A PSYCHOANALYTICAL STUDY OF TRAUMA IN THE SELECT NOVELS OF ABDULRAZAK GURNAH

Thesis Submitted for the Award of the Degree of

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in

English

By

Mohammad Irfan Ul Haq

Registration number: 12021133

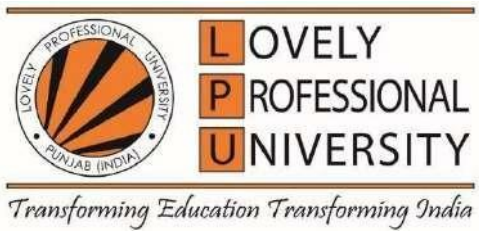
Supervised by

Dr. Rasleena Thakur (27830)

Assistant Professor

Department of English

Lovely Professional University



LOVELY PROFESSIONAL UNIVERSITY, PUNJAB

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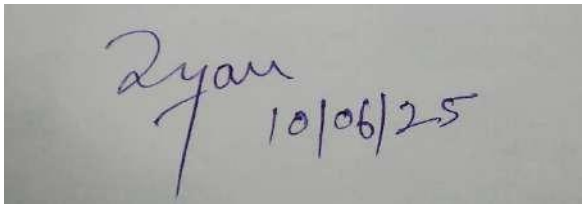
DECLARATION

I, hereby declared that the presented work in the thesis entitled "A Psychoanalytical Study of Trauma in the Select Novels of Abdulrazak Gurnah" in fulfilment of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph. D.)** is outcome of research work carried out by me under the supervision of working as Dr. Rasleena Thakur Assistant Professor, in the English of Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India. In keeping with general practice of reporting scientific observations, due acknowledgements have been made whenever work described here has been based on findings of another investigator. This work has not been submitted part or full to any other University or Institute for the award of any degree.



(Signature of Scholar)

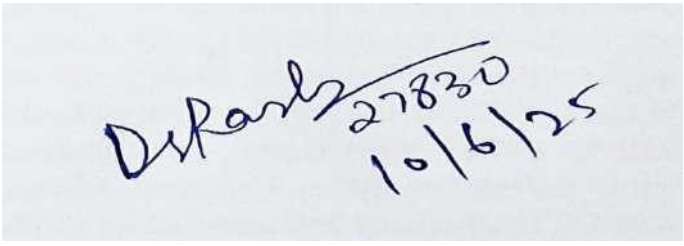
Name of the scholar: Mohammad Irfan Ul Haq Registration No.: 12021133

Department/school: English, School of Liberal and Creative Arts Lovely Professional University,

Punjab, India

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work reported in the Ph. D. thesis entitled "A Psychoanalytical Study of Trauma in the Select Novels of Abdulrazak Gurnah" submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the award of 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 Mohammad Irfan Ul Haq Registration No. 12021133 is Bonafide record of his original work carried out under my supervision and that no part of thesis has been submitted for any other degree, diploma or equivalent course.



(Signature of Supervisor)

Name of supervisor: Dr. Rasleena Thakur Designation: Assistant Professor

Department/school: English / School of Liberal and Creative Arts University: Lovely Professional University

Abstract:

Abdulrazak Gurnah's fiction propounds a nuanced exploration of trauma, illustrating how individual psyches are shaped and fractured by familial dysfunction, socio-cultural displacement, and the enduring legacies of colonialism. While Gurnah's narratives are rich with psychological depth, the psychoanalytic dimensions of his work remain comparatively underexamined within literary scholarship. This thesis, titled *"A Psychoanalytical Study of Trauma in the Select Novels of Abdulrazak Gurnah,"* seeks to address this critical gap by examining the psychological landscapes of Gurnah's characters through the lens of Sigmund Freud's foundational theories, including repression, resistance, symptom formation, neurosis and unconscious conflict. Additionally, the study incorporates contemporary psychoanalytic frameworks to contextualize how trauma is manifested, internalized, and at times, resisted, in Gurnah's fiction. Central to this inquiry is Freud's concept of repression and the unresolved psychic tension arising from suppressed desires, which this study contextualizes within the historical, familial, and social traumas depicted in Gurnah's works. Gurnah's portrayal of colonial subjugation, cultural displacement, and familial dysfunction provide a rich framework for analyzing the psychological scars left by these forces. Freud's theory of repression, as a defense mechanism against distressing memories and desires, is pivotal in understanding the emotional fragmentation experienced by his characters. This thesis expands on Freud's foundational ideas, integrating contemporary trauma theory to explore the nuanced interplay of memory, identity, and post-colonial dislocation in Gurnah's narratives. This study makes its stance clear that it engages in literary psychoanalysis, not clinical psychology. The focus is on narrative patterns, symbolism, dream sequences, silences, fears, and fragments which invite psychoanalytic interpretation, traumatic and post-colonial interpretation. It does not claim that Yusuf, Khalil, Aziz, Zuleikha or Salim have

neuroses in the clinical sense; rather, it uses psychoanalysis to reveal how Gurnah's fiction represents the workings of the unconscious and certain psychodynamic elements. This thesis sets out to read Abdulrazak Gurnah's fiction as a sustained investigation of how colonialism, migration, and intimate family ruptures are inscribed in the unconscious life of his characters, and it does so by forging an interdisciplinary method that privileges psychodynamics while remaining critically self-aware. The decision to use psychoanalysis is grounded not in an uncritical embrace of Freud but in a productive retooling of his concepts as interpretive instruments: Freud in *Studies on Hysteria* acknowledged that his clinical narratives "read like short stories and lack the serious stamp of science" (160), a candid observation that licenses a literary deployment of psychoanalytic categories, repression, symptom-formation, and melancholia as exploratory devices rather than clinical verdicts. At the same time, the thesis acknowledges the colonial genealogy of psychoanalysis and the ethical demand for self-reflexivity (O'Loughlin, 2020), and it therefore places Freudian psychodynamics in conversation with Fanon's (1952/2008) anticolonial psychology e.g., "the black man has two dimensions" (8), Bhabha's (1994) account of split enunciative space, colonial mimicry (38), and Mignolo's (2000) model of 'border thinking' that insists we "think from the borders of modernity/coloniality" (67). This dialogic posture transforms psychoanalysis from a potentially hegemonic apparatus into a border-crossing language that illuminates how universal psychodynamic processes take historically specific forms in colonial and diasporic contexts. Trauma theory is central to this reconfiguration: Cathy Caruth's (1996) claim that trauma resists being "simply located in the past" (9) and Dori Laub's (1992) insistence that trauma often destroys the subject's capacity for internal witnessing, producing repetitive, intrusive images and a "mute wound" rather than an integrated narrative (57, 69, 89), are used to explain the recurrence, silences, and dream-figures in Gurnah's narratives. Neurobiological evidence

