threatened or contested in some way and needs to be explicitly asserted." Hall's views share this emphasis, as quoted by Thakur:

> Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should, instead think of identity as a "production" which is never complete, always in process and always constituted within, not, outside representation. (126)

Identity can be influenced by different contexts and life experiences. It is also socially constructed, meaning it is shaped by societal norms, expectations, and interactions. Moreover, it is influenced by cultural values, traditions, and language, as well as the social structures and institutions that individuals navigate within. Bhabha says that there is a need to be aware of the "interstices" of difference to understand how identity is produced and negotiated (*Location of Culture* 2).

For Bhabha traditional ideas of identity, which sometimes rest on the notion of a single, original subject, are no longer sufficient in the modern world. Bhabha argues that we need to move away from these singularities and focus on the "subject positions" that inhabit any claim to identity. He contends that instead of concentrating on these singularities, the attention to be paid to the "subject positions" that inhabit any claim to identity.

> The move away from the singularities of 'class' or 'gender' as primary conceptual and organizational categories, has resulted in an awareness of the subject positions- of race, gender, generation, institutional location, geopolitical locale, sexual orientation- that inhabit any to identity in the modern world. (*Location of Culture* 1)

Bhabha emphasizes that it is crucial to think about identity in terms of "subject positions" shaped by various factors, including social identities like race, gender, or experiences of colonization. This approach allows to understand how power is created and maintained, for example, by marginalizing certain subject positions based on race or gender. Bhabha argues that traditional concepts of identity often obscure how power is used to marginalize and exclude certain groups of people. "What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes- that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences" (1). For Bhabha cultural differences can be articulated when two cultures meet, or different social groups interact, or when different worldviews collide. When these differences are articulated, they can produce new forms of identity, new forms of community, and new forms of resistance.

Each person's identity emerges from their combination of life events and social connections. However, this individual identity is further enriched and complicated by the presence of multiple social identities (Voicu 16). These social identities, such as belonging to a minority group or having undergone colonisation, have significant political and cultural implications that affect where a person fits into the larger social structure. As Bhabha suggests, these social identities can be understood as "subject positions" that arise from our interactions with different cultures and social groups. Ratna Ghosh et al. in "Identity in Colonial and Postcolonial Contexts" (2008) explain the term identity in the similar context that

> . . . identity is based on historical experience that is generally complemented
>
> by such factors as nationality, ethnicity and culture as well as gender, class,

and race. Identity emerges at the individual level but each person has several

social identities that have implications at the political (such as being colonized

or belonging to a minority group) and cultural levels. These factors assume

specialized meanings in social relations, particularly when they mediate

dominant-group (or colonizer) perceptions of the minority or the colonized

group as well as individual perceptions and responses. (57)

Consequently, individuals' perceptions of themselves and their responses to their

identities can be greatly influenced by the societal expectations, the historical events

that have defined their communities, and the ongoing struggles for justice and

equality. For individuals who belong to communities that have historically

experienced oppression, their identities become a source of resilience and

empowerment as they cope with the challenges brought on by unjust systems and

strive to dismantle those unfair structures.

     As mentioned earlier, the historical events that define a community are

particularly significant when considering the enduring legacies of colonialism.

Colonialism had an impact on the formation of individual and community identities in

addition to its evident effects. While quoting Dizayi's definition of identity in the

context of postcolonialism, Iqbal et al. argue that "The identification of an individual

or a nation in postcolonial perspective is linked to the 'Other' that means they iconize

themselves 'Us' with the existence of the 'Other'" (629). It highlights the central role

of the colonizer-colonized binary in shaping postcolonial identities, suggesting that a

sense of self is often defined in opposition to the former oppressor. Colonial

experiences forced individuals and communities to struggle with imposed identities

and a sense of displacement. In her work "Edward Said and Postcolonial Theory: Disjunctured Identities and the Subaltern Voice" Shehla Burney states:

> Colonial experiences that have adversely affected the subaltern subject - or a person who has been marginalized and silenced through the dynamics of imperialism, oppression, and power, remain as a sedimented form of collective memory and desire, forming a major strand of the criticism. (44)

The identities of the colonised have undergone a profound evolution, resulting in the emergence of hybrid identities that incorporate elements from diverse cultures. Colonialism exerted a profound impact on identity formation through the suppression or replacement of indigenous cultures, languages, and traditions with those of the colonizers. This process of cultural assimilation and erasure created a sense of alienation and disrupted the continuity of indigenous identities. It imposed a conflict between their indigenous background and the dominant colonial culture upon individuals and communities, compelling them to negotiate their identities within the constraints of colonial power structures. As rightly pointed out in "Postcoloniality and The Boundaries of Identity" by R. Radhakrishnan "Before colonialism, these peoples lived in their own spaces with their own different senses of history" (752).

The process of identity formation within the colonial context is not a passive one, it involves resistance, resilience, and the negotiation of identities. Colonised individuals and communities actively sought ways to maintain their cultural practices, beliefs, and traditions, often in the face of suppression and marginalisation. As Loomba notes, "Homi K. Bhabha, have emphasised the failure of colonial regimes to produce stable and fixed identities, and suggested that 'hybridity' of identities and the 'ambivalence' of colonial discourse more adequately describe the dynamics of the

colonial encounter" (91-92). This 'ambivalence' captures the complex mix of emotions experienced by the colonised, who might be drawn to certain aspects of the coloniser's culture while simultaneously resisting its imposition.

Bhabha further argues that in-between spaces are sites of contestation, where people can challenge existing power structures and negotiate their identities to create new identities "These in-between spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood- singular or communal- that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself" (*Location of Culture* 1). For example, a colonized person might adopt elements of the colonizer's language or dress while still holding onto core aspects of their indigenous culture like the character of Hamza from *Afterlives*. This negotiation and navigation of identities led to the emergence of hybrid identities that incorporated elements from both the indigenous and colonial cultures.

However, the negotiation of identity within colonial contexts presents a unique challenge. As rightly suggested by Matthew A. Beaudoin in "A Hybrid Identity in a Pluralistic Nineteenth-Century Colonial Context" identities are shaped by a complex interplay of factors, including an individual's history, current experiences, and aspirations for the future (45). They negotiate their identities based on these factors, aiming for the best outcomes they can anticipate. In a colonial setting, this negotiation is often fraught with tension. "In this sense, all identities, be they colonial or otherwise, are being negotiated in a present with contemporaneous contexts and can be understood as hybrid" (48). For the colonized, this hybridity often involves a complex and sometimes contradictory mix of adopting elements of the dominant

culture for survival while simultaneously striving to preserve their own cultural heritage.

The negotiation of identities within the confines of colonial power structures generated additional conflicts. The colonised needed to adopt elements of the dominant colonial culture to navigate social and economic opportunities, yet this assimilation often came at the cost of eroding their own cultural and social frameworks. As Voicu notes, ". . . a colonial order imposed the myths and symbols of national cultural identity and caused the conquest of European civilisation; on the other, the negation of these myths and symbols associated with the popular culture and resistance to a system of oppression" (23-24). Individuals and communities were forced to navigate the complexities of multiple identities, reconciling their indigenous heritage with the expectations and pressures imposed by the colonisers. This negotiation resulted in ongoing struggles to assert their identities, which continue to shape postcolonial societies.

The colonial experience influences how individuals perceive themselves, their cultural heritage, and their place in the world. As colonised people struggled to reconcile their native identities with the dominant colonial culture that was imposed upon them, it gave rise to numerous identity conflicts. This conflict of identities, as seen in the concept of "Creole" identity in the Caribbean (Voicu 24), resulted in a spectrum of responses. Some resisted the imposed culture entirely, while others adapted elements of it into a unique blend with their traditions (24). This resistance and integration led to movements aiming to reclaim indigenous identities while fostering new hybrid cultures.

These struggles persist in post-colonial cultures. The enduring legacies of colonialism manifest in social inequalities, power imbalances, and unresolved historical injustices. As communities confront the aftermath of colonial rule and strive to establish inclusive, equitable, and just systems, the processes of decolonization and the pursuit of social justice often require addressing these issues directly. This ". . . colonial aftermath is marked by a range of ambivalent cultural moods and formations" (Gandhi 5), includes a persistent grappling with identity. Nations that were once colonized struggle with a sense of displacement, ambivalence, and alienation, even as they experience the "celebrated moment of arrival" and the "creative euphoria of self-invention" (5) that accompanies independence. Consequently, they have embarked on an ongoing quest to rediscover their authentic selves.

In postcolonial societies, there is often a tension between the desire to reclaim and revive indigenous cultural practices and the influences of the dominant culture imposed during the colonial period. Hence postcolonial identities can encompass elements of both the indigenous cultures that predate colonisation and the hybridised identities that have emerged through the interaction and blending of cultures during and after colonial rule. Bhabha refers to Fanon's concept of "negating activity" (*Location of Culture* 9) from *The Wretched of the Earth* according to which the colonised are often forced to negate their own culture to assimilate into the dominant culture. However, when the colonised negate their own culture, they are also creating a new culture. This new culture is a hybrid culture that is both familiar and strange. Bhabha states the need to break down the ". . . time-barrier of a culturally collusive present" (9) to see cultures as dynamic and fluid, and cultures as being in a constant

state of negotiation and change. This understanding of culture gives the power to resist domination and to create new identities.

Hence postcolonial identities are shaped by a range of factors, including personal experiences, socio-economic conditions, political realities, and the ongoing negotiation of power dynamics within society. It involves a continuous process of self-reflection, cultural reclamation, and engagement with the complexities of postcolonial histories and contemporary challenges. Postcolonial identities are not homogenous, as they vary among individuals and communities based on ethnicity, social class, gender, and geographical location. It is a diverse concept that encompasses a spectrum of experiences, perspectives, and struggles within postcolonial societies.

Specifically, to gain a comprehensive understanding of identity from a postcolonial perspective, it is essential to consider factors such as space, location, and historical background. Burney suggests that recognizing the significance of place and location is integral to the process of self-discovery for postcolonial and diasporic individuals. "The identity formation of postcolonial, diasporic peoples through an understanding of place and location are, I believe, integral in 'discovering' oneself" (44). Postcolonial identity is often characterized by a conscious recognition and reflection upon the effects of colonialism on individuals and communities. It involves grappling with questions of cultural heritage, language, traditions, and social dynamics that have been shaped by the colonial past.

The Third Space: A Site of Displacement and Negotiation

Bhabha's concept of the 'third space' is central to understanding the complexities of postcolonial selfhood and the emergence of hybrid identities. This

concept delves deeper into the characteristics of these 'in-between' spaces where colonised subjects negotiate their identities. Bhabha suggests these spaces are characterised by fluidity and ambiguity, becoming crucial sites for understanding how individuals and communities forge new identities that transcend colonial categories. As he argues, ". . . in-between spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood- singular or communal- that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself" (*Location of Culture* 1-2).

In alignment with Cerulo's observations, which underscore the interplay of cultural and social factors in shaping identities, Bhabha's concept of the third space emerges as the very arena where identities are actively forged and negotiated. Bhabha contends that the 'third space' originates from colonial or postcolonial contexts, signifying its roots in the encounters and negotiations within these environments (*Location of Culture* 38). He further characterizes these spaces as transcending the binary constraints of classification, thus evading "the politics of polarity" (39). The notion of the third space encapsulates the idea that within postcolonial contexts, a distinct space emerges where cultural intersections engender novel meanings, perspectives, and identities. This conceptual domain marks the juncture at which indigenous and colonial elements intersect, giving rise to identities that surpass rigid categorizations. These identities are not solely indigenous nor exclusively colonial; rather, they represent amalgamations that reflect the multifaceted complexities inherent in postcolonial societies.

Bhabha further emphasizes this dynamism by highlighting the role of "non-synchronous temporality" of global and national cultures. He writes that "The non-

synchronous temporality of global and national cultures opens up a cultural space,"
which he calls the 'third space' "...where the negotiation of incommensurable
differences creates a tension peculiar to borderline existences" (*Location of Culture*
218). This space is created by the interaction between global and national cultures,
which do not develop or progress at the same pace or in alignment with each other.

The concept of the third space holds significant power. It provides a
framework for understanding cultural relationships that diverge from assimilation or
dominance. This space celebrates diversity and fosters the emergence of novel
possibilities. As Nagendra Bahadur Bhandari critiques Bhabha's work, he describes
the third space as ". . . a new space although it partially belongs to two preceding
spaces" (173). In essence, it deviates from established conventions, facilitating a fresh
exploration of cultural interactions. Moreover, the notion of the third space
underscores the transformative potential inherent in cultural intersections, where
diverse influences converge to give rise to new identities, meanings, and modes of
expression.

Edward William Soja, a renowned postmodern political geographer, expands
upon Bhabha's concept of the 'third space,' focusing on the intersection of real and
imagined spaces in our lived experiences (Fay and Haydon 43). Soja's interpretation,
known as 'thirdspace,' builds upon Bhabha's framework by emphasising the
significance of lived experiences within these intermediary spaces. He draws
connections between this concept and Henri Lefebvre's idea of "spaces of
representation," suggesting that "thirdspace" is actively inhabited by individuals who
seek to comprehend and alter their everyday realities (Meskell-Brocken 244). This
portrayal implies that the third space serves as a platform for agency, enabling

individuals to construct new meanings and potentials. It functions as a space where people can envisage fresh possibilities and reformulate their perceptions of the world. Soja's notion of "thirdspace" transcends traditional understandings of physical and conceptual spaces, encompassing directly lived experiences, fostering active transformation and imagination, and bearing political significance by facilitating opportunities for alternative viewpoints and counter-narratives. Essentially, "thirdspace" provides a space for challenging dominant narratives and cultivating new possibilities, potentially catalysing social and political transformations (Meskell-Brocken 243-244). Thus, third space cultivates a milieu for diverse perspectives and positions that emerge from the amalgamation of original elements. It disrupts traditional binaries and classifications, paving the way for novel modes of thought and understanding to emerge.

Expanding on the concept of agency within the third space, Bhabha delves deeper into its implications for identity formation. He contends that interactions within this space challenge the conventional notion of identity as static and rooted solely in one culture. Instead, he posits identity as a dynamic construct shaped by diverse influences. This dynamism reflects the ongoing exchange within the third space, where identities are not rigid but rather fluid and multifaceted. As scrutinized in Arup Ratan Chakraborty's analysis titled "Liminality in Post-Colonial Theory: A Journey from Arnold van Gennep to Homi K. Bhabha," "The 'third space', therefore, is a place of opportunity for the growth of fresh ideas and it rejects anything fixed, so it opens up newer scope for fresh thoughts allowing us to go beyond the rigidity and limited focus of colonial binary thinking" (149). This space catalyses ". . . new

beginnings and meaningful identification," enabling a comprehensive understanding

of one's identity beyond narrow categorizations (149).

Furthermore, the third space marks a departure from rigid and limiting

colonial binary thinking. It challenges these entrenched binaries and categories,

fostering the emergence of innovative modes of thought and understanding. Thus, this

space disrupts conventional power structures and historical narratives. In the

interview titled "Third Space" with Jonathan Rutherford, Bhabha articulates ". . . third

space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority,

new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received

wisdom" (211). It is a space that transcends the mere reproduction of the histories of

the two cultures in contact, instead forging a new space unbounded by either culture's

history. This novel space represents a space of possibility, where innovation thrives.

Bhabha further argues that the third space is a liminal space, neither wholly

one nor the other, but rather a space of hybridity and divergence. He views liminality

as a space of resistance, where individuals, not fully assimilated into either culture,

possess the freedom to challenge the status quo. This perspective underscores

Bhabha's rejection of the notion of cultures as pure and fixed entities. His concept of

hybridity suggests that cultures are inherently interconnected, constantly influencing

and reshaping each other.