as Kolk (1994) affirms that early emotional trauma produces long-term changes in stress response (253), provides a somatic complement to these textual readings, showing how dreams, startle responses, and affective numbness are not merely metaphors but embodied traces of distress. Judith Alpert's (2001) observation that "loss of traumatic material begins early, and children work as ferociously to forget as adults do to remember" (729), helps to account for the paradoxical presence and absence of childhood memory in Yusuf's case, memories that are neither fully recollected nor utterly erased but continually displaced into recurrent nightmares and silences (732–736). Methodologically, the thesis intentionally triangulates: (1) it clarifies the theoretical terrain by delineating trauma studies and postcolonial conceptions of memory before, (2) it situates psychoanalytic tools within a decolonial frame rather than applying them monolithically, and (3) it performs close, text-based psychoanalytic readings of the novels selected for their sustained engagement with childhood, dysfunctionality of certain institutes that impact ones psyche, migration, and exile. This sequence of theory, critical repositioning, literary application, answers critics who worry about theoretical clutter or the extrapolation of generic postcolonial critique: it makes explicit when psychoanalysis is being used as an interpretive vocabulary and when postcolonial and neurobiological data delimit its application. The approach also addresses concerns about over-psychologizing or pathologizing colonial subjects by treating psychodynamic findings as historically inflected patterns (how repression, displacement, and melancholia register under colonial pressure) rather than as universal clinical diagnoses. Thus, Yusuf's dog-dreams, Saleh Omar's silences, and Hassan's rebellious eruptions, Yusufs crab burial scene, Abdalla's predatory nature, are read as manifestations of psychodynamic processes (repetition compulsion, symptom formations, fixations, collapse of witnessing, splitting) that are shaped by specific historical factors, debt-bondage, forced migration, and family violence not explained away by them. The thesis is

candid about its limits: it does not claim to produce regionally exhaustive histories nor to substitute literary interpretation for clinical study, and it acknowledges that further work could extend the corpus and deepen the neurobiological dialogue, feministic psychoanalytical study. Nevertheless, its contributions are clear and actionable: it introduces a concept of 'postcolonial psychodynamics,' demonstrates how psychoanalysis can be transformed into a decolonial hermeneutic (rather than remaining a Eurocentric imposition), and offers a transferable framework for reading trauma and memory in other African and diasporic literatures. In short, by foregrounding psychodynamics within a self-reflexive, interdisciplinary architecture, Freud's heuristic vocabulary, Fanon and Bhabha's anti-/postcolonial insights, Caruth and Laub's trauma hermeneutics, van der Kolk's embodiment, and Alpert's developmental observations, the thesis produces a robust, ethically attuned account of how colonial modernity continues to live in the unconscious and how literature both records and resists those psychic legacies.

Acknowledgement:

This Ph.D. journey has been one of immense growth, perseverance, and discovery, and it would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of the extraordinary individuals who stood by me throughout this endeavor. It is with profound gratitude that I acknowledge their invaluable contributions to this milestone in my life. Alhamdulillah.

I dedicate this thesis to my late grandfather, *Ghulam Hassan Parrey*, a teacher whose dreams were anchored in the education and success of his grandchildren. His vision to see us thrive in universities, continues to inspire me. This achievement is a tribute to his unwavering belief in the power of knowledge and his enduring legacy. This journey would not have been possible without the prayers of my grandma *Zaina Begum,* Thankyou Mooja.

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Thank you for walking this journey with me and for being the cornerstone of my success.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Psychoanalysis provides a powerful framework for understanding the hidden forces that shape human experience, particularly in narratives of trauma, memory, and identity. By uncovering unconscious drives, repression, and other defense mechanisms, psychoanalysis allows for a deeper interpretation of how individuals process suffering and loss. Literature, as a reflection of human consciousness and unconscious, offers a compelling space for such literary psychoanalytical inquiry, where characters' inner conflicts and psychological struggles reveal the complexities of the psyche. Among contemporary novelists, Abdulrazak Gurnah presents a particularly rich field for psychoanalytic study. His works explore themes of displacement, exile, and the enduring effects of colonialism, not only as external struggles but as deeply psychological experiences. Gurnah's characters are often caught between fractured identities and repressed memories, navigating the tensions between personal history and collective trauma. His narratives do more than depict the suffering; they construct layered psychological landscapes where repression and denial operate as key forces in shaping identity. Psychoanalysis, therefore, becomes an essential tool for interpreting the psychological depth of Gurnah's fiction. By examining how trauma is internalized, resisted, and reconfigured through unconscious mechanisms, this study seeks to uncover the deeper structures of suffering in his works. In doing so, it highlights the significance of psychoanalysis as a critical approach to literature, revealing how the unconscious shapes the narratives we tell about pain, displacement, and the search for subjectivity.

Building on this perspective, the present study, *A Psychoanalytical Study of Trauma in the Select Novels of Abdulrazak Gurnah*, unravels the psychological complexities embedded in Gurnah's fiction. Grounded in Sigmund Freud's theories of repression,

resistance, and symptom formation alongside his insights into neurotic states, this research examines how trauma is either remembered or repressed by Gurnah's characters and later manifests through nightmares, hallucinations, guilt, fear, doubts, fragmented social and cultural institutes etc. In doing so, it explores the intricate relationship between memory, psyche, and identity, offering a deeper understanding of how Gurnah's fiction mirrors the unconscious struggles of dysfunctional familial, social, cultural structures, colonial, postcolonial, and displaced individuals. The thesis highlights continued relevance of psychoanalysis in literary criticism by demonstrating how it opens new pathways for interpreting trauma and the human condition in contemporary literature and more so through literary psychoanalytical studies. Through a psychoanalytic reading of Gurnah's novels, this study not only sheds light on the hidden dimensions of trauma but also reaffirms the role of literature as a site where the unconscious finds expression, negotiation, and, at times, resistance. This research positions itself at the intersection of psychoanalysis, trauma studies, and postcolonial theory, not as a compromise between disciplines but as a deliberate reimagining of how literary subjectivity can be read. While Freud's conceptualisation of defence mechanisms, repression, displacement, and fixation emerged in a clinical context, this study extends their explanatory power into the terrains of colonial history and migratory displacement, where psychic injury is as much historically inscribed as it is individually experienced. This extension is not mere ideal or theoretical but as Freud (1977) contends that his works can be understood and read like novels in literature as "Freud himself emphasized the proximity between the case study and the novel, asserting that his case studies could be read as novels and that novelists knew more about the unconscious than psychoanalysts" (107). Gurnah's fictional world exposes how the self is constructed in the shadow of empire, where the 'reminiscences' that Freud speaks of are inextricably bound to legacies of dispossession. In this light,

colonial agency is not a distant political force but an active, formative trauma that imprints itself on the unconscious. Building on Fanon's claim that colonialism 'distorts, disfigures, and destroys' and Ashis Nandy's observation that it colonises minds in addition to bodies, this research forges a framework in which historical power structures are read as catalysts of psychic defence. Such integration is not merely interdisciplinary; it challenges the conventional compartmentalisation of the psychological and the political, asserting that the fractured identities in Gurnah's narratives can only be understood through a model that reads the inner life and historical forces as mutually constitutive in order to counter the epistemic violence. By doing so, the study marks a critical step towards a psychoanalysis that is attuned to the lived realities of postcolonial trauma, a terrain that remains underexplored in literary scholarship. This method allows for what Walter Mignolo terms 'border thinking', working from the threshold between Western and non-Western epistemes, interrogating both, and forging hybrid analytic frameworks that neither romanticise the indigenous (as Gurnah suggests) nor absolutise the Western. In this way, the psychoanalytic lens is not an epistemic imposition but a site of productive tension through which new, plural histories of trauma and resistance can emerge.

The term 'psychoanalysis' was coined for the first time in 1896 by an Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist named Sigmund Freud, in his book *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). Terry Eagleton in his work *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (2011), highlights the working principle of psychoanalysis as:

> Psychoanalysis, in theory, deals with the working and mechanism of the unconscious mind. Drawing upon his extensive experience in treating individuals with mental health challenges, Freud devised his foundational psychological and psychiatric theories, which afterwards established as the discipline of psychoanalysis. (43)

The impact of psychoanalysis on the world and literature of the 20th century is by now well acknowledged. Edgar Jones, PhD, who is professor of the history of medicine and psychiatry at the Institute of Psychiatry, King's College London writes in *Shell Shocked* (2012) that during the First World War, Freudian psychoanalytic theories and procedures became progressively more popular in Europe as a method of treating troops who suffered shell shock. The term shell shock was coined by the soldiers themselves. It involved symptoms like fatigue, tremors, confusion, nightmares, and impaired sight and hearing. It was often diagnosed when a soldier was inept to function, and no apparent cause could be identified. A medically qualified psychologist, Charles S. Myers, was recruited on the list of consulting psychologists for the British Army and was brought in to consult with the B.E.F (British Expeditionary Force) regarding issues related to shell shock cases. Some of the very first few patients Myers testified, presented a whole host of perceptual disorders that included loss of or diminished hearing and vision as well as many other common physical symptoms that range from tremors, loss of balance, headaches, and exhaustion. He concluded that these were psychic wounds rather than physical ones and thought the symptoms were outward signs of repressed trauma (Jones, 18). The high success rate of therapy led to the emergence and continued popularity of psychoanalytic therapy centers all over Europe. The therapy's reputation gradually expanded to the United States and the traumatized American soldiers after the Second World War due to the cruelty and destruction on the battlefield. All of Freud's work is supported by his theory of the unconscious, which is the part of the mind that resides outside of consciousness but has a significant impact on how we act. It utilizes the psychoanalytic literary criticism school of thought that Sigmund Freud founded.

In the *International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* (2005), Alain de Mijolla writes about the functionality of psychoanalysis, he says that, at its most basic level, the

psychoanalysis of the author or a particularly intriguing character in a particular work might be the subject of psychoanalytic literary criticism. Freud highlights that when examining the approach used in case studies and the approach applied by literary authors, "Freud himself emphasized the proximity between the case study and the novel, asserting that his case studies could be read as novels and that novelists knew more about the unconscious than psychoanalysts" (107). It is worth noting that the criticism employs the very interpretive procedures Freud describes as identifying latent meanings, linking symptoms to causes, and reading beyond the manifest content. This approach aligns with the tradition, though extended it to the historical and cultural contexts shaping the characters' psyches. The criticism closely follows the analytic interpretative procedure covered in Freud's *Introductory Lectures on psychoanalysis,* (1977), and other publications and is thus comparable to psychoanalysis itself. In that sense, the methodology is not a deviation from psychoanalytic practice but a deliberate adaptation of its core procedure, following the same logical steps that Freud outlines observation, identification of psychic mechanisms, and contextual interpretation.

A psychoanalytic reading strives to conceptualize meaning from mundane human experiences including fears, trauma, anxiety, sexuality, repression of the unconscious, and dream meanings, as well as the meaning of death, to better comprehend the inner working of human behaviours. They identify a psychological framework for the literary work, prioritizing the individual 'psychodrama' above the 'social drama'. The link between conscious and unconscious processes and the norms of mental functioning are the concerns explored by a subfield of applied psychoanalysis known as psychoanalytic critique. Since the beginnings of psychoanalysis, the subject has revealed a strong set of ties to literature that may almost be described as a shared fascination.

In 1906, Freud was introduced to a then-unknown short novel by German author

Wilhelm Jensen through his colleague Carl Jung. His subsequent analysis of *Gradiva* (Jensen, 1903/1918) in 1907 is regarded as the first instance in which literature was systematically examined from a psychoanalytic perspective (Kaplan & Kloss, 1973). However, even before this, Freud had explored literary works in his psychoanalytic reflections, as evident in an 1897 letter to Wilhelm Fliess, where he discussed *Hamlet* and *Oedipus Rex.* Freud frequently turned to literature for insight and inspiration, drawing connections between artistic expression and psychological theory. It is noted by Linda Sandbæk, that references to literature and other forms of art appear in 22 of his works (Segal, 1991, as cited in Kristiansen, 2013) (27). In his analysis of *Gradiva (1907)*, Freud particularly highlights his deep appreciation for the intuitive knowledge that literature offers, stating: But creative writers are valuable allies, and their evidence is to be prized highly, for they are apt to know a whole host of things between heaven and earth of which our philosophy has not yet let us dream. In their knowledge of the mind, they are far in advance of us everyday people, for they draw upon sources which we have not yet opened to science. (8)

This statement underscores Freud's recognition of the profound psychological insights embedded in literature, often preceding formal scientific exploration. Literary criticism, especially in its academic form, has served as the primary articulation point between the two fields of study. Three distinct disciplines Literary theory, Literature, and Psychoanalysis interact and seek to use one another in distinctive ways. Although it has done so on occasion, psychoanalysis does so considerably more commonly by employing literature as a model or source for its conceptions. Literary criticism has attempted to use psychoanalytic theory to explain literature, while literary criticism itself has occasionally attempted to creatively incorporate psychoanalysis. Such connections are feasible because the psychoanalytical theory has long held that literature and the arts, in general, derive

much of their appeal from their capacity to express unconscious content in masked form, as well as from their capacity to serve as vehicles for fantasy and, in Freud's case specifically, as socially acceptable sublimations of the erotic drive. The academic discipline of literary theory or literary criticism has always made the strongest connections between literature and psychoanalysis.

The Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis is based on the series of two-hour lectures given by Sigmund Freud to laypeople and medical professionals at the University of Vienna between 1915 and 1917 to introduce them to the basic ideas of psychoanalysis. The Introductory Lectures, which were delivered with the idea of publishing down the road, were a huge success, selling fifty thousand copies in German during Freud's lifetime. It was and still is Freud's most well-known work, along with *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901). Freud adopted a public lecture method of instruction. The Lectures are not treatises, but rather condensed explanations of concepts and findings from previous research. He provides several illustrations and anecdotes, and he spends a sizable portion of the book talking about the psychopathology of daily life and dreams, two subjects that are instantly pertinent to his readership. He also tries to describe the peculiarities of psychoanalysis, especially those that are most difficult for people to comprehend and that, in their offence to human egotism, are comparable to the discoveries made by Charles Darwin and Nicolas Copernicus.

The Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis are divided into three segments of varying lengths. The first is brief and deals with parapraxes, the second and third, which are more in-depth, deal with dreams and the general theory of neuroses, respectively. Given the breadth of the topics covered, which range from the unconscious to the development of the libido, the formation of various symptoms, and how they are addressed during psychoanalysis, part three is incredibly concise. Thirty years after Sigmund Freud

gave these lectures, the psychoanalytic community in the United States had expanded to the point where it could support a journal with a cultural focus. The Freudian journal Imago, which Freud tells us was "concerned with the application of psychoanalysis to non-medical fields of knowledge… served as the forerunner of the American Imago in Europe" (Mijolla, 60). A few of the chapters from this book that would be applied to the works of Abdulrazak Gurnah are briefly introduced below:

The first lecture from the book *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* that is being propounded here is, *The Path to the Formation of Symptoms*. In Freud's lecture, *The Path to the Formation of Symptoms* Freud deliberates the core arguments that propound the development of neurotic complications in the human psyche. It is to say that characters may experience various moral issues that have an emotional impact on them and ultimately impact their psyche. Characters that experience these upheavals and difficulties consequently carry these consequences to their overall physical life and into their unconscious and subconscious. However, it must be noted that family issues have a significant impact on a child's or child character's psychological growth. For example, in the novel *Paradise,* the absence of something from a child's life, especially if it is connected to his or her family, leads to fears, alienation, and nightmares. Furthermore, if a child, like the protagonist Yusuf, suffers harsh incidents like being compelled to leave his home and leaving his mother, her affection, attention, and care, which visibly alters the psychic patterns, he begins developing symptoms.

The second lecture in Freud's *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, titled *From Fixation to Trauma - The Unconscious*, focuses on elucidating the dynamics of the unconscious mind and its function in psychological development. Freud discusses the concept of fixation, where individuals become trapped at a particular stage, leading to unresolved conflicts that manifest later in life as neurotic symptoms. He then links fixation

to trauma, suggesting that traumatic events, especially in childhood, can be repressed into the unconscious, shaping behavior and emotional responses. Freud highlights how these repressed memories and unresolved traumas often resurface in disguised forms, such as dreams or neurotic behaviors, emphasizing the unconscious as a crucial force in influencing human psychology.

The third lecture in Freud's *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* focuses on the concepts of *Resistance and Repression*. Freud explains repression as the mental process by which distressing memories, desires, or thoughts are pushed into the unconscious to avoid conscious discomfort. Resistance refers to the psychological defense mechanisms individuals use to block the recovery of these repressed thoughts during psychoanalysis. Freud argues that these unconscious repressions manifest through neurotic symptoms, behaviors, or dreams.

The fourth lecture that is used in this thesis is '*common neurotic state*'. The term 'neurosis, sometimes known as psychoneurosis or neurotic disorder, is used to describe a variety of mental or emotional problems, the majority of which entail a high level of worry or terror. A person with any level of anxiety or depression, depressed feelings, lack of emotions, low self-confidence, and/or emotional instability is referred to informally as 'neurotic' (a person affected by neurosis). Sigmund Freud established the relationship between Hysterical, neurotics and neurosis in the book, *Origin and development of psychoanalysis* ed-(2018), Freud states about the case of a reminiscence of Londoners who built statues in memory of great fire to remind people of disaster it was, Freud in his lecture says:

> Now hysterical and all neurotics behave like these two unpractical Londoners, not only in that they remember the painful experiences of the distant past, but because they are still strongly affected by them. They

> cannot escape from the past and neglect the present reality in their favour. This fixation of the mental life on the pathogenic traumata is an essential, and practically a most significant characteristic of the neurosis. (10)

Anxiety is among neurosis's most prevalent and obvious symptoms. Symptoms of neurosis include anxiety, sadness or depression, anger, irritability, mental confusion, and a low sense of self-worth. Cognitive problems such as unpleasant or disturbing thoughts, repetition of thoughts and obsession, habitual fantasizing, negativity, cynicism, etc; and so forth are additional symptoms of neurosis. Perhaps the simplest way to describe neurosis is that it is characterised by "poor ability to adapt to one's surroundings, inability to change one's life patterns, and inability to build a richer, more complicated, more gratifying personality" (498). Freud thought that early disappointments or traumas, especially in childhood, were the source of neurosis. In the broader framework of Freudian thought, given that Freud is widely regarded as the founding figure of psychoanalysis, a selection of key texts and their contextual relevance are provided below to support referencing, application analysis and the development of arguments in the thesis.

Studies on Hysteria, *1995,* translated into English by James Beaumont Strachey, which Freud and Breuer originally published in 1895, summarised a decade of work and explained the psychological management of behavioural problems (such as paralysis, migraines, loss of speech, and other symptoms) without a physical explanation. In the book, they discussed their work with and research on several hysterics, including one of their most well-known patients, a young woman by the name of Anna O. The cornerstone of Freud's theory, Die Traumdeutung was the original title of '*The Interpretation of Dreams' 1900,* a German publication. This work, which Freud frequently mentioned as his personal favourite, has now become an enduring classic in the history of psychoanalysis.