Gurnah's characters like the unnamed narrator of *Admiring Silence* and Salim

of *Gravel Heart,* explore the complex processes of identity formation in the

postcolonial world. These characters presented as displaced, exiled, and diasporic,

navigate the unexplored territories of the third space to create new identities for

themselves, identities that are often hybrid fusions of their cultural backgrounds. In

Admiring Silence, the narrator negotiates the third space by bridging two distinct cultures, first the culture of his birth, Zanzibar and second the culture of his adopted homeland, England. Living in this liminal space, he grapples with feelings of displacement and estrangement within both cultural spheres. A significant challenge confronting the protagonist is the enduring legacy of colonialism. Having endured periods of German and subsequent British rule, Zanzibar bears the scars of colonial exploitation that have indelibly shaped the protagonist's identity. Conscious of the power dynamics inherent in colonial encounters, he is acutely attuned to the insidious ways in which colonialism has been employed to justify racial discrimination and exploitation. As articulated in *Admiring Silence*, "History turns out to be a bundle of lies that covers up centuries of murderous rampage around the globe- and guess who the barbarians are supposed to be" (Gurnah 7).

The unnamed narrator's journey in *Admiring Silence* encapsulates a hybrid identity moulded by the aftermaths of the post-independence revolution in Zanzibar. His journey to England, facilitated by a counterfeit passport and a student visa, vividly portrays the dislocation and fractures within his identity as he negotiates the aftermath of the African revolution and the predominantly Arabic ruling class. The initial phase in England delves into the narrator's strategies for coping with ingrained racism, strategically appealing to Emma's father's colonial sense of empire. In his own words, "Perhaps I was nervous, in case they said or did something embarrassingly opinionated. . . My first view of them was coloured in this way. Their first view of me was coloured differently, and I think theirs was the bigger surprise" (Gurnah, *Admiring Silence* 21). This exchange of perspectives underscores the negotiation needed to navigate racial complexities in a foreign environment.

The narrator's journey to England and the subsequent transition from living with Ahmed Hussein to residing alone, this shift marks a significant turning point in his perception of England, highlighting the protective role Ahmed played in shielding him from the initial challenges. The narrator acknowledges the support and encouragement provided by Ahmed, which fuelled his confidence and academic pursuits (93-94). As the narrator embarks on his university course and begins living independently in London, he grapples with the stark reality of his abandonment. When "I arrived at the Institute to start my course. That's when I began to understand how much Ahmed had protected me, and how frightening England really was" (93). The loneliness and fear intensify as he navigates the unfamiliar terrain, emphasising the harshness of his surroundings.

> But in no time at all after I moved, I was overcome by the enormity of my abandonment, like someone weeping in a crowd. I was astonished by the sudden surge of loneliness and terror I felt when I realized how stranded I was in this hostile place, that I did not know how to speak to people and win them over to me, that the bank, the canteen, the supermarket, the dark streets seemed so intimidating, and that I could not return from where I came - that, as I then thought, I had lost everything. (94)

The narrator's experience encapsulates the profound challenges faced by individuals navigating identity. The depiction of loneliness and fear in a foreign land resonates deeply with the overarching theme of identity in a globalized context, emphasizing the struggle to communicate and adapt to the multifaceted aspects of life in England. This struggle, in turn, becomes a canvas for the exploration of cultural hybridity, where diverse influences converge in shaping one's sense of self. Bhabha, echoing

Fanon, introduces the notion of "presencing and unhomeliness" (9) as a

transformative process of forging a new sense of being and identity through critical

engagement with the past and present. This dynamic involves a profound feeling of

'unhomeliness,' reflecting a sense of displacement and disconnection from traditional

identities and spaces (Bhabha, *Location of Culture* 9).

Amidst this disorienting backdrop, Emma emerges as a pivotal figure in the

narrator's life, bringing a sense of homeliness that was previously elusive. The

transformative impact of Emma's presence is articulated by the narrator with the

declaration, "Then Emma came and filled my life" (Gurnah, *Admiring Silence* 94).

Emma becomes a beacon of recognition, acknowledging the historical oppression that

the narrator has endured and extending genuine sympathy towards him. Emma acts as

". . . a bridge, where 'presencing' begins" as Bhabha writes about this "presencing"

that ". . . because it captures something of the estranging sense of the relocation of the

home and the world- the unhomeliness- that is the condition of extra-territorial and

cross-cultural initiations" (Bhabha, *Location of Culture* 9). Emma's presence acts as a

catalyst for the narrator's exploration of cultural hybridity within the third space. Her

acceptance and understanding provide a sense of belonging and connection that he

lacked before. This newfound sense of belonging fosters a space where the narrator

can grapple with his dual cultural identity.

Emma's character takes on the role of an agent of empowerment, challenging

established norms and cultural expectations. Her inclination to venture into places that

might evoke misgivings or intimidation symbolizes a willingness to defy conventional

norms, thereby resisting colonial influences that seek to homogenize diverse cultures

and identities, "She took me into places I had passed with only a sideways look of

misgiving" (Gurnah, *Admiring Silence* 68). By integrating the narrator into her circle of friends and fostering a sense of communion, Emma actively contributes to the exploration of cultural hybridity, embracing the blending of different cultural backgrounds and identities (68). Emma's presence creates a 'third space' for the narrator. Her acceptance and understanding provide a sense of belonging and connection that he lacked before. "I could not credit the affection Emma showed me, the praise she heaped on me. I struggled to cling on but it seemed I could do no wrong" (67-68).

Furthermore, Emma actively challenges the colonial tendency to overlook or stigmatize cultural differences, as she recognizes and values the narrator's alienness. In doing so, Emma not only acknowledges the complexities of the narrator's identity but also adorns him with the liberality of their friendship. "She took me into places I had passed with only a sideways look of misgiving: specialist second-hand bookshops, vegetarian cafes, jewellers, jazz clubs - places I expected to be evicted from with guffaws of derision, places which intimidated me with their undisclosed rituals" (68). Moreover, Emma becomes a catalyst for the narrator's self-discovery. Her influence propels moments of profound growth, shaping the narrator's self-perception and encouraging him to step outside his comfort zone. Emma's impact on the narrator's storytelling and invention of stories signifies a postcolonial narrative strategy, "I was allowed so much room that I could only fill it with invention" (69) a form of resistance against colonial narratives that may have distorted or silenced indigenous voices. In essence, Emma's multifaceted role in challenging, empowering, and facilitating the narrator's exploration of identity and cultural hybridity within the globalized context.

Emma wants to hear the narrator's past, though the narrator wants to hide and escape from the aspects of his past, so he manipulates Emma through his embellished stories. Which highlights the narrator's insecurity and a desire for connection with her,

> In my stories I found myself clarifying a detail, adjusting it so that its impact was unobscured, even at times adding a variation that added irony and a note of bitterness to what might otherwise have seemed banal. I found the opportunity to rewrite my history irresistible. . . to construct a history closer to my choice than the one I have been lumbered with, to cling to her affection.
>
> (69)

He wants to construct a coherent identity amidst displacement, cultural clashes, and the desire for acceptance. There is also an element of irony in the narrator being granted ". . . so much room" (69) to tell stories about regions the listeners have not personally experienced. This could be a critique of how colonized people were often expected to speak for entire cultures or regions they could only represent through borrowed knowledge and imagination.

The narrator's manipulation of stories for Mr. Willoughby demonstrates the dynamics of postcolonial subjectivity, where individuals navigate the 'third space' between cultures, presenting a strategic interpretation of their history to both resist and accommodate the expectations of the colonizer. The narrator, in recounting the colonial past, occupies a 'third space' by skilfully manoeuvring between colonizer and colonized cultures. The stories are presented from the perspective of the colonized, but the crafting of these tales involves a negotiation with the expectations and beliefs of the colonizer, Mr. Willoughby. The narrator strategically constructs

narratives that appeal to Mr. Willoughby's preconceived notions about the Empire, "Mr Willoughby's eyes would sparkle at these stories, his lips would part with poignant enthralment" (83) operating in a space that transcends the binary divisions between the colonizer and the colonized. The act of narrating stories becomes a liminal space where cultures converge and diverge, offering insights into the complexities of transcending historical boundaries.

Living in England, he constructs a reality separate from his life in Zanzibar, particularly regarding his relationship with Emma. This concealment highlights the challenges of reconciling his cultural background with his new life. He cannot be fully transparent with his family or fully integrate with his life in England. This fractured sense of belonging underscores the chasm between his cherished memories of the past and the harsh realities of the present. Furthermore, his internal conflict about concealing his life in England reflects the ongoing struggle to define his identity within this third space.

The narrator's disclosure to his family creates a third space of enunciation. This space is neither fully his homeland's culture nor fully British, but rather a liminal space where both influences are present and contested. His family's diverse reactions, "Akbar's anger," "Rukiya's despising looks," and his mother's initial silence followed by later disapproval (200), illustrate the multifaceted nature of this space. This third space becomes a crucial site for negotiation, where cultural expectations, familial authority, and the narrator's evolving identity collide. The mother's contrasting reaction towards a hypothetical Jewish woman compared to Emma underscores the complexity of these negotiations. "Something in her felt revolted, ill. How could I do it? I couldn't have done worse if I had married a Jewish woman" (200). Her

discomfort and questioning reveal the interplay between cultural and racial prejudices within the family dynamic. Ultimately, the narrator's disclosure acts as a catalyst, forcing a confrontation between the family's established norms and the narrator's hybrid identity forged in the third space of his globalised experience.

Later in the story, the metaphorical significance of plumbing bridges the gap between the narrator's diasporic experiences and his cultural heritage. His contemplation of returning to Zanzibar and learning plumbing suggests an earnest attempt to bridge this gap "When I've done my course on plumbing, I'm going to offer my services to my homeland, strictly on an expatriate salary, so we can sort out those blocked toilets" (236). Plumbing becomes a tool for addressing questions of identity and belonging. The practical skill transforms into a metaphor for navigating the pipelines of cultural complexity and personal history.

The narrator's internal struggle surrounding returning to Zanzibar highlights the ongoing negotiation of cultural hybridity within the 'third space.' While seeking to connect with his roots, he is also grappling with his hybrid identity formed by displacement. This internal conflict reflects the challenges of navigating the third space, where belonging remains elusive and identity is constantly in flux. By exploring the narrator's desire to return and his consideration of plumbing, Gurnah offers a deeper understanding of how individuals negotiate identity and belonging within the 'third space' created by displacement.

Gurnah's portrayal of the unnamed narrator in *Admiring Silence* exemplifies the complexities of navigating a third space identity. The protagonist grapples with displacement, cultural hybridity, and the ongoing negotiation of selfhood within a postcolonial context. Emma's presence offers a sense of belonging and facilitates his

exploration of this third space, but the challenges of reconciling his past with his present remain. The unresolved tension between his evolving identity and his longing for connection underscores the enduring impact of colonialism and the complexities of forging a new sense of self in its wake.

The exploration of postcolonial identity in Gurnah's novels extends beyond *Admiring Silence*. In *Afterlives*, the experiences of individuals grappling with the aftermath of the Zanzibar revolution and the pervasive legacy of colonialism can be seen. Here, the concept of third space manifests differently, shaped by the specific historical and social realities depicted in the novel. This work delves further into the historical realities of colonialism in East Africa, particularly the devastating effects of German colonial rule on the lives of the Tanzanian people. Through the lens of characters like Hamza and Ilyas, *Afterlives* offers an exploration of how colonialism disrupts traditional ways of life, severs familial bonds, and shapes the experiences of future generations.

Bhabha's concept of ambivalence in colonial discourse sheds light on the tragic demise of Ilyas. Bhabha argues that colonial discourse is inherently ambivalent, never fully accepting the colonised as equals, as pointed out by Sumit Chakrabarti "Clearly, the basic idea behind the creation of these Anglicized (but not English) subjects was to make them *repeat* rather than *represent* the West and its socio-cultural formations" (242). Ilyas's character caught in this third space between his cultural heritage and the colonisers' world, embraces this ambivalence with devastating consequences. Ilyas embodies the concept of the interstitial space, existing in a perpetual state of transition. Kidnapped as a boy by an askari, he is raised by Germans, severing his ties to his original identity. He internalises their language,

customs, and ideology, transforming from a young boy to a fervent supporter of the German colonial regime, "He was remembered as Elias Essen, a performer in low-life Hamburg cabarets who wore the military uniform of an askari on-stage, including the tarbush with the Imperial eagle badge" (Gurnah, *Afterlives* 274). As Valle notices, "Despite this sameness, via Ilyas' final depiction, we will witness, once again, the ambivalence that was inherent to colonial discourses. His tragic death will entail he has always been considered the 'Other'" (21-22). This transformative journey highlights the power dynamics of the colonial encounter, where the colonised are pressured to conform to the colonisers' image of civilisation.

> However, what the European master failed to realize was that many of these chosen and educated colonial subjects who were meant to play the role of the mimic men were also men of letters by their own right. They realized that they were being used by the colonizer for the simple reason that they were better than many of their brethren in certain respects. (Chakrabarti 243)

Ilyas's attraction to the Germans is emblematic of the contact zone produced by colonisation. Drawn into their cultural sphere, he adopts their values and beliefs, erasing his connection to his heritage. His views that "The Germans are honourable and civilised people and have done much good since they have been here" (Gurnah, *Afterlives* 42) reflect the internalisation of colonial narratives that portray the colonised as inferior. His mimicry exemplifies the production of a compliant subject who embraces the coloniser's perspective at the expense of his cultural identity. Upon returning to his hometown, Ilyas experiences a profound sense of dislocation. His fluency in German and mimicry of colonial practices alienate him from his community. He becomes a "government man," (27) a stark reminder of his

transformation and disconnection from his roots. His inability to recite Islamic

prayers despite being Muslim underscores the extent to which he has severed ties with

his cultural heritage.

> Ilyas did not know how to pray, did not know the words. He had never been
>
> inside a mosque. There was not one to go to where he lived as a child, and
>
> there was not one on the coffee farm where he spent so many years later.
>
> There was a mosque in the nearby mountain town but no one at the farm or the
>
> school told him he should go there. (25)

Ilyas's tragic flaw lies in his uncritical adoption of the coloniser's culture. He

fails to recognize the manipulative nature of ambivalence within colonial discourse.

His blind mimicry results in a contradictory identity; he sees himself as one with the

Germans while remaining oblivious to their true intentions. His struggle is not a

simple binary between his original culture and the colonial culture, but a complex

navigation of multiple influences. Khalifa's observation that Ilyas lives in "illusion"

(119) underscores the dangers of unchecked assimilation. Ilyas becomes a symbol of

the psychological and cultural devastation wrought by unreflective mimicry within the

colonial third space. While Bhabha conceptualizes the third space as an area of

"cultural uncertainty and representational undecidability" (Chakrabarti 265) that can

potentially liberate cultures from restrictive power structures, Ilyas's tragic fate

demonstrates the dangers inherent in this ambivalent space. His story illustrates how

the "free play of meanings and cultural identities" (265) can, under the pressure of

colonial power, lead to erasure and uncritical assimilation rather than liberation.

Ilyas's struggle disrupts simplistic narratives about colonialism, showcasing the

complex, often devastating consequences of navigating the third space created by colonial encounters.

Ilyas's tragic story exemplifies the complexities of identity formation in the third space created by colonialism. Severed from his cultural roots at a young age, he embodies the transformative power of the colonial encounter. His adoption of the German language, customs, and ideology reflects the pressure to conform to the colonial system. This act of mimicry plays a crucial role in shaping identities within the third space. However, mimicry can be a double-edged sword. While some Askari might strategically employ it to create hybrid identities that subtly challenge the dominant German norms, Ilyas's uncritical assimilation leads to a complete disconnect from his cultural heritage and a distorted sense of self. He becomes a stark illustration of how the third space can be a fragile and unsettling space, where individuals can lose touch with their roots and struggle to reconcile their hybrid identities.