The book details Freud's hypothesis that unconscious desires concealed by symbolism are represented in dreams. *Zur Psychopathologie des Alltagslebens*, often known as *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life,1901,* is regarded as one of the key works that describe Freud's psychoanalytic theory. The book delves deeper into several abnormalities that occur in daily life, such as forgetting names, verbal stutters (also known as Freudian slips), faults in speech, and hidden memories. After that, he examines the underlying psychopathology that he thinks caused these mistakes. Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewußten, or *In Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious, 1905,* is a book by Sigmund Freud that describes how jokes, like dreams, can be connected to memories, wants, or wishes that are hidden from conscious awareness. Based on his theories of the id, ego, and superego, Freud developed a theory of comedy. Freud believed that the superego gave the ego the ability to produce and convey comedy. *Introduction to Psychoanalysis, 1977*, one of Freud's most well-known publications, is where he presents his psychoanalytic theory, which includes the unconscious mind, the theory of neuroses, and dreams. The preface, written by G. Stanley Hall, explains "These twenty-eight lectures to laymen are elementary and almost conversational. Freud sets forth with frankness almost startling the difficulties and limitations of psychoanalysis and describes its main methods and results as only a master and originator of a new school of thought can do" (15). The most well-known and frequently read of Freud's publications is *Civilization and Its Discontents*, also known as *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*. The emphasis of the book is on Freud's theories concerning the conflict between the self and society. Freud believed that many of our most fundamental impulses conflicted with what was best for society, which is why laws were made to restrict some behaviours. *Moses and Monotheism* is one of the important books by Freud. This volume covers Freud's theorising on different religious topics, which he uses to explain some of the traits of the Jewish people in connection to

Christians. After thorough research into the Moses legend, Freud shockingly uncovers that Moses was an Egyptian who carried the religion he taught the Jews with him from his home country. He embraces the idea that while Moses was killed in the wilderness, the people treasured his memory, and his religious doctrine prevailed. The development of Freud's idea of monotheism allows him to shed light on the history of Judaism and Christianity.

Abdulrazak Gurnah was born in 1948 and raised on the African island of Zanzibar. At the end of the 1960s, he fled to England. Following the peaceful end to British colonial control in December 1963, Zanzibar underwent a revolution that, under the rule of President Abeid Karume, resulted in the tyranny and persecution of locals of Arab heritage, including massacres. Gurnah, a member of the victimized ethnic group, was compelled to abandon his family and leave the then-new Republic of Tanzania after completing his education. He was a young man of eighteen then. With a primary focus on authors like Wole Soyinka, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and Salman Rushdie, Gurnah served as a Professor of English and Postcolonial Literature at the University of Kent in Canterbury until his recent retirement. Gurnah has ten novels and several short story collections to his credit, including *Memory of Departure (1987), Pilgrims Way (1988), Paradise (1994), By The Sea (2001), Desertion (2005), Gravel Heart (2017)* and, most recently, *Afterlives (2020)*. At the outset, a novel expedition of struggle is initiated as it may be not easy to be displaced from one country and to another unfamiliar country, but it is as problematic and difficult to adapt to and survive a new society and culture for human beings as they are looked upon as the 'other' or 'refugees', whose human rights are negated in such new lands which later gives an uproar to the psycho-traumas. Jopi Nyman (2017) says that "Gurnah's refugees grapple with the psychological scars of displacement, caught between the trauma of the past and the alienation of the present." (45). Stefanie Schüler (2020) in a similar instance mentions

that "The refugee's struggle to adapt to a hostile 'other' society exacerbates the psycho-social wounds of colonial violence" (112).

His entire body of art is centered on the idea of refugee disruption. Even though Swahili was his native tongue when he started writing as a 21-year-old in exile in England, English ended up being his primary literary medium. Gurnah has made it a point to steer clear of the pervasive nostalgia for a purer pre-colonial Africa in all his work. His background is an Indian Ocean Island with a diverse range of cultures, a history of slavery, and other types of persecution under several colonial powers, including Portuguese, Arab, German, and British, and with linkages to the rest of the globe through trade. Zanzibar was a cosmopolitan society before globalization.

While discussing Abdulrazak Gurnah through the lectures of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis, this relation delves into contemporary relevance of psychoanalysis and literature. It is important to note that his works frequently address serious issues including immigration, refugees, alienation, racism, and homelessness. This is because the author himself abandoned his hometown in his early years and moved to London. It just served as a starting point for him to discuss endless topics and situations related to alienation and displacement in his works. His compositions are replete with references to his home country, upbringing, recollections, death and survival. Surviving the deaths made Abdulrazak Gurnah recall it all from his memory, from what he witnessed back in his home. Gurnah writes in his 2004 essay *Writing Place*:

> I was writing from memory, and how vivid and intense that memory was... That oddity heightened the feeling that a life had been abandoned, that people had been carelessly and nonchalantly dumped, and that the place and the manner had been permanently lost to me. When I began to write, it was that lost life that I wrote about, the lost place and what I remembered

of it. (58)

The concept of "writing from memory" serves as a foundational premise for introducing the psychoanalytic study of Abdulrazak Gurnah's works. Explores the intricate relationship between memory and psyche, it draws upon Sigmund Freud's lectures and broader psychoanalytic theories that examine these connections. Through this framework, the study investigates how Gurnah's characters evolve as their memories, both repressed and recalled, shape their psychological landscapes. Gurnah's works have been widely studied in the context of migration, alienation, and the refugee experience, with numerous scholars examining these themes. However, what distinguishes his narratives is the deep personal nature of his storytelling. Writing from recollection, Gurnah revisits his own past, bringing forth the psychological weight of displacement and exile. This direct engagement with memory provides a compelling justification for analyzing his fiction through a psychoanalytic lens, offering new insights into how trauma, repression, and identity formation are woven into his narratives.

Previous research on Abdulrazak Gurnah's works has largely overlooked the psychoanalytic dimension, with only minimal or negligible attention given to this critical area of study. Through a thorough review and analysis of existing literature, I have identified a significant gap in the exploration of Gurnah's narratives from a psychoanalytic perspective, highlighting the need for a deeper investigation into how his characters' psychological experiences are shaped by trauma, memory, and repression. Abdulrazak Gurnah's literary corpus, distinguished by its unflinching exploration of displacement, colonial violence, and fractured identities, has long occupied a critical space in postcolonial scholarship. While existing studies have rigorously dissected sociopolitical dynamics, migratory patterns, and cultural hybridity in his works, the psychological dimensions of trauma, particularly through psychoanalytic frameworks, remain

conspicuously underdeveloped. The basic postulate of looking into the psyche of the characters is the primary principle to deal with, because Gurnah in an interview he himself emphasises the role of his psyche, memory and trauma in shaping the development of his novels, characters, narrative structures and the other underlying principles of psyche. Du, Yujin, and Dan Cui's study, "A Study of Gurnah's Memory Narrative and Diaspora Identity" (2022), explores the themes of memory, identity, and diaspora in Abdulrazak Gurnah's fiction. The authors argue that Gurnah's use of memory narratives helps to illuminate the struggles of racial identity, cultural antagonism, and hybridity in the postcolonial world. Zheng Qingyue's study, "Memory Writing and Identity Construction in Abdulrazak Gurnah's Admiring Silence" (2024), explores how cultural memory and identity construction shape the experiences of diasporic individuals in Gurnah's fiction.

By employing cultural memory theory and identity theory, Zheng argues that the protagonist's crisis stems from both colonial legacies and the failure of acculturation in exile. The study also highlights how Gurnah's narrative structure reflects the fragmented and conflicted psyche of the diasporic subject, reinforcing themes of alienation, nostalgia, and cultural hybridity. This literature review synthesizes and critiques extant scholarships to foreground the necessity of a systematic psychoanalytic inquiry into trauma in Gurnah's *Paradise*, *Memory of Departure*, *By the Sea*, *Afterlives*, *Pilgrims Way* and *Admiring Silence*. By interrogating gaps in Freudian, Caruthian, and Kristevan interpretations of repressed memories, somatic dissociation, and intergenerational suffering, this review positions the proposed thesis as a pioneering intervention, one that recalibrates the East Africa's pre, Colonial and Post Colonial phases of living through the prism of psychoanalytic trauma theory. As Gurnah himself is of the opinion that the evil existed way before the colonisation of East Africa- Slavery, Child Sexual Abuse, Patriarchy and Homophobia. Similarly, Suad Abdulaziz Al-Kadery's paper, "Slavery as a

Cultural Legacy: Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Paradise* as a Case Study" (2024), examines how slavery persists as a cultural and psychological legacy in Gurnah's *Paradise* (1994). Al-Kadery highlights themes of dehumanization, discrimination, loss of agency, and social marginalization, illustrating how cultural memory of slavery perpetuates racial and class hierarchies. Vijay Nair (2012) interrogates Gurnah on the impulse behind writing *Paradise* to which Gurnah answers that he wrote the novel because of "the falsification of history as the people who did most of the crusading against slavery were also missionaries" (4). There was this hope that the ending of one would also enable the other." Abdulrazak Gurnah, as noted in Encyclopedia of African Literature (2003) by Gikandi, is regarded as "one of the most prolific and refreshing figures in the field of East African writing" (295). However, much of East African literary criticism tends to overlook his contributions. Khainga O'Okwemba observes that "East Africa critic mainly focuses on canonical Swahili authors such as Said Ahmed Said, Mohamed Said Abdullah, Shaban Roberts and Kezilahabi while the outstanding Tanzanian English writer Abdulrazak Gurnah . . . passes more or less unnoticed" (151).

This research aims to offer a fresh perspective on Gurnah's works, addressing the gap in critical engagement with his fiction. As Tina Steiner asserts, "Gurnah's work deserves more attention than it has received to date" (33). Therefore, the objectives of this study extend beyond broadening the discourse surrounding Gurnah and his literary contributions. They also seek to highlight the overlooked landscape of Tanzanian fiction within the broader literary framework, bringing it into scholarly focus. The concept of migration has been extensively explored in postcolonial studies, often serving as a metaphor for displacement, identity fragmentation, and cultural transformation. Salman Rushdie (2010) conceptualizes migration as the "migration of ideas into images," (278) arguing that migrants themselves are "metaphorical beings" (278) as they transition

between cultures and nations. Rushdie further asserts that displacement reshapes perception, enabling migrants to recognize that "reality is an artefact" and to resist "absolute forms of knowledge" (280). Similarly, Homi Bhabha (2000) posits that migration transfers meanings of home and belonging across cultural distances, allowing the migrant to reconstruct notions of identity and origin. This reimagining serves as an act of self-empowerment, mitigating the trauma of displacement and transforming loss into creative agency. Andrew Smith (2004) expands this discussion by asserting that "migrancy has now become ubiquitous as a theoretical term" (7), defining it not merely as a physical movement but as a fundamental condition of human existence. Postcolonial scholars frequently examine migration in terms of its revelatory aspects, wherein new experiences, insights, and understandings of cultural relativity emerge. Migration, therefore, is not simply a geographical shift but a psychological upheaval necessitating further critical exploration.

Closely linked to migration is the theme of exile, a key focus in postcolonial scholarship. Michael Seidel (1986) describes exile as a state in which an individual inhabits one place while maintaining a psychological connection to another, often reconstructing past experiences through memory and narrative. David Morley (2000) similarly frames exile as a psychological rather than merely physical condition, emphasizing emotional detachment as a consequence of displacement. Edward Said (2001) takes a more somber view, defining exile as an "unhealable rift forced... between the self and its true home." The irreparable trauma associated with forced displacement, as opposed to voluntary migration, remains a dominant concern in postcolonial discourse. Nejmeh Khalil Habib (2008) further asserts that the exiled individual remains bound to the dream of return, though its intensity varies with time and circumstance. This longing, real or imagined, contributes to the psychological turmoil of exile, reinforcing the need for psychoanalytic

inquiry into postcolonial narratives.

The distinction between exile and expatriation remains an ongoing debate in migration studies. Sophia McClennen (2004) differentiates between the two, arguing that exile is typically involuntary, often driven by political or social coercion, while expatriation implies voluntary departure. McClennen further posits that ideological constructs of identity influence the emotional and psychological impact of exile, intensifying the sense of alienation. This distinction is crucial in understanding the psychological fragmentation experienced by displaced individuals, particularly in postcolonial literature where trauma is deeply embedded in the exilic condition. Nishanth Mogili's study, "Migrants' Trauma and Texture of Survival in Abdulrazak Gurnah's Fiction" (2023), examines the struggles of migrants and residents in postcolonial Africa, particularly in response to colonialism and imperialism. Mogili contextualizes West African literature within its historical and educational developments, emphasizing the novel as the dominant literary form. While the paper provides insight into the broader context of African literary traditions and their engagement with migration, it lacks a direct psychoanalytic exploration of trauma in Gurnah's works. This gap underscores the necessity of a deeper psychological engagement with the emotional and cognitive dissonance experienced by Gurnah's displaced characters. The psychological ramifications of migration and exile have not been sufficiently addressed in postcolonial criticism. While scholars have rigorously examined sociopolitical dimensions, fewer studies have delved into the psychoanalytic implications of trauma resulting from displacement and fractured identities. Abdulrazak Gurnah's narratives frequently depict characters grappling with the residual effects of colonial violence, cultural alienation, and intergenerational trauma, making them prime candidates for psychoanalytic exploration. However, existing scholarship has primarily analyzed Gurnah's works through themes of

migration, colonial history, and diasporic identity without a comprehensive engagement with trauma theory. Mustapha Kharova in "Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea*: Unbelonging and the Trauma of Imprisonment," (2016), attributes Saleh Omar's exile in *By the Sea* to postcolonial dislocation but overlooks the role of Freudian repression in his psychological fragmentation. Ezekiel Kimani Kaigai in "Encountering Strange Land: Migrant Texture in Abdulrazak Gurnah's Fiction," (2014), examines survival strategies in *Admiring Silence* and *Pilgrims Way* but reduces trauma to a byproduct of material struggle, neglecting its deeper psychological transmission. Similarly, Esther Pujolras Noguer et al. in "Exploring the Interstices of Ageing and Narrative Agency in *By the Sea*," (2021), analyze storytelling as a survival mechanism but fail to consider Kristeva's theory of abjection in understanding repressed shame and narrative rupture.