In contrast to Ilyas's complete assimilation into the coloniser's culture, Hamza's journey in *Afterlives* exemplifies the complexities of navigating a fragmented identity within the third space. Severed from his cultural roots through slavery, he constantly negotiates his sense of self throughout the narrative. Hamza's initial escape from the merchant's house is a desperate attempt to break free from the confines of slavery and assert his individuality. "I could not bear to live like that any more so I ran away to the war" (Gurnah, *Afterlives* 205). However, this act of defiance plunges him deeper into the third space as he becomes an askari for the Germans. This seemingly voluntary choice reflects his yearning for agency and belonging, yet it inadvertently traps him within a new system of power dynamics.

Hamza's desire to mimic the German officers by adopting their language, reveals his struggle to find a place within the colonial hierarchy. Chakrabarti calls this act "a way of registering one's presence" (253). He adopts a mask of strength to mask his inner turmoil. However, Bhabha's concept of mimicry with difference comes into play. Hamza's attempts at assimilation are never perfect, reflecting the inherent difference that resides within him. This creates a fractured identity, where he oscillates between his cultural heritage and the imposed expectations of the colonisers. The strict hierarchy and dehumanising treatment within the German camp further erode Hamza's sense of self. He is reduced to a nameless object, forced to obey without question. This experience of violence and oppression chips away at his initial ideals of freedom, leaving him questioning his place in the world. Hamza's exposure to the brutality of war has a profound impact on his identity. Witnessing and experiencing violence leaves him emotionally and psychologically scarred. This trauma contributes to his feelings of displacement and uncanniness upon returning to the town. The familiar environment now feels alien, reflecting the internal transformation he has undergone. "It was then a town of Deutsch-Ostafrika and was now a British colony, but that alone did not explain the disappearance of a house with a walled garden and a shop at the front. It was as if the town had grown beyond itself and some of its neighbourhoods had disappeared" (Gurnah, *Afterlives*149). His disturbing dreams ". . . falling through dark emptiness, crawling over fallen bodies, hectored by a face twisted with implacable hatred. There were shouts, blows and distant hills overflowing with translucently red viscera" (150) and an overwhelming sense of sorrow are outward manifestations of the deep psychological wounds inflicted by the war.

Hamza's return to the town after years of absence highlights the profound changes he has undergone and the loss of his former self. The town itself embodies the uncanny- a space that is both familiar and strange due to the passage of time and the shifting colonial powers. The town, despite being the same place, is displaced by time and colonial influence, "It was then a town of Deutsch-Ostafrika and was now a British colony" (149). Similarly, Hamza, in returning to his old home, finds himself displaced as the same person, yet fundamentally changed, ". . . the repetition of the 'same' can in fact be its own displacement (Bhabha, *Location of Culture* 137). He feels like an outsider in a place he once considered home, further emphasizing the fragmented state of his identity. His journey serves as a powerful illustration of how the third space created by colonialism can fracture and redefine an individual's sense of self. His constant negotiation between freedom and servitude, his attempts at mimicry, and the lasting impact of the war's trauma all contribute to a complex and multifaceted identity. He remains a wanderer, searching for a sense of belonging in a world forever altered by the forces of colonialism. He has become this uncanny double, neither fully his original self nor fully assimilated into the colonial culture. He might feel like an "imposter" in his own hometown, ". . . cultures double returns uncannily - neither the one nor the other, but the imposter - to mock and mimic, to lose the sense of the masterful self and its social sovereignty" (137). He tries to identify himself with his old self or the colonial culture, which creates internal conflict for him.

In *Gravel Heart*, Salim also embodies the complexities of navigating a fragmented identity within the third space created by colonialism's legacy. The novel, narrated from Salim's perspective, explores his life in post-colonial Zanzibar and his

subsequent migration to England. This journey highlights the constant negotiation of identity experienced by individuals caught between their cultural heritage and the pressures of assimilation in a foreign land. The narrative opens with a pivotal event that shapes Salim's sense of self. His internal conflict begins with the absence of a strong paternal figure, "My father did not want me" (Gurnah, *Gravel Heart* 1). Laya Soleymanzadeh notes that "This abandonment and ignorance of its cause turns into an existential crisis" (161). His father's abandonment and subsequent disengagement leave a void in Salim's sense of belonging within his own family "I might have that there was nothing exceptional in having to live without a father's love" (1). This early experience sets the stage for his lifelong struggle to find his place in the world. His mother's subsequent relationship with Hakim, a prominent official, further reinforces Salim's outsider status within his family. Salim witnesses his mother's sadness but feels helpless to address it, which leads to a sense of frustration and powerlessness in him, "I could not tell her, but I grieved for the air of barely perceptible melancholy she carried around her all the time, and I was made sad by the thought of the hard-faced man exchanging intimacies with her and mocking my poor Baba" (44). This fractured family dynamic mirrors the larger social and political complexities of post-colonial Zanzibar, where traditional structures are challenged by new power dynamics.

Uncle Amir and Asha's decision to send Salim to England for further education is presented as an opportunity, yet it becomes a catalyst for further displacement. In London, Salim struggles to find a sense of belonging, "I tried but could not join in the city's human carnival (66). His academic pursuits in literature, a stark contrast to the business studies Amir pressured him into ". . . Business Studies is

respectable and flexible" (57), further highlight the disconnect between their expectations and his aspirations. Salim's decision to pursue literature for his higher studies is perceived by Amir and Asha as irresponsible. They view him as a ". . . disrespectful person whose passivity stems from neglect, lack of appreciation, and a dearth of responsible feelings (Soleymanzadeh 164). Later in his life, Salim navigates a series of relationships, all of which seem ultimately unsatisfying, reflecting his inability to fully connect with anyone in this new environment. He says, "The newness and the strangeness did not last but nor did they completely go away" (67). And the lack of communication with his family back in Zanzibar further exacerbates his isolation.

A profound sense of exile and dislocation characterises Salim's life in London. He feels like an outsider in both cultures, unable to fully connect with either. This experience aligns with the concept of the uncanny, where familiar spaces become unsettling due to a sense of displacement. The feeling of displacement experienced by migrants is ". . . half-life, half-light" (Bhabha, *Location of Culture* 139) a state of existing partially in the present and partially holding onto memories of the past life in their homeland. This echoes the concept of a colonial identity being incomplete, neither fully belonging to the origin nor the new land. Salim persists in the feeling of strangeness throughout the story, ". . . I still felt like a stranger from a small town, anxious about destinations and directions although I did my best to disguise this" (Gurnah, *Gravel Heart* 85). After moving to Brighton, he seems to like it there, but it does not erase his connection to his homeland. He writes to his mother, "I have moved again and now live in Brighton where I am studying at the university. I love it here. It is a town by the sea, although it is nothing like our sea" (105). Brighton could

be a third space for Salim. He tries to find a new identity and sense of belonging in this new environment, but a part of him still yearns for his roots.

Salim's university experience serves as a microcosm of his larger struggle with identity and displacement within the third space. Despite his initial desire for a scholarly community, he finds himself on the periphery, unable to fully connect with his fellow students, "I felt uncomfortable among them" (107). His detachment from the passionate activism of his fellow students stems from his scepticism. He questions their ability to grasp the true complexities of the issues they champion, having not experienced the realities firsthand.

> If the posters and the campaigns and demonstrations were a guide, any injustice in the world seemed to be theirs to claim, accompanied by frivolities that were like a celebration of disorder. They were fortunate people who desired to own even the suffering of others. It seemed that after all that going around the world their ancestors did and their descendants continue to do - all the effort and the carelessly inflicted misery - people in England now wanted to live a good life, to observe the decencies, to abhor hatred and violence, to give all that up and respect everyone's humanity. (108)

He perceives the superficiality in student activism, where suffering seems less about understanding and more about a performance of "world-citizenry" (107). In contrast, he respects the silence of his peers, particularly regarding Amos' past as a child soldier. "Amos, it turned out, had been a child soldier in the Biafra war, but we could not ask him anything about it because his eyes filled with tears the moment, he blurted the words out and then he rushed out of the room" (107). This showcases Salim's sensitivity to the complexities of individual experiences. He recognizes that probing

such sensitive topics with casual questions can violate personal boundaries. These experiences at university contribute to a deeper understanding of how the third space created by colonialism shapes Salim's sense of self, leaving him yearning for a place where he can truly belong.

Salim's experience working as a local government officer in London further amplifies his struggle with identity within the third space. While seemingly settled with a job and residence permit, his internal monologue reveals a deep-seated unease. His line, "I feared turning into one of England's helots, becoming accustomed to bondage" (*Gravel Heart* 127), exposes a fear of losing himself through assimilation. This anxiety echoes his earlier struggles at university, highlighting the ongoing challenge of maintaining his individuality in a foreign environment. His contemplation about leaving London, "I could save money, maybe retrain and then look for work in the Gulf or in South Africa" (127), demonstrates his yearning for a place where his skills and identity might be more valued. However, his indecisiveness between the Gulf, South Africa, and even returning to Zanzibar reflects a sense of rootlessness and the lack of a clear path towards belonging.

Salim's journey serves as an illustration of the lasting impact of colonialism on identity formation. Caught between Zanzibar and England, he inhabits a perpetual third space where his cultural roots are fragmented and attempts at belonging remain unfulfilled. His journey remains unresolved, and whether he will ever find a true sense of belonging remains unanswered. He leaves Zanzibar at the end, realizing his lack of connection there, but his return to England is not presented as a definitive answer. The final line, "Some people have a use in the world . . . and some people don't" (261) underscores the theme of displacement and the struggle for identity

within a world that often leaves individuals feeling like outsiders. The narrative

suggests that finding a place to call home is a complex and ongoing process. While

Salim might find solace in understanding his past and reconnecting with his family,

the question of a definitive 'home' remains unanswered. This highlights the

challenges faced by those caught in the third space and the enduring search for

belonging in a world marked by colonialism's legacy.

Globalisation and Identity Formation

While Bhabha's concept of the third space forms the theoretical backbone for

understanding identity negotiation in postcolonial contexts, globalisation introduces

further complexities into this negotiation. The dynamic of identity formation is no

longer confined to the colonial encounter between the coloniser and the colonised;

instead, it becomes increasingly multidirectional. Globalisation intersects with the

third space by introducing new flows of people, ideas, cultures and technologies,

further diversifying the terrain of identity formation. Characters like Salim, the

narrator of *Admiring Silence*, Rashid, Abbas and Ilyas are not only shaped by

historical dislocations but are also subject to transnational currents that reconfigure

their sense of self, belonging, and displacement.

Globalisation can be defined as a process marked by increasing

interconnectedness among societies, largely driven by cultural flows, migration,

economic interdependence and technological innovation (Stephen 1146). These

elements give rise to transnational spaces that not only foster new forms of mobility

and interaction but also resemble and, in many cases, overlap with Bhabha's notion of

the third space. In such spaces, individuals are not merely displaced but are

continually negotiating and constructing hybrid identities informed by both postcolonial legacies and global influences.

A key aspect of this process is cultural globalisation, which refers to the transmission and exchange of ideas, values, and practices across national borders, leading to complex and layered cultural intersections. This flow of culture, often mediated by migration, media and technology, complicates the way identity is imagined and performed. Arjun Appadurai's theorisation of global cultural flows through five interconnected 'scapes' in *Modernity at Large: Cultutal Dimensions of Globalization* (1996), which are ethnoscapes (people), technoscapes (technology), financescapes (capital), mediascapes (media), and ideoscapes (ideologies), offers a critical framework to examine how identity is continuously shaped within global networks. These scapes do not function uniformly but interact in uneven and unpredictable ways, creating disjunctures that compel individuals and communities to renegotiate their sense of self within ever-shifting global contexts (Appadurai).

Migration, one of the most tangible and enduring consequences of globalisation, furthers this identity fluidity by compelling individuals to navigate between multiple cultural reference points. In Gurnah's *Afterlives* and *The Last Gift*, Ilyas and Abbas traverse geographical and emotional borders between homelands and host lands, inhabiting cultural interstices that mirror Bhabha's third space but are also inflected by global dynamics. Characters like the narrator in *Admiring Silence* and Rashid in *Desertion* embody identities that are not only shaped by colonial histories but also influenced by economic migration, transnational values, and exposure to global cultural flows. Their sense of self is fractured and reassembled across cultural

registers, demonstrating how globalisation reconfigures both the burden and the potential of postcolonial identity.

Technological advancements have likewise transformed identity politics in Gurnah's fictional world. Characters are situated within networks of global communication that expose them to diverse and often conflicting narratives of belonging. In *Gravel Heart*, Salim's move to London and his engagement with Western academic and cultural discourses complicate his already fragile identity, shaped by silences and secrets from his past in Zanzibar. The digital and cultural permeability between the two worlds enables a hybrid identity formation, one that is constantly negotiated between the personal, the political, and the global. Similarly, in *Admiring Silence*, the unnamed narrator constructs and reconstructs his identity through his immersion in English culture while suppressing his own past, a narrative arc that reflects both the alienating and enabling potential of globalised identity spaces.

Hall contends that identity is not fixed but always in process, ". . . never complete, always in process. . ." (222), produced through difference and representation. His argument that identity is formed through continuous negotiation resonates with both Bhabha's notion of hybridity and the fluid subjectivities found in Gurnah's characters. Additionally, Paul Gilroy's concept of the 'Black Atlantic' foregrounds the idea of transnational cultural formation, where identity is shaped through the interplay of diasporic memory, colonial history, and modern global experience, an idea that finds thematic echoes in Gurnah's diasporic figures.

Thus, identity formed through globalisation intersects significantly with the identity negotiated in Bhabha's third space. In Gurnah's novels, this intersection does

not suggest a smooth synthesis but rather a layered, at times contradictory, evolution of self. Globalisation, while offering mobility and exposure, also amplifies dislocation, echoing the unresolved tensions of postcolonial displacement. The characters' ongoing identity construction takes place at the confluence of local histories, global currents, and postcolonial memory, reinforcing the idea that identity, in the contemporary world, is never singular but always becoming.

At the heart of Gurnah's narratives lies a poignant exploration of identity and belonging, perpetually oscillating between the sun-drenched shores of Tanzania and the mist-shrouded streets of England. Each landscape carries distinct burdens and promises, shaping the characters' journeys in profound ways. In Tanzania, the weight of history echoes through themes of slavery, cultural transformation, and contested identities. Exiled at a young age, Gurnah imbues his characters with the ache of displacement, the constant negotiation of lost roots and newfound landscapes. England, while offering refuge, often presents an environment of alienation and marginality, further complicating the characters' quests for belonging. In novels like Dottie, Desertion, and Admiring Silence, we encounter individuals adrift in this liminal space, engaging with fragmented identities, burdened by the weight of memory, and allured by the elusive promise of a 'home' that may forever remain out of reach. As Dan Odhiambo Ojwang observes in the *Encyclopedia of African Literature*, Gurnah's ". . . novels meditate sensitively, in the tradition of the best diasporic fiction, on questions of exile, memory, and cosmopolitanism" (296).

Gurnah presents a world where identity is no longer rooted in a singular place or culture but constantly negotiated within transnational, diasporic, and hybrid spaces. In *Admiring Silence*, the narrator relocates from Zanzibar to England, adopting a new

cultural code while repressing his origins. His transformation is a result of not just exile but of immersion in Western norms that challenge and reshape his sense of self. His internal conflict reflects the complex negotiation between homeland identity and host land expectations, a phenomenon heightened by global migration and cross-cultural exchanges.

Similarly, in *Gravel Heart*, Salim's education in England introduces him to liberal Western ideologies that clash with his constrained upbringing in Zanzibar. His academic and emotional evolution signifies how global exposure reconfigures inherited notions of self and belonging. Yet, despite opportunities for reinvention, Salim remains haunted by unresolved ties to his family and homeland, highlighting the psychological weight of dislocation in a globalised world.