The psychoanalytic dimensions of Gurnah's work, particularly regarding identity crises and the bodily imprint of trauma, remain significantly underexplored. Rashad Al Areqih's "A Psychoanalytic Reading of Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Gravel Heart*" (2023) examines Salim's psychological struggles through Freudian psychoanalysis, focusing on childhood trauma, inferiority, and emotional repression. The study highlights Salim's defense mechanisms and self-perception, particularly after migration. While useful, it remains limited to a character-focused psychoanalytic reading without extensive theoretical engagement with trauma studies. Muhammad Sabboor Hussain and Sitara Tariq's "Sense of Guilt and Shame: An Interpretation of Abdulrazak Gurnah's Gravel Heart in Terms of Traumatic Neurosis" (2023) applies Cathy Caruth's trauma theory to analyze Salim's guilt, repression, and psychic entrapment. It links colonialism to his neurotic symptoms and inability to reconcile with the past. However, this study lacks an in-depth engagement with psychoanalytic structures and does not explore Salim's trauma as a deeply embedded postcolonial symptom across multiple theoretical dimensions.

Abdulkadir Ünal's "Plunderers of the Human Spirit: A Criticism of Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Gravel Heart* in Terms of Literary Trauma Theory" (2022) examines the novel's fragmented structure as a representation of postcolonial trauma. The study focuses on how colonial dispossession erodes identity and stability, utilizing trauma narratives and literary devices. While insightful, it centers on textual techniques rather than an expansive psychoanalytic evaluation of trauma. Debayan Banerjee in "Damed for Difference: A Study of Xenophobia in Dottie," (2018), critiques xenophobia in *Dottie* but confines alienation to sociocultural constructs, disregarding Freudian concepts such as somatic conversion and bodily shame. Felicity Hand in "Searching for New Scripts: Gender Roles in Memory of Departure," (2015), examines patriarchal oppression in *Memory of Departure* but fails to engage with repressed Oedipal conflicts, which may manifest through symptoms like anxiety and psychosomatic distress. While Mohammad Sabri in "A Psychoanalytic Study of *Gravel Heart*," (2017), attempts a psychoanalytic study of *Gravel Heart*, his focus on individual pathology ignores Freud's Mourning and Melancholia, which could unravel collective grief in Admiring Silence. Similarly, Rajesh Thakur in "Complexity of Migration in the Novels of Abdulrazak Gurnah." (2019), examines migration's cultural impacts without considering how forced displacement internalizes trauma as Lacanian *objet petit a*- an unattainable desire for belonging. Anne Minayo Mudanya in "The Narrative Voice in Desertion," (2013), explores narrative fragmentation in *Desertion* but ignores how first-person fissures serve as Freudian defense mechanisms such as denial and displacement.

Sexual trauma (psychosexual) and its intersection with colonial and patriarchal violence in Gurnah's works remain critically neglected. Felicity Hand (2023) in "Gurnah's men: Rethinking Muslim Masculinities in the Indian Ocean World", examines Zanzibari masculinity but fails to address non-consensual sodomy in *Paradise* as a traumatic

enactment of patriarchal dominance. Kate Houlden (2022) in "It Worked in a Different Way': Male Same- Sex Desire in the Novels of Abdulrazak Gurnah" from the book Critical Perspectives on Abdulrazak Gurnah (2022), edited by Tina Steiner and Maria Olaussen similarly reduces same-sex desire in Gurnah's novels to metaphorical resistance, ignoring child sexual abuse as a manifestation of traumatic hegemony and male child Rape, which also calls for the policy framing in East Africa and around the globe. Similarly, Monica Bungaro (2021) in "Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Dottie*: A Narrative of (Un)Belonging," critiques *Dottie* through racial and social exclusion but does not engage with the psychological ramifications of sexual trauma. Robert Young (2019) applies Connell's masculinity theory in *Desertion* but omits Lacanian *Real*, the traumatic kernel of Rehana's oppression that resists symbolization. The conflation of sodomy with homosexuality in some studies obscures its role as a tool of colonial and patriarchal dominance, neglecting psychoanalytic frameworks such as Laplanche's "enigmatic signifier."

The scholarship on sexuality, sodomy, and masculinity in African literature has primarily focused on adult experiences of sexual violence while largely neglecting the implications of sodomy for male children and vulnerable men. Salama Ally and Diyammi Paul (2022) critique sexual violence within Tanzanian society but focus predominantly on the victimization of adult women. Their analysis, while valuable, does not engage with the experiences of child characters in Gurnah's *Afterlives*, whose abuse embodies the intersection of colonial oppression and patriarchal trauma. Similarly, Kimani Kaigai (2014) addresses homophobic violence in East Africa but problematically conflates consensual homosexuality with non-consensual sodomy. This conflation obscures the critical distinction between sodomy as a coercive tool of hegemonic masculinity and consensual same-sex relationships. The failure to differentiate these dynamics perpetuates an oversimplified discourse that marginalizes the experiences of male survivors of sexual

violence.

Furthermore, the tendency to frame sodomy in Gurnah's works as a mere socio-political allegory diminishes its psychoanalytic depth. Scholars such as Houlden (2022) and Kaigai (2014) emphasize the cultural and political implications of same-sex relations in East Africa but do not account for the psychological residues of sexual trauma. Applying Jean Laplanche's theory of the "enigmatic signifier," this study argues that the traumatic imprint of sodomy in *Paradise* and *Afterlives* is not merely metaphorical but deeply embedded in the formation of male subjectivity within oppressive colonial and patriarchal systems. While Freud's model provides a universal framework for understanding repression and neurosis, integrating feminist psychoanalytic theory, particularly Nancy Chodorow's and Juliet Mitchell's interventions enables a more nuanced reading of Gurnah's texts, revealing how patriarchal power is not only imposed externally but also internalised through early relational dynamics. Nancy Chodorow's object-relations framework foregrounds the formative role of early mother-child relationships in shaping gender identity, arguing that because women have historically been primary caregivers, girls tend to maintain a continuous identification with the mother, while boys must differentiate themselves to acquire a masculine identity (93,98). This psychic differentiation, Chodorow suggests, often reproduces patriarchal structures by associating care and emotional labour with femininity, and autonomy and authority with masculinity. Juliet Mitchell complements this by insisting that Freud's psychoanalysis remains indispensable for understanding the unconscious underpinnings of patriarchy, since gendered power is not only socio-economic but deeply embedded in psychic structures (11–14). In Gurnah's *Paradise* (1994), Yusuf's emotional detachment from his mother, necessitated by his departure into Aziz's service, reflects the Chodorowian rupture in maternal bonds, forcing an early masculine individuation under colonial-patriarchal