The Last Gift intensifies these tensions through Abbas, whose identity is splintered across various geographies. His past in East Africa, his adult life in England, and his children's hybrid upbringing show how diasporic families grapple with cultural continuity and disruption. The novel demonstrates how globalisation affects not only individual identity but also intergenerational memory and cultural transmission.

In *Desertion*, characters such as Rashid illustrate the disjuncture between a Western academic identity and East African origins. His movement across continents and ideologies reveals how education and mobility, products of globalisation, complicate one's cultural anchoring. Rashid's alienation from both home and host land underscores Gurnah's recurring portrayal of globalised identity as rootless and unresolved.

Finally, *Afterlives* presents characters like Ilyas and Hamza, whose roles in the German colonial forces bring them into contact with European modernity. While these encounters initially appear to offer agency, they often reinforce marginality, as these characters remain peripheral in both African and European contexts. Their stories expose the unequal structures of global power that continue to shape postcolonial identities.

In all these works, Gurnah illustrates that identity in the postcolonial world is deeply entangled with global processes- migration, education, colonial legacies, and cultural exchanges. These shifting identities inhabit a third space that is neither wholly native nor entirely foreign, but a dynamic zone of negotiation and hybridity. Globalisation, in Gurnah's fiction, thus becomes both a space of opportunity and alienation, pushing characters toward continuous reinvention in the search for belonging.

Gurnah's narratives paint a poignant portrait of individuals grappling with identity and displacement within the complex realities of the third space created by colonialism. His stories explore the lasting impact of colonial legacies on individual lives, highlighting the challenges of navigating a world shaped by cultural disruptions and power imbalances. Characters like the unnamed narrator in *Admiring Silence* and Salim in *Gravel Heart* struggle to reconcile their past with their present, haunted by memories they can neither fully embrace nor escape. Their sense of self is fragmented, caught between their cultural heritage and the pressures to assimilate in foreign lands.

Language and silence become potent symbols in Gurnah's work, with characters often finding difficulty in articulating their in-between-ness. Unspoken

truths, desires, and grief simmer beneath the surface, revealing the profound impact of displacement on their inner lives. They yearn for connection but struggle to bridge the cultural and historical divides that separate them. The third space becomes not just a site of hybridity but also a site of alienation, one that forces individuals to confront the sacrifices they must make in order to belong.

However, in an increasingly globalised world, the dynamics of identity formation grow more layered. The third space is no longer limited to colonial encounters alone, it now overlaps with global cultural flows, transnational migrations, and technological influences. Characters in *Afterlives* and *The Last Gift*, for instance, negotiate identities shaped not only by colonial memory but also by global capital, modern diasporic conditions, and exposure to worldwide cultural networks. Their experiences reflect a shifting paradigm where identity is shaped by both historical dislocation and the fluidities of global belonging.

Thus, identity formation in Gurnah's fiction can be understood as an ongoing process situated within overlapping third spaces- rooted in colonial histories and shaped further by globalisation. His novels, while grounded in postcolonial critique, transcend temporal boundaries to speak to contemporary realities of displacement, mobility, and hybridity. Gurnah's work ultimately serves as a powerful meditation on the human search for belonging, reminding us that identity, whether shaped by colonial trauma or globalised movement, is never static but always in the making.

Gurnah's novels do not simply depict the post-colonial experience, but they offer a profound exploration of its enduring impact on identity formation. While his narratives focus on the postcolonial experience, the concept of the third space remains relevant in a globalised world. Individuals navigating cultural differences,

displacement, and the complexities of belonging continue to grapple with similar challenges. Gurnah's work serves as a powerful reminder of the enduring human search for identity and the ongoing struggle to find a place to call home, even in a world increasingly defined by movement and migration.

Chapter 5

Multiculturalism and Cultural Hybridity

Building on the exploration of identity formation within the third space, this chapter delves into the broader themes of multiculturalism and cultural hybridity. In today's rapidly globalizing world, where diverse cultures and identities intertwine to form a rich tapestry, the notion of a unique, stable identity becomes increasingly elusive. The fusion of cultures, customs and experiences shapes people's lives and identities, challenging traditional frameworks. Through the lens of hybridity, this chapter examines the flexible and dynamic forms of identity that emerge in multicultural contexts. By analysing Gurnah's literary works, it highlights how these narratives navigate and portray the complexities of hybridity, exploring both its potential for enrichment and its challenges. This discussion positions hybridity as a critical response to cultural homogenization and colonial legacies, emphasizing its role in resisting fixed notions of identity in a postcolonial world.

Jonathan Seglow writes, "Multiculturalism can be acknowledged, championed, challenged or rejected, but it cannot be ignored because it describes a central feature of the world in which we live" (156). Larsya Kupriianova and Darya Kupriianova also make a similar point: "Multiculturalism is an identifying feature of modern society" (52). In today's increasingly interconnected and globalised world, cultural diversity extends beyond mere coexistence; it fosters a dynamic exchange of ideas, traditions, and values. This exchange gives rise to new, hybrid cultures emerging from the fusion of elements from different cultural backgrounds. These hybrid cultures exemplify the evolving nature of our world, where the boundaries

between cultures become open, and identities are shaped by the interplay of diverse influences.

Multiculturalism, as a concept, encapsulates the recognition and coexistence of multiple cultures within a single society. Given that cultures are constantly in contact with multicultural societies, they invariably borrow and adapt elements from one another. In *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader* David Theo Goldberg writes, "… multicultural heterogeneity is a generator of other (hybrid and novel) possibilities alongside the old, established, and familiar" (31), and this process of hybridization is what gives multiculturalism its dynamism. Simultaneously, it poses a challenge to the dominant culture, which often seeks to impose its values and norms on others.

Goldberg argues that multiculturalism is not simply about celebrating cultural diversity. It is also about challenging the power structures that have traditionally marginalised certain groups, particularly the way that knowledge is produced and disseminated in society. For Goldberg:

> Multiculturalism explores the assertive foundations of disciplines, scrutinizing the boundaries of subjects, conceived as agents and disciplines. It pursues the interdisciplinary interpellation of (or calling to) subjectivity from within while transgressively challenging the confinements, the borders, of established institutional structures, subjects and subjectivities, and imposed disciplinary forms. Themes analysed include the relations between Self and Other, selves and others, Subject and subjects; between knowledge, power, pedagogy, politics, and empowerment. (2)

He argues that the traditional disciplines are too narrow and exclusive. They focus on the knowledge of the dominant culture and ignore the knowledge of minority cultures.

This can lead to the marginalisation of minority cultures and the perpetuation of inequality. Similarly noted by Kelly Chien-Hui Kuo in "A Euphoria of Transcultural Hybridity" that despite embracing diversity, certain power structures or norms within multicultural societies may restrict the ability of individuals to undergo a meaningful transformation in their roles and identities, ". . . multiculturalism promotes closure of potentially transforming subject positions" (224).

Kuo further states that multiculturalism is a social and political philosophy that recognises and values the diversity of cultures within a society. He adds multiplicity of cultures in a multicultural society leads to ". . . multiplicities of cultural spheres, representations and subject-positions, and hence enable multiculturalism to challenge the static and hegemonic notion of identity via the virtue of plurality and diversity" (225). While quoting Stuart Hall, Kuo examines the dynamics of identity formation in multicultural contexts, and it has been emphasised that identities are not fixed as they are constantly evolving in response to the world around us. "The full unified, completed, secure and coherent identity is a fantasy. Instead, as the systems of meaning and cultural representation multiply, we are confronted by a bewildering, fleeting multiplicity of possible identities, any one of which we could identify with- at least temporarily" (225).

In addition to this perspective, Bhabha argues that cultural diversity is not simply a matter of recognising and celebrating different cultures. It is also a complex process that involves the negotiation of power and identity. He writes, "Cultural diversity is the recognition of pre-given cultural contents and customs" (*Location of Culture* 34) which suggests that cultural diversity is something that is fixed and unchanging. However, he further writes that it ". . . held in a time-frame of

relativism," which means that it is constantly evolving and changing, and "gives rise

to liberal notions of multiculturalism, cultural exchange or the culture of humanity"

(34). He argues that multiculturalism is a liberal ideology that seeks to promote

tolerance and understanding between different cultures. However, Bhabha also argues

that multiculturalism can be problematic because it often relies on a static and

essentialist view of culture. "Cultural diversity may even emerge as a system of the

articulation and exchange of cultural signs" (34), this means that different cultures can

borrow and adapt elements from each other, creating new and hybrid cultural forms.

Additionally, the phenomenon of mimicry resonates in multicultural societies,

where minority groups adopt elements of the dominant culture to succeed. Unlike

simple assimilation into a dominant culture, mimicry involves a selective borrowing

of elements from various cultural sources, creating identities that defy easy

categorisation within traditional boundaries. Bhabha's concept of mimicry suggests

that when different cultures come into contact, there is a tendency for individuals and

communities to mimic or imitate aspects of each other's cultures. However, their

mimicry is far from perfect as it is not a simple replication. Rather, it introduces a

crucial element of difference, as Bhabha suggests ". . . almost the same, but not quite"

(*Location of Culture* 86). This difference is what gives multiculturalism its dynamism,

a concept emphasised by Bhabha himself when he writes, ". . . mimicry is the desire

for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the

same, but not quite" (86). Mimicry, therefore, plays a crucial role in the formation of

hybrid identities, as it involves adopting certain cultural practices or expressions, not

as an act of pure "sharing," but as an ". . . imitation of the former imperial power and

knowledge" (Ferdous 1507). This process of mimicry highlights the cultural

intersections in multicultural societies, where diverse cultural elements blend and

merge, leading to the emergence of new, dynamic hybrid forms. Bhabha's argument

underscores that these cultural intersections are not grounded in a fixed past or an

idealised future; rather, they are constantly in flux, always changing and adapting. In

this view, cultures are never completely pure or authentic; they are inherently hybrid,

continually mixing and merging with other cultures.

Building on these ideas hybridity is a key concept in the formation of

identities within multicultural societies. It refers to the blending, synthesis, or

intermixing of different cultural elements, practices, and identities. In such societies,

individuals from diverse backgrounds inevitably interact, leading to the creation of

new cultural forms that mix aspects of the original cultures. Hybrid identities thus

emerge as a product of these interactions, embodying the richness and diversity of

multicultural experiences. Shaped through mimicry and other processes, these

identities resist simple classification within predefined cultural boxes, blurring the

lines between 'Self' and 'Other' (Bhabha, *Culture 3*) and reflecting the fluid and

interconnected nature of cultures in a multicultural context. As Fay and Haydon note,

"Hybridity is the idea that identities are made up of all the different cultures with

which they have contact" (11).

In contrast to the pressure to conform to a single cultural identity, as seen in

various societies the concept of hybridity offers a powerful alternative. Like in Japan,

there is a strong pressure to conform to Japanese cultural norms and values, in India

there are many different ethnic groups who share a common ancestry, language and

culture, and they have a strong sense of community and identity. Another example is

the United Kingdom where there is strong pressure among the upper class to conform

to certain cultural norms, such as speaking with an RP accent. Bhabha suggests

hybridity exists "on borderlines" (*Location* 226-27), challenging the notion of a fixed

or singular identity. It allows individuals to embrace the complexities of their

experiences and combine elements from different cultures. Farjana Ferdous writes,

"Hybridity by its assimilating policies negates the imbalance and inequality of the

power relations and masks cultural differences" (1493). This builds the idea that when

cultures mix under the umbrella of hybridity, it can appear as though power

imbalances and inequalities between groups have disappeared. Hybridity becomes a

space for creativity and negotiation, where individuals can move between different

cultural influences and forge their own distinctive identities in the world.

Multicultural societies, being potential sites of conflict and discrimination,

experience tension arising from different cultural values, power dynamics, or

historical legacies. "Multiculturalism . . . presents culture as a site of contestation and

competition, in which the periphery is engaged in conflict with the centre, setting off

the free play of various elements" (Behera 121). The concept of hybridity offers an

understanding of these tensions, representing a way to negotiate and resolve conflicts

between different cultures. It emphasises that identities are not fixed or monolithic but

are constantly evolving and changing. People negotiate their identities by drawing

from various cultural sources, creating hybrid identities that defy traditional

categories, contributing to the richness and complexity of cultural intersections in

multicultural societies. Examining how cultures intermingle, adapt, and evolve in

multicultural societies can lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the

challenges and opportunities of multiculturalism.

Further, it is important to recognise that colonialism has had a profound impact on the formation of hybrid identities in multicultural societies. As rightly highlighted by Sheikh Mehedi Hasan in "Of Identities: Fixity, Fluidity and Postcolonial Musings" "Postcolonial society has inherited a diversity of cultural, social and political hierarchies owing to colonial rule" (75). Colonialism involved the subjugation and domination of indigenous cultures by colonial powers. This had a lasting impact on the identities of once-colonised people.

The hybrid identities that emerge in postcolonial contexts are in many ways, a direct result of the historical experience of colonialism. Colonial power often imposed their values, norms, and cultural practices on indigenous populations, leading to a complex interplay of cultural influences. This interplay, however, was not equal, as Gandhi observes, "The West remains the privileged meeting ground for all ostensibly cross-cultural conversations" (136). This power imbalance meant that indigenous cultures were compelled to adapt and sometimes resist, the dominant culture. Consequently, the identities of people who live in postcolonial societies are often shaped by the historical encounter with colonialism, with elements of both the coloniser's culture and the colonised culture present in a new, hybrid form.

The translation of cultural elements into a space of survival is a concept that mirrors the negotiation and adaptation of cultures in multicultural societies to ensure their persistence and relevance. In a multicultural society, cultures must learn to coexist and interact with each other. This often involves translating cultural elements into a common language or framework. This process of translation is not always easy, but it is essential for the survival and relevance of cultures in multicultural societies.

The translational process within multicultural societies offers valuable insights for comprehending the dynamics of postcolonial identity. Postcolonial contexts frequently characterised by the mixing of different cultures, as people from different cultures interact with each other and negotiate their identities. The intermingling of cultures often engenders the formation of novel and hybrid identities, which challenges established conventions of identity. In "Indian Literature, Multiculturalism and Translation," Guru Charan Behera discusses the role of translation in a multicultural society. He writes,

> Though multiculturalism conceives cultures as autonomous, it opens up a space for constant "negotiation" between them and even facilitates the process of hybridization. Between cultural forms there is the clearing in which interpenetration takes place. Translation operates in this clearing, in the "in-between" space, as an aid to and product of this negotiation process. (121)

Translation operates in the 'in-between' space, which is the space where cultures meet and interact. In this space, there is a constant negotiation of meaning, and Behera argues that translation plays an important role in this negotiation process. It can help to make the invisible visible, and it can help to bridge the gaps between different cultures. This concept is particularly relevant to Gurnah's novels, where characters like Salim in *Gravel Heart* navigate the complexities of cultural translation as they move between Zanzibar and England. Their struggles to communicate and express themselves highlight the challenges and opportunities of forging hybrid identities in multicultural settings.

Postcolonial fiction frequently explores the idea of hybridity, particularly during and after the colonial era ". . . hybridity which is the primary characteristic of

all post-colonial texts, whatever their source" (Ashcroft et al., *Empire*182). Gurnah's body of work stands as a profound exploration of the intricate intersections between cultural identities, colonial legacies, and the migratory experiences of individuals. Within this fabric of narratives, Gurnah skilfully weaves the elements of multiculturalism, portraying the dynamic of the coexistence of diverse cultural backgrounds. His characters whether navigating the complexities of their homelands under colonial rule or encountering the challenges of migration to the United Kingdom, embody the rich tapestry of multicultural experiences.

One of the key ways in which Gurnah explores multiculturalism in his novels is through the theme of hybridity. His characters often embody this hybridity, as they draw on elements from both their home cultures and the cultures they migrate to, for example in the novels *Admiring Silence*, *Desertion* and *Gravel Heart*. Another way in which he explores multiculturalism in his novels is through the theme of displacement. His characters are often displaced from their home cultures and forced to rebuild their lives in new and unfamiliar places. This displacement can be a traumatic experience, but it can also lead to new opportunities and new ways of seeing the world like in the novel *Afterlives*. His narratives explore the challenges of surviving colonialism and migration. His characters often face discrimination and prejudice, and they must find ways to cope with the loss of their homeland and their culture.

Afterlives takes place in East Africa during the era of German colonial rule, which highlights the intersection of African and European cultures. The interactions between the native characters and German colonisers demonstrate the clash and blending of cultures. The characters in the novel, particularly Khalifa, Asha, Ilyas and

Hamza, grapple with their identities within the colonial context. The narrative delves into the challenges faced by the characters due to colonial exploitation, other than the novel also highlights a multicultural community within the African context

The introduction of Khalifa and his familial background in the novel provides a compelling exploration of the themes of hybridity and multiculturalism. Khalifa's lineage exemplifies the notion of cultural hybridity, as he is born to a father of Indian origin, Qassim, and an African countrywoman, Mariamu (Gurnah, *Afterlives* 1). His Indian-African identity reflects the blending of different cultures, languages, and traditions, highlighting the multicultural nature of his family. The presence of Indian immigrants or descendants who maintain connections and coexist with the local Zanzibar population hints at the existence of a multicultural community within the East African context.

Qassim finds success in Africa by using his connections in the Indian community. He comes to coastal Africa to support his family back in India and never returns, where the job of bookkeeping is offered to him by some Indian landowners (2). The intermarriage of Qassim and Mariamu serves as a poignant illustration of how cultures interweave and influence each other, ultimately shaping Khalifa's multifaceted existence. Khalifa follows in his father's footsteps by joining an Indian-run private business. He, as an Indian African, navigates the multicultural workplace and interacts with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. His mixed heritage allows him to navigate between different cultures. He uses his knowledge of both Indian and African cultures to succeed in his career. He works for an Indian-run business, and then for a Muslim merchant Amur Biashara.

The character of Ilyas also encapsulates the complexities of living in a multicultural world with hybrid identities and offers a poignant illustration of how individuals navigate and embody hybridity in their lives. His character unfolds in various stages, each reflecting different facets of his multicultural experience. His journey begins with exposure to German culture and language through his education at a church school for converts and his work on a German coffee plantation. This exposure shapes his appearance, behaviour, and language, showcasing the malleability of cultural identity in a multicultural context. People consider him "a government man" (33), and he speaks German ". . . as if it's his native language" (21). His transformation into an individual, with both African and German influences, exemplifies the fluidity of identity in a diverse world. His friendship with Khalifa, an Indian African, demonstrates how individuals with hybrid identities often form bonds and connections with others who share similar multicultural experiences. Moreover, as Goldberg highlights that human interactions and relationships are better and more enriched when they foster diversity and adaptability, ". . . human interaction and relations are promoted by as they effect heterogeneity, not insularity; fluidity, not fixedness" (25). Khalifa's influence encourages Ilyas to reconnect with his African roots, emphasizing the fluidity and adaptability of cultural identities.

His decision to take Afiya under his wing and help her learn to read and write reflects a commitment to preserving and empowering their shared cultural heritage. Ilyas's decision to join the German army during World War I underscores the complexities of living in a multicultural world during times of conflict. Khalifa also tries to make him understand the consequences of it, "This is between two violent and vicious invaders, one among us and the other to the north. They are fighting over who

should swallow us whole. What has this to do with you?" (Gurnah, *Afterlives* 42). His

affiliation with the German side, which had shown kindness to him during his

childhood, reflects the multifaceted nature of loyalty and identity in a globalised

world. The uncertainty surrounding Ilyas's fate throughout the novel underscores the

enduring impact of multiculturalism and hybrid identities on individuals and their

families. His absence haunts Khalifa and Afiya, representing the unresolved questions

and challenges faced by those navigating multiple cultural worlds.

Ilyas's denial of the ongoing conflict and his tendency to blame his people for

creating tension reflects a form of cultural dislocation and internalised colonialism.

When Khalifa asks him "Was there still fighting up there?" (22), he denies and

blames his country people for creating tension, "No, I don't know how much fighting

there was before, but it was all over . . . It was very peaceful. There were farms and

schools, new towns as well. Local people sent their children to the mission school and

worked on the German farms. If there was any trouble it was the work of bad people

who likes to make an uproar" (23). He distances himself from the plight of his native

community, instead attributing any trouble to bad people who seek to disrupt the

peace. This denial mirrors the colonial trope of presenting the colonised as inherently

prone to chaos and violence, perpetuating the colonial narrative of the civilizing

mission.

Ilyas's dismissal of the atrocities committed by the Germans, as described by

Mahmudu, "… Germans have killed so many people that the country is littered with

skulls and bones and the earth is soggy with blood" (41). Ilyas calls it exaggeration

and his justification of their harshness to impose order and obedience on savage

people underscores the extent to which his hybrid identity has been co-opted by

colonial ideologies. He fails to recognise the depth of suffering inflicted upon his people, and his perception of the Germans as honourable and civilised reflects his assimilation into the colonial narrative. He says, "They had to be harsh in retaliation because that's the only way savage people can be made to understand order and obedience" (42). For him "The Germans are honourable and civilised people and have done much good since they have been there" (42). The poignant statement, "My friend, they have eaten you," (42) made by Mangungu encapsulates the tragic consequences of Ilyas's hybridization. It underscores how Ilyas's identity has been consumed and reshaped by the colonial culture to the point where he no longer identifies with or advocates for his people. Instead, he becomes a proponent of the very forces that exploit and subjugate them.

Ilyas's character serves as a compelling embodiment of the complexities of living in a multicultural world with hybrid identities. His experiences and transformations reflect the fluid nature of cultural identities, the influence of relationships and education, and the challenges individuals face in navigating their diverse cultural heritage. Ilyas's story underscores the enduring legacy of multiculturalism and the profound impact it can have on individuals and their descendants, as well as the moral and ethical dilemmas that may arise in the context of shifting historical and political landscapes.

Ilyas's later life as Elias Essen, his marriage to a German woman, and his affiliation with a Nazi organization (244) reveals the fluidity of his hybrid identity. His new name and loyalty, "Uncle Ilyas wanted the Germans back" (246), reflect the adaptability of individuals with multicultural backgrounds in response to shifting historical and political contexts. Ilyas's recurring pattern of running away from his

responsibilities and identity underscores his struggle to reconcile his hybrid identity with the cultural expectations and societal pressures of the colonial context.

Hamza's character in the novel also embodies the complexities of identity and servitude within a multicultural and colonial context. His journey reflects the challenges of hybrid identity formation, internal conflict, and the pursuit of belonging in a world marked by colonial oppression and cultural interplay. His story serves as a powerful exploration of the consequences of seeking liberation and identity in a colonial society.

Hamza's employment in one of Nassor Biashara's warehouses and his subsequent companionship with Khalifa exemplify the multicultural dynamics of the town. Khalifa's trust in Hamza and the offer of a place to stay in his house signify the bonds formed across cultural boundaries. Afiya's presence in Khalifa's family further highlights the interconnectedness of the characters' lives. The relationship between Afiya and Hamza, born out of shared pain from the war, exemplifies how individuals in multicultural societies may find solace and connection with others who have experienced similar hardships. Their eventual marriage symbolises the capacity for love and resilience in the face of adversity.

Hamza's complex identity is further shaped by his experiences in the town and his interactions with the Germans. His pride in demonstrating his ability to read and write in German reflects his desire for acceptance and recognition in the dominant culture, "He could not keep the pride out of his voice" (184), when Mzee Sulemani enquires about his knowledge about German language. This desire to mimic the Germans and play language games with him stems from the pressure he feels to conform and assimilate into the colonial culture. However, this mimicry also leads to

a sense of ambivalence in his identity, as he grapples with conflicting emotions and attitudes towards his cultural heritage. As ". . . the colonial presence is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference" (Bhabha, *Location of Culture* 107)

One of the key aspects of Hamza's identity is his struggle to balance between two cultures. Under the Germans' servitude, he faces constant pressure to conform to the dominant culture while also wanting to preserve his own cultural identity. This struggle is exemplified when he attempts to join the afternoon prayer at the mosque while serving coffee to the Oberleutant. He senses inner turmoil when, "At approximately four in the afternoon, as the muadhin was calling people to the alasiri prayer" he ". . . took a cup of coffee to the officer" (Gurnah, *Afterlives* 77). He desires to maintain a connection to his culture and religion, even in the face of the colonial power dynamics that seek to erase them. This yearning for his cultural connection is further highlighted later when he returns to his town when the sound of the muadhin's call brings back a familiar comfort. "He heard the muadhin calling for the maghrib prayers, . . . In so many places he had travelled there were no mosques, and he missed them, not for the prayers but for the sense of being one of many that he always felt in a mosque" (139).

This deep-seated connection to his faith and community is tested even further as Hamza is thrust into the horrors of World War I. While he resists orders to shoot villagers and avoids violence, when possible, he remains loyal to the schutztruppe for various reasons, including a sense of duty and fear of punishment. His loyalty does not exempt him from the hostility and violence of the Germans. The incident where Feldwebel slashes him with a sword leaves a lasting physical and mental scar, turning

him into an invalid. "Then he stepped forward and with a wild swing slashed at Hamza who turned sharply to avoid the blow. It caught him on his hip and ripped through flesh and bone" (116). This traumatic experience further shapes his identity and contributes to his discomfort and sense of dislocation. Hamza's character undergoes a profound transformation and experiences ambivalence in his identity as he navigates the complexities of colonialism, mimicry, and the impact of war. His struggle to balance two cultures and his endurance of physical and mental trauma is central to his evolving sense of self in the multicultural and hybrid world of the novel.

The transformation of the town over time mirrors Hamza's own evolving sense of self and the complex interplay between familiarity and strangeness in his life "It was then a town of Deutsch-Ostafrikanans was now a British colony" (149). The shift from a German colony to a British one is not merely a change in political rule but also a transformation in the town's cultural and social fabric. The introduction of new people, particularly the Indians brought in by the British, adds another layer of complexity to the town's identity. The Britishers ". . . brought their own people to do business here. They brought them from India and from Kenya, and those new Indians sank their teeth in here fast and sure, and here they still are" (208). The presence of these newcomers further blurs the lines between familiarity and strangeness. The town becomes a site of cultural hybridity and multiculturalism, where different identities and influences converge. This transformation reflects broader shifts in the colonial world, where different cultures and identities intersect and shape the evolving landscape. In essence, the town's transformation is a microcosm of Hamza's journey and the broader themes of hybridity and multiculturalism explored in the novel.

Gravel Heart, also explores the challenges faced by displaced individuals as they navigate the intersection of their home cultures and new environments. This novel provides a rich context for exploring how identities shift in response to these complex forces. Salim's character struggles with both personal upheaval and the broader social and historical effects of colonialism. Bhabha's concept of hybridity is evident as Salim navigates the complex and evolving social and political landscape, forging a hybrid identity shaped by both his Zanzibari heritage and the colonial experience.

Salim's story sheds light on the complex and fluid nature of identity in a globalised world. He grapples with accepting his hybrid identity, caught between his Zanzibari heritage and experiences in England. This internal conflict surfaces when he questions his place in England, stating: "What use was someone like me to this England? . . . Some people have a use in the world, even if it is only to swell a crowd and say yeah, and some people don't" (Gurnah, *Gravel Heart* 251). Stuck between two cultures, Salim struggles to feel at home in either Zanzibar or London. Gurnah masterfully captures the multicultural intricacies of these contrasting environments, highlighting the challenges Salim faces as he navigates his evolving identity.

The feeling of unfamiliarity that plagues Salim in London underlines his ongoing quest to reconcile his Zanzibari heritage with his new experiences. He constantly negotiates between two different worlds. He learns to live there with time, but "The newness and the strangeness did not last but nor did they completely go away" (67). While he gradually adjusts to his new home, his sense of self remains firmly rooted in his Zanzibari identity. He experiences a complex mix of attraction and repulsion towards British culture, further highlighting the challenges of

navigating London's multicultural landscape. Salim embodies a blended identity, a product of his upbringing and encounters with a new culture.

Salim's adaptation to London involves a multifaceted learning process. The unsent letter to his mother offers valuable insights into these challenges:

> I learnt to live in London, to avoid being intimidated by crowds and by rudeness, to avoid curiosity, not to feel desolate at hostile stares and to walk purposefully wherever I went. I learnt to live with the cold and the dirt, and to evade the angry students at college . . . I learnt to live with the chaotic languages of London, which did not speak to each other . . . I tried but could not join in the city's human carnival. I feared the silent empty streets at night, and always hurried home when I left work. (66)

His ability to withstand the overwhelming nature of crowds and rudeness demonstrates resilience in the face of cultural differences. The act of "avoiding curiosity" suggests a strategy of self-preservation, a way to shield himself from unwanted attention and maintain a sense of privacy in this new environment. This aspect of his adaptation sheds light on the negotiation of personal space and boundaries within a multicultural context. Learning to live with the "chaotic languages of London" further emphasises the complexities of integrating into a society vastly different from his own. Despite his attempts, the text reveals that Salim remains unable to fully "join in the city's human carnival," hinting at a sense of isolation despite being surrounded by people. His fear of the "silent empty streets at night" reinforces this feeling of alienation, highlighting the difficulties of finding belonging in a new cultural milieu.

Despite the challenges, Salim finds connections with others, underscoring the potential for cultural exchange and the formation of relationships that transcend cultural boundaries. "I made unexpected friends . . ." (66) this unexpected friendship represents the richness and unpredictability inherent in multicultural interactions. His experience of multiculturalism is also reflected in his relationship with Mr. Mgeni. He feels a sense of homeliness and happiness when he speaks Kiswahili with Mr. Mgeni "It makes me so happy, to speak the old language" (88). His sense of home is tied to his culture and language. He feels the same when he is with Billie, but this is shattered when she leaves him. He ". . . felt rejected and misused by this severity" (149). This suggests that Salim's sense of home is tied to his relationships with others.

The narrative of Salim underscores the potential for cultural exchange and the formation of relationships that transcend cultural boundaries. This theme resonates with Gurnah's interview response to Iqbal, where he discusses his own sense of belonging, emphasizing the importance of being part of a larger community through writing and recognizing the multicultural dimensions of personal connections across diverse geographical and cultural contexts. "I feel part of a larger community. Writing is an enabler of that, people read and share ideas. I am also part of that writing constituency. My family, of course, are here too - not all of them - several are in Zanzibar. But my immediate family are here. I have friends. So, in that respect it's as good as home could be or should be" (39). This suggests that people can belong to multiple communities and places, and this sense of belonging can be found in a variety of ways, including through writing, reading, family, and friendship.

Salim's initial uncertainty about his place in England mirrors Gurnah's own experiences as a migrant. However, Salim finds connections with others, highlighting

the potential for cultural exchange and relationships that transcend boundaries. This parallels Gurnah's emphasis on a diverse community and relationships beyond geographical locations. Salim's inner conflicts and eventual acceptance of his hybrid identity demonstrate the challenges and rewards of navigating cultural influences. His contemplation at the end of the story offers an exploration of this theme. Initially grappling with uncertainty about his place in Engalnd, "What use was someone like me to this England?" (261) reflects the common struggle associated with hybrid identity acceptance. However, in the very next moment, he shifts his perspective, acknowledging the universal ambiguity of purpose. This signifies a more integrated acceptance of his hybrid identity, shaped by the amalgamation of his Zanzibar roots and experiences in England. His recognition, "But then what use was someone like my father anywhere? Some people have a use in the world, even if it is only to swell a crowd and say yeah, and some people don't." (261), encapsulates a broader understanding of the diverse role individuals play in society. Salim's acknowledgement of his father's perceived lack of purpose resonates with his existential questioning, emphasizing the complexities of identity and purpose in a multicultural context.

Similar themes recur in Gurnah's *Admiring Silence*, emphasising the subtle examination of hybridity and multiculturalism. Like *Gravel Heart*, Gurnah's skilful narrative in this work explores the difficulties of identification and belonging. The protagonist in *Admiring Silence* grapples with the challenges of navigating multiple cultural influences and forming connections that transcend conventional boundaries. He is a Zanzibari immigrant of Omani Swahili descent, and embodies cultural hybridity. His identity is a blend of Zanzibari and Omani heritage, and his immigrant

status situates him in a hybrid cultural space in contemporary Britain. His relationship

with Emma, an English woman, adds a layer of multiculturalism.

In the opening encounter with Mr. and Mrs. Willoughby and narrator there are

contrasting perspectives between them, which underscore the dynamic nature of

multicultural encounters where each party brings their own biases.

> Perhaps I was nervous, in case they said or did something embarrassingly
>
> opinionated, something that would diminish me and which I would be unable
>
> to handle with the right degree of courteous indifference. My first view of
>
> them was coloured in this way. Their first view of me was coloured
>
> differently, and I think theirs was the bigger surprise. (Gurnah, *Admiring*
>
> *Silence* 21)

The narrator's first view being coloured by fear and apprehension, while the

Willoughby's first view being coloured differently, hints at the complexity of

perspectives in a multicultural world. The narrator's response to Mrs Willoughby's

question about his time in England reveals a layer of his culturally hybrid identity.

The phrase "Long enough to know how to respond to intimate small talk of that kind"

(22) underscores his ability to navigate the complexities of English social interactions,

demonstrating a form of cultural hybridity. His actions demonstrate that he adapts

well to the new cultural aspects of his life in England. He knows how to respond to

intimate small talk in a way that is acceptable to his English hosts. However, his

response "Murmur audibly, smile brightly, say nothing" (22) is also somewhat ironic,

suggesting that he is aware of the superficiality of the conversation. Cerulo rightly

says, as quoted by Sanjiv D. Khobragde, "… the effect of hybridization is not

'sharing' but rather 'mimicry' or 'impersonation' of the previous supreme force and

learning" (226). Yet, beneath this disguise lies a potential internal conflict. The narrator's statement: "In general that did not seem to me at the time to be a contemptible philosophy, and there were many occasions when I rebuked myself for failing to live by it more consistently," (Gurnah, *Admiring Silence* 20), reveals the complexities of his hybrid identity. The narrator finds these social niceties superficial. This inner tension reflects the ongoing negotiation between his Zanzibari heritage and his adaptation to British social norms. It highlights the complexities of cultural hybridity, where individuals possess the ability to adapt to new environments while still grappling with their evolving sense of self.

The relationship between the narrator and Emma in *Admiring Silence* serves as a powerful example of the complexities and possibilities of navigating multicultural encounters. Emma, a British woman, asserts her autonomy by declaring her life ". . . a narrative which had refused closure" (232). This statement transcends cultural limitations and highlights her desire to define her own story. Despite their different backgrounds, the narrator and Emma find a connection. Their decision to raise a daughter demonstrates a blending of cultural norms, challenging traditional expectations, particularly those held by the narrator's family, for his family his act is a "shame and disregard" (151). This initial tension foreshadows the challenges of navigating cultural differences within their relationship.

When the narrator discloses his relationship to his family back home, their disapproval exposes the clash between his "old" and "new" selves. Their expressions of "anger" and "despising looks" (200) reflect the family's adherence to traditional cultural expectations, expectations that the narrator may no longer fully embrace. His seeming indifference to their reactions could be interpreted as a sign of his

detachment from these traditional values, suggesting that England has transformed him into someone his family no longer recognises. This moment highlights the transformative potential of globalised experiences and the emergence of hybrid identities that challenge established cultural norms.

However, Emma's eventual distancing from the narrator and her pursuit of a new relationship highlight the evolving nature of their connection. The narrator's disbelief and fear, "disbelieving, afraid to move" (168) suggest the emotional toll of navigating a love that transcended cultural boundaries but ultimately failed. While their story showcases the challenges of hybridity, it also serves as a testament to the possibilities that emerge when individuals from diverse backgrounds come together. Their experience highlights how navigating cultural differences and expectations within a relationship can lead to both connection and conflict.

In *Admiring Silence*, the narrator's connection with Emma, a woman from a different background, exemplifies the emotional complexities of navigating love across cultural boundaries. While their connection ultimately fades, it serves as a reminder of the emotional toll and societal challenges that can arise when individuals from diverse backgrounds come together. Similarly, the relationships between Pearce and Rehana, Amin and Jamila in *Desertion* and Hanna and Nick in *The Last Gift* illuminate both the complexities and enrichments of navigating hybrid identities within a postcolonial context. These stories showcase the initial attraction of crossing cultural boundaries. The narrator in *Admiring Silence* and Pearce in *Desertion* are drawn to something exotic and unfamiliar. Pearce is captivated by Rehana's "fluid face" and "dark eyes" (Gurnah, *Desertion* 111) while the narrator is drawn to Emma's

difference (Gurnah, *Admiring Silence*). This initial attraction highlights the potential for love to bridge cultural divides.

Despite the initial attraction, Pearce, an English Orientalist, and Rehana, a local Zanzibari woman, navigate a complex cross-cultural relationship marked by inherent power imbalances. These imbalances reflect the colonial context, as Pearce is acutely aware of the societal implications of their scandalous pairing in the eyes of many, ". . . she was the mistress of an Englishman for many years, and before that another mzungu gave her a child of sin too, her own bastard. That was her life, living dirty with European men" (Gurnah, *Desertion* 204). Through their union, they both experience hybrid identity as they ". . . come together at a time when their worlds were so divided, so far apart" (228) Rehana's world expands with Pearce's shared stories of places she had never seen and ideas she had never considered, creating a space that is neither entirely English nor entirely Zanzibari, but a new blend of both.

Similarly, the relationship between Amin and Jamila further delves into these themes within the local context of Zanzibar. Amin feels the societal pressures regarding his feelings for Jamila, often sensing the weight of societal expectations pressing down on him. ". . . I was too faint-hearted to fight for her, and perhaps that is true. I could not disobey them, not after all these years" (236), highlights the weight of societal expectations that ultimately contribute to his decision to leave her. Jamila, marginalised due to her circumstances "Her grandmother was a dirty woman" (235), finds solace and validation in Amin's presence, experiencing a rare comfort in a world that often seemed intent on sidelining her. During their relationship, they form a third space where they can explore and affirm their identities away from societal constraints, allowing them to carve out a space where they can be themselves. This

connection facilitates significant personal growth for both characters, as their bond

transformed them, each learning and growing from the other in ways they had never

imagined possible. These relationships underscore the complexities and enrichments

of blending diverse cultural backgrounds, reflecting the intricate dynamics of hybrid

identity and multiculturalism in a postcolonial context.

In *Desertion*, Rashid's character also embodies a complex hybrid identity

shaped by his Zanzibari heritage and exposure to British colonial influences. His

frustration with the limitations he perceives in his surroundings the "social

obsequiousness" and "historical mendacities" (155) coupled with his yearning for a

broader world fuelled by his education, create an internal conflict. Rashid's access to

books and his development of a "powerful vocabulary" ignite a desire to escape the

confines of his immediate environment, ". . . the books he had read that gave him an

idea of the world that was ampler than anything he saw in the lives they lived" (155).

The education system plays a pivotal role in shaping Rashid's perspective.

His British teachers (155), particularly those in positions of power, become

instrumental in his intellectual development. Their focus on British history, literature,

and philosophy (Carlyle, Mill, Darwin, Eliot) (155-156) equips Rashid with a deep

understanding of the coloniser's world. The text suggests a subtle form of

"conspiracy" (155) as these educators groom him for success within their own system.

"His teachers were British, . . . and perhaps they had taught Rashid to study their

world so well that now they could not help but be impressed at what they had

produced" (155). This highlights the influence of colonialism in shaping young minds

and potentially fostering a sense of hybridity where colonised individuals internalise

the values of the coloniser. Rashid's pursuit of knowledge is driven by a complex mix

of motivations. There is a desire to "succeed and please" his teachers, but there is

also a more "seductive" element at play (156). The deeper he understands the British

world, ". . . the more it seemed that this world became his" (156). This raises a

concern about a potential loss of his original cultural identity as he becomes

increasingly invested in mastering the coloniser's domain.

The contrasting paths taken by Rashid and his siblings further illuminate the

complexities of navigating a multicultural environment. Amin pursues a teaching

career within Zanzibar, and Farida establishes a local business (156). Rashid, on the

other hand, seeks escape through education and immersion in the British world.

Despite her initial concern, his mother ultimately supports his dream, showcasing the

dynamics within the family as they grapple with Rashid's desire to forge a unique

path.

Though London does not fulfil Rashid's earlier aspirations, his initial

impressions of London capture his sense of awe and dislocation, comparable to

Senghor's reaction to Harlem: "London London! I have seen London London! . . . It

was like a miraculous rising out of emptiness, as if I had not known of its presence

there over the horizon" (209). This excitement soon gives way to the challenges of

adapting to new cultural norms. His early encounters in London are marked by

misunderstandings and a sense of intimidation, as evidenced by his interaction with

the "slim, awkward man from the British Council" (210). Even basic tasks like

finding the dining room become daunting, fuelled by his fear of "mismanaging the

tools" (211). Rashid's sense of belonging and exclusion is further highlighted through

his interactions with fellow students. While he finds camaraderie with other foreign

students, he experiences subtle and overt exclusion from English peers as "It was not

easy to get near the English students . . . the slightness of the smiles I was given in return to my beaming ones" (213).

Rashid's homesickness and the emotional toll of exile are evident as he longs for Zanzibar, yet hesitates to share his feelings with his family: "I know I would not have told them how much I longed to be back with them, how homesick I was . . . I would not have wanted them to think me childish and overwhelmed" (212). Over time, he forms new relationships with the multicultural group of foreign students, finding a sense of belonging that contrasts with his experiences with English students: "I made friends in the hall, a group of foreign students like me . . . they welcomed me and made much of me because I was a new arrival" (212). Rashid's encounters with prejudice in London force him to confront and internalise these biases, shaping his evolving identity: "Like many people in similar circumstances, I began to look at myself with increasing dislike and dissatisfaction, to look at myself through their eyes" (214). His realization of his limited understanding of England underscores his internal conflict: "I realised that I did not know very much about England, that all the books I had studied and the maps I had pored over had taught me nothing of how England thought of the world and of people like me" (214).

Throughout his narrative, Rashid negotiates multiple cultural spaces, forming friendships and attempting to engage with English peers, reflecting the hybridity of his identity: "We talked about these things among ourselves . . . What were they so upset about, when it was they who went overbearing over the world and filled our heads with our unworthiness?" (215). Despite the cultural impositions he faces, Rashid adapts and resists, learning to navigate his new environment: "One of the teachers spoke to me about this . . . Be cold and unfriendly and you'll soon make

friends" (215). Rashid's experiences of cultural dislocation, adaptation, and the evolving nature of his identity in a multicultural context vividly illustrate the complexities of hybrid identity and the impact of exile.

Challenges of Multicultural Interactions

While multiculturalism is often presented as a progressive ideal, promoting diversity, coexistence and mutual respect, Gurnah's novels reveal that multicultural encounters are rarely free from conflict, inequality, or residual colonial power structures. His works depict the lived realities of migrants, exiles, and diasporic subjects who navigate supposedly inclusive societies only to encounter exclusion, cultural misunderstanding, and the demand for assimilation masked as acceptance.

In *Admiring Silence*, the unnamed narrator attempts to build a life in England, entering into an interracial relationship that initially appears emblematic of liberal multicultural integration. However, beneath the surface of this apparent acceptance lie subtle acts of othering. His partner's family, though seemingly welcoming, perceives him through orientalist and racialised stereotypes. Remarks like "That's the kind of idiot country we have become, . . . Thousands can just walk off the plane and live off us. . ." (Gurnah, *Admiring Silence* 65). The narrator is often expected to suppress or sanitise his cultural background to remain legible and acceptable in British society. His identity is not engaged with in its complexity but is flattened into a consumable version of the exotic other. Gurnah deftly exposes how multiculturalism, when rooted in colonial hierarchies, offers only conditional inclusion, one that demands conformity rather than fostering genuine intercultural dialogue. This perspective finds resonance in Bhabha's work, where he similarly elaborates on this notion, stating, ". . . the attempt to dominate in the name of cultural supremacy" (*Location of Culture* 34).

This tension continues in *Gravel Heart*, where Salim's experiences in Britain demonstrate the limitations of multicultural belonging. Despite his efforts to assimilate, through education, accent modification and social interaction, he remains on the margins of British society as a ". . . Muslim nigger from Africa" (Gurnah, *Gravel Heart* 147). Encounters with racial microaggressions and cultural insensitivities underscore the challenges of navigating spaces that claim to value diversity while perpetuating structures of exclusion. The aftermath of the 2001 terrorist attacks in New York further intensifies his alienation, as public discourse becomes increasingly hostile toward Muslims. Salim observes, "The language people speak on the news and in public has changed too since those killings in New York, and the talk is all about Muslim fanatics and terrorists" (150), reflecting how broader geopolitical events reshape the social climate and deepen his sense of unbelonging. "I feel even more of a stranger here now. I hate it but still I stay. I feel like a traitor but I am not sure who it is that I am betraying" (151), he confesses, capturing the emotional and moral ambiguity of existing in a space that increasingly views him with suspicion.. As Hall contends, identity in multicultural contexts is "a matter of becoming as well as being," constantly negotiated in response to forces of inclusion and rejection (Hall 225). Gurnah's characters often occupy this precarious in-between, seeking belonging in societies that never fully embrace them.

Moreover, Gurnah problematises the notion of multicultural harmony by portraying how cultural hybridity, far from being universally celebrated, can become a source of inner conflict and external discrimination. In *The Last Gift*, Abbas lives with the weight of multiple cultural identities but is haunted by secrets from his past and his partial disconnection from his British-born children. His attempts to navigate

between his Tanzanian heritage and British present are fraught with guilt, silence, and the alienation that stems from cultural dissonance. This intergenerational gap also reflects the failures of multicultural environments to foster empathy or understanding across cultural lines, even within families. As Jamal reflects, "For millions of people… moving is a moment of ruin and failure, a defeat that is no longer avoidable, a desperate flight, going from bad to worse, from home to homelessness, from citizen to refugee…" (Gurnah, *Last Gift* 73). Even as characters attempt to adapt and belong, emotional displacement lingers: "He could not quite make himself say home, when he meant England, or think of foreigners without fellow feeling" (47). These sentiments reveal the deep fractures that migration and hybridity imprint on identity, fractures often obscured by surface-level multicultural narratives.

In *Pilgrims Way*, Gurnah's second novel, the narrative unfolds with Daud, an African immigrant residing in Canterbury, England. The story revolves around Daud's complex love affair with Catherine, a white woman. Intending to escape his past, Daud finds himself confronted with new disturbing challenges in a foreign land, experiencing exile in a society marked by hostility. This novel marks Gurnah's exploration of themes related to racism and migration, delving into the harsh realities faced by individuals living in an unfamiliar cultural landscape. Isabel Quigly's review emphasises the novel's shocking portrayal of "British racism" (qtd in Orthofer). While citing Andrew Sinclair's review of *Pilgrims Way*, Orthofer notices where the former praises Gurnah's writing style, noting "Mr Gurnah has a wry humour that is pungent and acerbic, sparing no assumption." Sinclair highlights in his review that Gurnah's ability to confront ". . . exaggerated black militancy as to illiterate white hooliganism" and regarding the character Daud, Sinclair notes, ". . . Daud is not

marginal or weak as so many, English comic heroes are. He is both defiant and deprecatory: his sting is sharper than his sneer" (qtd. in Orthofer). This review portrays Gurnah as a writer who uses humour as a powerful tool to challenge societal norms and stereotypes. Moreover, Gurnah's characters, like Daud, are complex and relatable, and avoid common stereotypes.

The challenges of multiculturalism in Gurnah's fiction are not confined to interpersonal relationships but also reflect systemic structures that continue to uphold colonial binaries. As Gilroy suggests, the promise of cultural hybridity must be understood within the historical context of slavery, imperialism, and migration that continues to inform racial and cultural hierarchies. Gurnah's narratives embody this tension, offering characters who carry the psychic and cultural scars of colonial legacies into contemporary multicultural spaces.

Additionally, the silence and emotional suppression exhibited by Gurnah's protagonists signify the psychological costs of existing within multicultural environments that do not fully accommodate difference. This is consistent with Fanon's exploration of the colonised subject's inner turmoil, caught between the desire for recognition and the violence of misrecognition. In multicultural societies, this dynamic re-emerges through the dissonance between the self and the imposed cultural scripts of the dominant group. As Bhabha, drawing on Fanon, notes, cultures are "never unitary in themselves, nor simply dualistic in the relation of self to other," but rather exist in a "zone of occult instability where the people dwell" (*Location of Culture* 35). This instability underlines the fractured nature of identity formation in postcolonial contexts.

Ultimately, Gurnah resists the romanticisation of multiculturalism. His narratives illustrate that while multicultural societies offer opportunities for cross-cultural engagement, they also reproduce inequalities, silence minority voices, and impose hegemonic norms under the guise of tolerance. The reality of multicultural interaction, as portrayed in his work, is marked by negotiation, compromise, and often, deep personal loss. In doing so, Gurnah contributes to a more critical understanding of multiculturalism, not as a harmonious blend of cultures, but as a site of ongoing struggle, shaped by both historical trauma and the contemporary politics of belonging.

In the compelling narratives of Gurnah, the recurring theme of the complexities and enrichments of navigating multicultural spaces emerges. Through the journeys of characters like the narrator in *Admiring Silence*, Rashid in *Desertion*, Salim in *Gravel Heart*, and Hamza in *Afterlives*, Gurnah paints a vivid picture of cultural hybridity, where individuals grapple with the intersection of their heritage and the realities of the globalised world. Gurnah's characters are often drawn to individuals from different backgrounds. However, these relationships are not without their challenges. The narrator in *Admiring Silence*, Rashid and Rehana in *Desertion,* and Salim in *Gravel Heart* experience the emotional toll of navigating societal pressures and cultural differences.

Despite the challenges, Gurnah's narratives offer glimpses of hope. The characters forge third spaces where they can explore their identities away from societal constraints. The narrator and Emma in *Admiring Silence*, Rashid and Rehana in *Desertion*, and Salim in *Gravel Heart* all find temporary solace in these shared spaces. As rightly pointed out by Hand, "Gurnah's migrants are individuals coming to

terms with their new situation" (57). The encounters with diverse cultures leave a lasting impact on the characters. Their identities are not static but constantly evolve through their interactions with others. Rashid in *Desertion* develops a newfound awareness of his hybrid identity, while Hamza in *Afterlives* grapples with the legacy of colonialism and his place in a changing world.

Gurnah's works reflect a deep engagement with multiculturalism and hybridity. His linguistic style itself embodies a hybrid form, drawing on English literary traditions while incorporating elements of his Zanzibari heritage. This linguistic blending reflects the broader themes of his work, reminding us that identities are not fixed but fluid and ever-evolving. In conclusion, Gurnah's masterful storytelling unveils the multifaceted nature of identity in multicultural societies. The novels present characters whose struggles and triumphs underscore the challenges of navigating cultural differences and the power dynamics that shape one's sense of belonging. While each novel explores these themes with a distinct focus, ultimately, Gurnah's works remind us that identity is a fluid and dynamic force, constantly evolving amidst the complexities of a multicultural world.

Conclusion

The present research has explored the creation of new identities in postcolonial East Africa through the lens of Abdulrazak Gurnah's selected works applying Homi K Bhabha's theoretical concepts. This research has revealed that identity in Gurnah's narratives is a fluid construct, which is shaped by hybridity, negotiation within the third space, and resistance against colonial and postcolonial power structures. Gurnah's contribution to postcolonial literature is unique and valuable. His works expand the understanding of the diverse experiences present within postcolonial literature. The Nobel committee's citation praising ". . . his uncompromising and compassionate penetration of the effects of colonialism. . ." (*Nobel Prize*) accurately captures the depth and sensitivity with which his stories highlight the impact of colonialism. His narratives offer new perspectives on themes of identity, culture, and the long-term implications of colonialism. His works are particularly significant in the context of the complex power dynamics established by colonial rule.

This research has demonstrated that identity formation in Gurnah's narratives is a complex process shaped by hybridity, negotiation, and resistance. This understanding is crucial when considering the broader context of colonialism. Colonialism established a power dynamic between the colonisers and the colonised. While the colonisers shaped their identity within a dominant framework, the colonised were subjected to control and often had their own identities marginalised. Colonial discourse further reinforced this power imbalance, creating a social reality for the colonised and shaping their sense of self. Gurnah's stories challenge this imposed narrative and give voice to the experiences of those affected by colonialism. As it is

rightly noticed "Gurnah is known for decentring European history: a structural decision that is also politically potent" (Mengiste). His characters struggle with the continuing impact of colonial ideology, highlighting the ongoing struggle for self-determination and the search for a new national identity in the postcolonial world. It is important to understand these complexities and consider how formerly colonised nations can reclaim their identities in the face of the legacies of colonial discourse.

Gurnah's emphasis on East Africa, particularly the Swahili coast draws attention to a region often overlooked in postcolonial studies. This unique and cultural focus enhances the diversity of postcolonial literature. It also offers a fresh perspective that contrasts with the more commonly explored regions like South Asia, the Caribbean, or West Africa. Rather than directly confronting colonial oppression, Gurnah's works highlight colonialism's lasting effects on individual lives and identities. This explores a deeper understanding of how colonial histories continue to shape personal and cultural identities in complex and often understated ways.

A hallmark of Gurnah's work is his emphasis on personal narratives. He employs a micro-historical approach, emphasising individual stories and personal experiences over grand historical narratives. His stories reveal the profound impact of larger historical forces on individual lives, and provide a detailed view of identity formation and personal struggle. The cultural tapestry of East Africa, particularly of Zanzibar, with its blend of Arab, African and Indian influences is woven throughout Gurnah's works. He paints a vivid picture of how these cultures interact, this provides a multilayered backdrop for his characters' exploration of identity and adds depth to their experiences. His exploration of exile and migration is also significant because it

is informed by his own experiences, which adds authenticity to his portrayals of characters who navigate between cultures.

Gurnah's use of language, particularly his incorporation of Swahili words and phrases, is a powerful tool for exploring postcolonial identities and resisting linguistic imperialism. By integrating untranslated Swahili expressions alongside English text, Gurnah engages in what Ashcroft et al. describe as a "political act" (*Empire Writes Back* 65) that foregrounds cultural distinctions and challenges the assumed superiority of the colonizer's language. This technique not only connects characters to their cultural roots but also invites readers to engage with the complexities of postcolonial subjectivity. The inclusion of German phrases, spoken by both colonizers and indigenous characters, further illustrates the lasting impact of colonialism on the Swahili language and culture. This linguistic hybridity, as Bhabha argues, is instrumental in generating fluid, new hybrid identities that defy simple categorization. While quoting Bernard William, Bhabha emphasises, "'A fully individual culture is at best a rare thing'" (*Location of Culture*, 125). Gurnah's multilingual approach thus becomes a microcosm of the larger postcolonial experience, reflecting the interplay between different cultural and linguistic influences. By refusing to privilege one language over another, Gurnah challenges the hegemony of colonial languages and creates a textual space that mirrors the complex nature of postcolonial identities. This linguistic strategy enriches the narrative and serves as a form of resistance against cultural erasure, inviting readers to recognize and engage with the diversity of voices and experiences in the postcolonial world.

The analysis of Gurnah's narratives through Bhabha's concepts contributes to postcolonial studies by demonstrating the ongoing relevance of the latter's concepts in

interpreting contemporary narratives and highlighting the importance of examining identity formation beyond the simplistic coloniser/colonised binary. Moreover, Gurnah's stories offer valuable insights into the challenges of identity in a globalised world, where racism persists, neocolonial structures exert influences and individuals struggle with the complexities of belonging in multicultural societies.

Gurnah's characters navigate the disruptions caused by colonial rule and the complexities of identity formation in a hybrid cultural space, exemplifying Bhabha's concepts of hybridity and the third space. Through the characters of Hamza and Ilyas in *Afterlives*, it becomes evident that colonial rule disrupts their existing identities, forcing them to negotiate between their indigenous culture and the imposed colonial culture. This negotiation often leads to internal conflict, as illustrated by Ilyas's tragic fate in a German concentration camp, demonstrating Bhabha's notion of colonial ambivalence. On the other hand, Hamza's struggle to reconstruct a sense of home after returning from the First World War under German service further reflects the broader theme of displacement and the creation of liminal identities.

Characters like Salim, Hamza, Ilyas, Rashid, and the narrator of *Admiring Silence* embody the formation of hybrid identities, blending elements from both indigenous and colonial cultures in what Bhabha terms the third space. Hamza's adoption of the German language and his sense of superiority highlight how colonial subjects can incorporate colonial elements, a process Bhabha describes as mimicry. Yet, Hamza's active resistance to a wholly imposed identity, seeking solace with his people, underscores the dynamic process of identity negotiation and resistance, illustrating the concept of colonial ambivalence. The narrator of *Admiring Silence* exemplifies the enduring influence of colonialism on identity. He struggles to balance

the complexity of his life in England, which he keeps secret from his family, with his background. His adaptability among Emma's family serves to reclaim agency and define his identity on his terms, demonstrating what Bhabha calls "sly civility" (Bhabha, *Location of Culture* 93), a form of resistance through apparent compliance. This offers a deeper understanding of how colonial and postcolonial subjects navigate complex cultural landscapes, highlighting the ongoing process of identity formation long after formal colonial rule has ended. Moreover, the portrayal of these identity negotiations challenges simplistic notions of cultural assimilation or resistance, offering a more complex view of postcolonial identity that enriches the understanding of contemporary multicultural societies. This bridges the gap between postcolonial theory and lived experiences, demonstrating the enduring relevance of these concepts in understanding modern identity formation in a globalised world.

Further, Gurnah's characters are often drawn to individuals from different backgrounds, highlighting the pull of cultural diversity. For example, the narrator in *Admiring Silence* falls for Emma. Rashid in *Desertion* pursues a relationship with Grace, Hanna's relationship with Nick in *The Last Gift* and Salim's relationship with Billie in *Gravel Heart*. In these relationships, characters explore their identities with another culture. However, these relationships are not without challenges. Characters like the narrator in *Admiring Silence* and Salim must navigate the complexities of living within multiple cultures. Despite these challenges, Gurnah's characters also seek out third spaces where they can explore their hybrid identities beyond societal constraints. These spaces, whether physical or emotional, allow characters to forge connections and express their evolving sense of self. This reflects how Gurnah's characters are not static, their encounters with diverse cultures and experiences of

displacement constantly shape them. Rashid in *Desertion* develops a newfound awareness of his hybrid identity while away from home, while Hamza in *Afterlives* grapples with the legacy of colonialism and his place in a globalized world. Their identities are fluid and ever-changing, reflecting the dynamic nature of hybridity.

Moreover, these portrayals of relationships between East Africans and English characters also provide insights into postcolonial dynamics and cross-cultural exchanges. In *Admiring Silence*, the narrator's relationship with Emma highlights the potential for meaningful cultural exchange and the misunderstanding due to their differing cultural backgrounds. The story also challenges stereotypes and prejudices, as seen in the welcoming attitudes of Emma and the restaurant owner towards the narrator, contrasting with the narrator's self-perception as an outsider. Lingering colonial power dynamics are reflected in characters like Mr Willoughby, who presumes superiority as a former coloniser. Gurnah's novels also delve into identity negotiation, as exemplified by Mr Mgeni of *Gravel Heart*, who maintains strong ties to his African heritage despite living in England for years. Salim's comfort in speaking Kiswahili with Mr Mgeni underscores the importance of maintaining cultural connections in a foreign land. These relationships challenge traditional notions of home and belonging in an increasingly interconnected world. By examining the complexities of personal interactions, Gurnah's works reveal how the enduring legacy of colonialism shapes societal structures. These portrayals offer an understanding of the challenges and opportunities arising from intercultural encounters in a postcolonial era.

Also, Gurnah's texts emphasise the challenges of navigating cultural differences and the power dynamics that often exist. His characters face societal

pressures, discrimination, and the emotional toll of displacement. Despite these challenges, these characters find a source of strength and fulfilment in their multicultural lives. Characters discover new perspectives, forge connections beyond borders, and develop a deeper understanding of themselves. The narrator of *Admiring Silence* and Abbas from *The Last Gift* learn to adapt to life in a new country. And in *Desertion* Rashid finds motivation in uncovering the story of Rehana and Pearce in a foreign land. The characters highlight the importance of creating spaces where individuals from diverse backgrounds can come together and explore their identities without societal constraints, as also seen with the narrator and Emma in *Admiring Silence*. These spaces foster understanding and acceptance of cultural differences.

Besides Gurnah's stories avoid simplistic stereotypes and explore the complexities of cultural identity, adaptation, and resistance within multicultural societies. Characters like Salim, Rashid, Abbas, and the narrator of *Admiring Silence* highlight the challenges immigrants face. While also showcasing their resilience and ability to forge connections and identities in unfamiliar environments. The characters' journeys highlight the complexities of navigating life in a multicultural society. For instance, Salim's and Rashid's struggle to find a sense of belonging in England, despite adopting aspects of British life. This emphasises the challenges immigrants face in reconciling their cultural heritage with the dominant culture of their new environment. This internal conflict is further exemplified by Salim's decision to pursue literature instead of business studies, and the narrator's concealment of his relationship with Emma from his family in *Admiring Silence*.

The ongoing process of identity formation within a multicultural context is also evident in *The Last Gift*, where Jamal's desire to learn about his family

background leads to internal struggle. These experiences align with Bhabha's concept of hybrid identities, where individuals negotiate between different cultural influences. Despite these challenges, Gurnah's characters often find ways to build connections across cultures. Salim's friendships with Reshat and Mahmood, and the narrator's relationship with Emma in *Admiring Silence,* provide a sense of belonging and acceptance. The characters' initial attempts to mimic expected behaviours in England can be interpreted as a form of resistance, echoing Bhabha's notion of mimicry. By mastering the skills needed to navigate life in their new country, these characters assert a degree of control over their environment, even while feeling like outsiders. These portrayals contribute significantly to postcolonial studies by illustrating the complex, ongoing nature of identity formation in multicultural societies. The narratives provide a view of how individuals negotiate their identities in the face of cultural displacement and globalisation, moving beyond simplistic narratives of assimilation or resistance.

Gurnah's works also highlight the diversity of voices and perspectives. His novels challenge the stereotypical representations of East African identities. The portrayal of characters from diverse backgrounds African, Asian, and European reflects the complex multicultural history of East Africa. The instances like the German Oberleutnant teaching Hamza, Khalifa's Indian heritage, and the relationship between Rehana and Pearce highlight the colonial influences, cultural hybridity and power dynamics that have shaped the region. These diverse representations challenge simplistic narratives of colonizer and colonized, instead presenting East Africa as a melting pot of cultures with complex social hierarchies and intersecting identities. The societal opposition to interracial relationships, such as Rehana and Pearce's, and the

continued prejudices faced by later their granddaughter Jamila, demonstrate how colonial-era attitudes continue to influence social perceptions long after the colonial period. These characters and their interactions, explore themes of cultural imperialism, identity formation, and the lasting impact of historical events on individual lives and social structures. This approach invites readers to consider the rich, complex and often conflicted social landscape of East Africa, both during the colonial era and in its postcolonial aftermath.

Gurnah's use of intergenerational characters creates a rich, multi-layered narrative that spans different periods, showcasing how historical events shape individual lives across generations. This illustrates the continuity and evolution of struggles, demonstrating how colonial legacies persist while highlighting each generation's unique challenges. The characters Saida and Salim in *Gravel Heart* explore psychological inheritance, showing how trauma and experiences are passed down through families. Shifting political landscapes, from colonial rule to independence and post-independence struggles, are portrayed through characters of different ages, allowing for an examination of evolving identities, intergenerational dialogues and the multifaceted nature of colonialism. The characters from across generations reveal the intersection of personal and collective memory, the evolution of postcolonial struggles and the long-lasting ripple effects of historical events. This approach creates a comprehensive portrait of the colonial and postcolonial experience, humanising historical events by demonstrating their enduring impact on individuals and families. The characters' experiences illuminate the evolving economic landscapes, diaspora experiences and educational opportunities that shape each generation's trajectory.

In *Afterlives*, it can be seen how economic realities shift from Hamza's time to his son Ilyas's, reflecting broader historical changes. The diaspora experience is central to Gurnah's narrative, with characters like Abbas, Salim and Rashid experiencing exile and migration differently based on their generation. Older characters often grapple with a deeper sense of loss, while younger ones struggle with identity in new lands. Education emerges as a powerful force for change across generations, as seen in *Desertion* and *The Last Gift*, where access to education opens new avenues for social mobility but also creates generational gaps. Characters like Amin and Rashid navigate opportunities unavailable to their parents, while Abbas's children's Hanna and Jamal university experiences in England contrast sharply with his limited education. Through these intergenerational portrayals, the novels illuminate how historical, political, and social changes ripple through families, shaping identities, challenges, and opportunities. This reveals the ongoing impact of colonialism and the constant negotiation of identity in a postcolonial world, offering a comprehensive view of how experiences evolve across generations while certain struggles persist.

Based on the preceding analysis, it is apparent that Gurnah's narratives challenge the binary of coloniser and colonised, illuminating the emergence of new hybrid identities. The characters exemplify the complex process of negotiating cultural belonging. Their interactions demonstrate how individuals create novel ways of being in the world, blending elements of different cultures. While acknowledging the power dynamics inherent in colonial encounters, the novels suggest that these relationships foster opportunities for cultural exchange and mutual influence. Rather

than mere mimicry or imposition, the characters' experiences reveal the dynamic process of identity formation in a rapidly changing world.

The third spaces in Gurnah's novels exemplify Bhabha's notion of a liminal space where cultural meanings and identities are negotiated. The fluid, ever-changing nature of the characters' identities aligns with Bhabha's concept of hybridity, while their navigation of multiple cultural codes echoes his ideas on mimicry and ambivalence. Gurnah's works offer a complex view of how individuals negotiate their identities in the face of cultural displacement, colonial legacies and globalization. By portraying both the challenges and enriching aspects of multicultural experiences, these findings enhance the understanding of identity formation as an ongoing, dynamic process that extends well beyond the immediate postcolonial period into our contemporary globalised world.

This research explores the construction of new identities, contributing substantially to the field of postcolonial studies. By focusing on the often-overlooked realm of East African literature, the study offers an examination of identity formation in this context. Through the lens of Bhabha's theories, this investigation provides fresh insights into the intricate processes by which individuals negotiate and create identities in the aftermath of colonialism and within multicultural environments. It focuses on how personal experiences of displacement intersect with cultural hybridity and colonial legacies to shape new identities. Beyond its literary analysis, this research offers valuable perspectives on the challenges and opportunities inherent in diverse societies. Its findings can inform policies and practices related to integration, culture and education in increasingly pluralistic communities, thereby underscoring the enduring relevance of postcolonial studies in our globalised era. Furthermore, this

study serves as a foundation for future research, including comparative analyses with other East African or diasporic writers, interdisciplinary explorations of immigrant experiences, and investigations into the resonance between Gurnah's literary portrayals and the lived realities of East African diaspora communities. As a final reflection, this research highlights how the complex interplay of cultural hybridity, displacement, and colonial legacies contributes to the formation of new identities, deepening the understanding of identity in an interconnected world and emphasising the dynamic and evolving nature of this process in postcolonial contexts

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Publications

Original Research

Unfurling Silences: Hybridity and Diasporic Belonging in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Admiring Silence*

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Abstract: This article delves into Abdulrazak Gurnah's "Admiring Silence," employing Homi K. Bhabha's hybridity theory to scrutinize the construction of the postcolonial self. By unpacking Gurnah's use of silences around memories of colonial violence and experiences of displacement, the article contends that the author challenges conventional notions of identity and belonging, revealing the fragmented nature of the postcolonial subject. Crucially, in the contemporary globalized world, Gurnah's exploration gains significance. The narrative's emphasis on cultural hybridity becomes a vital lens through which to understand the complexities of identity in our interconnected world. Characters, navigating liminality, emerge as proactive agents forging new forms of identity in response to the challenges of globalization. Drawing on Bhabha's "third space," the article illustrates how Gurnah's characters occupy liminal spaces between colonizer and colonized cultures, offering a powerful commentary on transcending historical boundaries. This analysis deepens our understanding of postcolonial subjectivity and timely explores how individuals navigate identities in a globally interconnected world.

Keywords: Cultural Hybridity, Third Space, Narrative Silence, Identity, Liminal Space

Introduction

Beneath the surface of postcolonial narratives, spun with threads of words and silences, lies a hidden landscape where untold stories of diasporic experience and fragmented identities resonate. In Abdulrazak Gurnah's novel *Admiring Silence*, these silences are not mere gaps but pulsating echoes of memories silenced by colonization and displacement. Delving into them becomes a journey of deciphering the intricate codes of cultural hybridity and liminality, as Homi K. Bhabha's "third space" theory suggests. Examining the unspoken anxieties, the unvoiced longings, and the unspoken truths within these silences reveals the complexities that shape Gurnah's characters' very existence. Here, marginalized voices find expression, and silenced histories surface, challenging dominant narratives of belonging. By deciphering these silences, we embark on a transformative journey, not only enriching our understanding of the postcolonial self but also fostering a more inclusive and equitable world where diasporic narratives find their rightful space in the global tapestry of human experience.

TRAVERSING THIRD SPACE: ANALYZING GLOBAL IDENTITY, COLONIALISM, AND HYBRIDITY THROUGH A BHABHAIAN LENS IN ABDULRAZAK GURNAH'S *ADMIRING SILENCE*

Shalini & Ajoy Batta*

Abstract: This paper explores global identity, colonialism, and hybridity in Abdulrazak Gurnah's novel Admiring Silence through the lens of Homi K. Bhabha's "Third Space.'" It contends that the novel delves into how individuals navigate identities amidst colonial legacies and cultural encounters. Bhabha's "Third Space,'" characterized by ambiguity and hybridity at the crossroads of diverse cultures, becomes the backdrop for the unnamed narrator's journey. Displaced by colonialism, the narrator grapples with the challenges posed by lingering colonial effects, the clash between traditional Zanzibari values and Western influences, and the complexities of reconciling a mixed heritage. Despite these obstacles, the narrator successfully forges a hybrid identity in the third space that transcends traditional dichotomies' limitations. This hybrid identity, blending Zanzibari and Western elements, emerges as more authentic and sustainable than either cultural extreme. The paper concludes that Admiring Silence offers valuable insights into negotiating identity in a postcolonial world, challenging conventional binaries and presenting a subtle perspective on identity formation.

I. Introduction

The idea of the "third space" has evolved in the constantly changing field of literary and cultural studies as a critical framework that transcends traditional borders and provides a dynamic lens for examining the intricacies of colonialism, hybridity, and global identity. Homi K. Bhabha, a postcolonial theorist, coined the phrase "third space" (1994). It invites us to investigate the liminal zone where cultures, histories, and identities collide, and eventually give rise to new forms of expression and comprehension. The "third space" is more than a geographical or physical entity, ". . . Third Space where cultural boundaries are the most blurred" (O'Neal, 2007). Instead, it is a conceptual domain that disrupts the traditional binaries of center and periphery, self and other, colonizer and colonized. Bhabha's notion of the "third space" allows for exploring cultural identity formation and the deconstruction of binary oppositions between the East and the West (Murray, 2013).

Abdulrazak Gurnah's novel *Admiring Silence*, set in this liminal space, weaves together stories of cultural encounters, negotiations, and transformations to reflect the multifaceted aspects of global identity in a postcolonial setting. The characters, settings, and events serve as illustrative examples of the interaction between colonizer and colonized, as well as tradition and modernity, and they show the complexity of hybrid identities that result from the blending of many cultural aspects. Gurnah's work, influenced by Bhabha's theory, takes a scattered and migratory approach to examine the multiple locations and forms of authorial performance and personae, expanding the understanding of Gurnah's position in contemporary cultural discourse (Flöter-Durr & Nowak-Korcz, 2021). By embracing the concept of the "third space," Gurnah's *Admiring Silence* explores the complexities of migration, displacement, and cultural hybridity in a postcolonial context.

I.1 Abdulrazak Gurnah's Multifaceted Journey

Gurnah's literary oeuvre adeptly navigates the intricate landscapes of displacement, identity, and the enduring repercussions of colonialism. Gurnah's stories ". . . of migration or

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THE NOTION OF UNCANNINESS IN ABDULRAZAK GURNAH'S *GRAVEL HEART*

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Abstract

The paper aims to offer a postcolonial reading of Abdulrazak Gurnah's novel *Gravel Heart* incorporating Homi K Bhabha's notion of uncanny/ unhomeliness. *Gravel Heart* is a tale that takes reader into Salim's life, from his childhood in Zanzibar to his difficult days as an immigrant in England. The novel is about displacements and perpetual movements of people from their homelands in the uncertainties of a foreign land. The notion of uncanny helps in comprehending the experiences of both individuals who are rooted to the homeland and those who are constantly on the move. The paper has explored Salim's transition to adulthood as an unpleasant journey, which Bhabha considers when the home is no longer the sphere of domestic life. The paper also examined Salim's unhomely journey to a foreign land that exemplifies his dislocation.

Keywords: Uncanny, unhomely, home, identity, migration.

Introduction

In today's world the notion of 'home' is about putting human society in a more insecure and unstable situation than ever before. How can such a notion that only exists on the abstract level have such devastating consequences. Despite the unsettling relationship between the idea of home/homeliness and change that has been observed all over the world particularly after colonialism, it is important to recognize that not all manifestations of the problem are the same. It varies by geography, position of the group in the larger equation, and the degree to which the contending groups have absorbed the idea of home.

In the essay "The World and the Home" (1992) Homi K Bhabha adapts Sigmund Freud's notion of 'unheimlich' to develop the concept of the 'unhomely'. Freud has used the term 'unheimlich', in his famous 1919 essay "The Uncanny", the term means something strange or uncanny. Freud defines the term, ". . . the unheimlich is what was once heimlich, homelike, familiar; the prefix 'un' is the token of repression" (15). According to Bhabha being unhomed or feeling unhomely is a sense of dislocation that emerges when the boundaries between the outer world and domestic world get blurred. Bhabha further states in the essay that unheimlich arises when this boundary disappears or collapses and "…the private and the public become part of each other…" (Bhabha 141), making once familiar home strange. The familiar becomes unfamiliar, home becomes unhomely, and this journey through the unheimlich is an emotional departure from something intimately familiar. According to Bhabha, the space between the heimlich (homely) and the unheimlich (unhomely) is a post-colonial space, a space in which one can observe formation of an individual's identity with a combination of the strange and the familiar events.

The notion of unhomely lives, given by Bhabha, refers to growing up between two cultures, living on the margins and on the edges, and not feeling at peace on either side eventually evokes uncanniness. This concept is very similar to Freud's concept of uncanny, according to which when the subconscious creeps into the conscious, it generates an uncanny moment. It is very similar to a situation when the outside world intrudes into the house and

Pertinence of Literature in Destroying Menstrual Taboos

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Abstract. The impurity of menstrual blood is a universal myth that spans across all societies and cultures. This notion has also established a barrier to gender equality, as females are instructed, throughout cultures, that menstruation is disgraceful. This belief restricts their capacity to conduct regular duties when they are bleeding, hence making them organize their lives around their menstrual period. The need to fill the inadequate understanding of the menstrual cycle in society is a necessity. The third wave of feminism encouraged society to discuss certain challenging topics, which led to considerable breakthroughs in beliefs around menstruation. The day when feminist discussions were limited to people who could pay to express their opinions has long since passed. The concept of feminism in the twenty-first century encompasses a larger spectrum of opinions. Strong arguments on women's cleanliness and the need for understanding menstruation only serve to emphasize how crucial and significant the issue is. The present paper attempts to explore the myths and taboos, cultural and political perspectives on menstruation, and the role literature is playing in altering society's attitudes about menstruation. The paper will attempt to comprehend how important literature is in eradicating the stigma associated with menstruation and how it contributes to raising awareness of menstrual hygiene among people.

1 Introduction

Societies generally uphold common moral principles and guidelines for appropriate conduct that its members are expected to follow. By establishing shared norms and expectations, a culture controls its members' actions and thinking. This set of social rules can be termed as social taboos. In their work "Taboos and Identity: Considering the Unthinkable" (2009) Chaim Fershtman, Uri Gneezy and Moshe Hoffmandescribe how taboos are considered as "…strong social norms" that are "… supported by severe social sanctions'. Moreover, they state that 'Even thinking about violating a taboo is problematic" [1]. Existing taboos cannot be addressed until there is sufficient knowledge to disprove them.

One prevalent sociocultural taboo is the taboo related to menstruation. Menstrual cycle education is extremely lacking in society, hence existing taboos cannot be challenged until there is enough information to debunk these false beliefs. In her study "A Cross-Cultural Study of Menstruation, Menstrual Taboos, and Related Social Variables" (1974), Rita E. Montgomery explains the "… wide variations in menstrual taboos found cross-culturally" [2]. Furthermore, the study establishes a connection between the development of menstrual taboos and a variable that may be used to correlate this development. Montgomery states how menstrual taboos are imposed on women by society, which imposes certain limitations on women, and several societies also isolate women during the menstrual period. "These taboos are transcultural in nature, represented along a continuum that ranges widely from mild uneasiness and distrust of menstrual fluid and menstruating women, to elaborate complex of restrictions, and ultimately to complete seclusion during the menstrual period" [2].

Despite the fact that menstruation is a natural process, many cultures and communities still hold certain taboos and misconceptions about women during their menstrual period. In her work "Reconsidering the Menstrual Taboo: A Portuguese Case" (1982), Denise L. Lawrencelists various beliefs and taboos followed by various societies and cultures, "Cross-cultural descriptions of menstrual taboo restrictions often include: abstention from sexual intercourse; altered personal hygiene and eating habits; temporary non- participation in normal household tasks such as cooking, cleaning, washing and child care; avoidance of contact with certain 'masculine' items such as tools and weapons, and the handling of food to be eaten by men; avoidance of certain economically and religiously important public areas such as gardens and temples; and more extreme forms of social exclusion such as banishment from usual living areas or from the community itself to a menstrual hut" [3]. This situation is also prevalent in India, where several taboos associated with menstruation still prevail. Menstruation is still seen as unclean and disgusting on a cultural level in many regions of India. In many parts of the country, menstruation limits the everyday lives of girls and women. They are forbidden from praying as well as touching sacred objects. Entering the kitchen is a significant limitation for many in rural areas

Conferences

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