arrangements. Similarly, in *By the Sea* (2001), Saleh Omar's recollections of childhood reveal the absence of nurturing female figures due to social arrangements that commodify marriage and women's labour, echoing Mitchell's claim that patriarchy survives through unconscious repetitions of gendered separations. In both novels, patriarchy is neither an abstract cultural code nor a purely economic structure; it is an internalised psychic system, enacted in intimate relationships and sustained by unconscious identifications and repressions. This feministic study can be developed into a proper research project, suggesting a future developmental stages that psychoanalysis could be understood through. Mohammad Irfan Ul Haq's recent study "A Critical Analysis of the Intersection between Masculinity and Sodomy in Abdulrazak Gurnah's Novels" (2025) extends this discourse by offering a hypermasculine reading of sodomy as a mechanism of reinforcing hegemonic masculinity in Gurnah's fiction. His work critiques how adult male perpetrators and teenage boys, in their pursuit of hegemonic status, enact sexual violence on weaker men, children, and socially marginalized figures. Unlike previous scholars who either politicize sodomy or conflate it with consensual homosexuality, Haq's research emphasizes its psychosexual traumatic implications, situating sodomy as a violent assertion of patriarchal power rather than an exploration of non-normative sexuality. His study further contributes to the field by conceptualizing sodomy as a form of male child rape, an area that has been largely unexamined in Gurnah's works.

By critically engaging with these gaps, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how sodomy functions in Gurnah's novels not as a representation of alternative sexualities but as a means of consolidating hegemonic masculinity through violence and subjugation. This analysis challenges the dominant discourse that either dismisses sodomy as a peripheral theme or misinterprets it within the framework of consensual same-sex relations. Instead, it foregrounds the psychological and sociopolitical

ramifications of sexual violence as central to Gurnah's critique of masculinity in postcolonial East Africa. This research, therefore, situates itself at the intersection of masculinity studies, psychoanalysis, and postcolonial literary criticism, providing a critical lens through which Gurnah's portrayal of sodomy can be reevaluated beyond existing paradigms. The study's engagement with psychoanalytic theory further underscores the lingering effects of trauma on male identity formation, shedding light on the intricate ways in which power, sexuality, and violence intersect in the author's oeuvre.

One of the key things we learn from Abdulrazak's literature is how skillfully the family is portrayed as the character's primary source of suffering, as opposed to an outsider or a European occupier, whether physically or emotionally, socially, or financially. Throughout Gurnah's works, we encounter characters experiencing familial disorientation, particularly the young characters who develop into the novel's primary protagonists and one neurotic youngster. These young characters initially experience hardship because of their families. If we use the book *Gravel Heart* as an example, we see how the kid's character is plagued by stress, anxiety, and guilt because of the family. *In Memory of Departure*, we see Said receive a heavy beating when they are caught with the money, and when her mother tries to save Said, his father knocks her mother down as well, also kicking Said's stomach (11). In all the novels of Abdulrazak Gurnah, we see the child characters suffer, physically, emotionally, and socially, which in turn are his reasons to suffer psychologically and dwell in one neurotic/anxious character that psychoanalysis talks about. To take another example of how the characters of Abdulrazak Gurnah develop neurosis, later into trauma and anxiety, we see Hassan in *Memory of Departure* sometimes cry out of terror when his father was just around (14). These familial troubles and patriarchal injustice are the prime factors in how the characters gradually develop psychoanalytical symptoms, consciously or unconsciously. This thesis examines Abdulrazak Gurnah's

literature, considering the five works selected for our research. Focusing on the issue of Trauma and how it is acquired, and maintained, applications of fear and terror are portrayed in the books, on the broader dimensions it examines how human relations are represented in the context of trauma, anxiety, fears, repressions, nightmares, regressions, etc.

This thesis contends that a close reading of pre- to post-colonial East Africa, as well as the places outside of East Africa where Gurnah's novels are also set, through quotidian interactions in micro-spaces, offers a different perspective on power dynamics than one emphasizes the effects of colonial dominance and the failed decolonization project. The thesis further contends that power dynamics unrelated to macropolitical power struggles are a part of regular human interactions, whether they take place at home in East Africa or in- migrant communities. The interactions that need to be examined in this case are those between family members, including children and adults, as they engage not only in interpersonal interactions but also in interactions with the places they inhabit. Gurnah gives the reader the chance to read East Africa through the basic units of the community, focusing on regular everyday lives and interactions. He does this through a deft narrative strategy that uses complex narrative perspectives, vivid descriptions, imagery, symbolism, and credible characterization. Gurnah uses the method of in-depth character analysis to show the various ways power enters several domains of human interactions (between father and kid, child and society, adults and occupiers, slaves and masters, travellers, and non-travellers, and between men and women). This very context of in-depth character analysis carried out by the author motivated us to study it through the framework expounded by Sigmund Freud.

Paradise: His critically acclaimed work, the Booker Prize-shortlisted, *Paradise (1994*) offers a prolific domain in the literary scenario. The ideal starting point seemed to

be *Paradise*. In less than three hundred pages, Gurnah creates a world that is rich in complexity and seamless in its storytelling by fusing the genres of bildungsroman, travel fiction, and historical fiction. The story begins in an unknown East African hamlet where 12-year-old Yusuf lives in poverty with little access to food and money. However, his life is made tolerable by his mother's unrestrained laughter and his father's cautious adoration. There isn't much information available regarding Yusuf's education and upbringing, but the youngster was raised near poverty, which taught him the value of money and all the sneaky methods for getting it. Yusuf spends his days waiting for a cheap lunch of bone soup and anticipating visits from Uncle Aziz, who brings a whiff of everything materialistic and the assurance of a parting gift in the form of money. When his father urges Yusuf to stop acting like a child and instead join Uncle Aziz on his adventures, one of these visits, however, completely transforms Yusuf's life. When Yusuf learns that his father has pawned him to Uncle Aziz (who turns out to be not his uncle but a moneylender) until he can pay his debts, the initial exhilaration of leaving home and embarking on a wonderful journey is replaced by powerlessness. There is no other option for Yusuf to get back home.

By The Sea: His famous book, *By The Sea,* is briefly summarised here to better understand the different conflicts characters are into. In Gurnah's interviews with Claire Chambers, Gurnah talks about this novel; "Shakespeare was a key reference point for *By The Sea*, including his ideas of what it might mean to be in love" (115). Also, when Saleh Omar is at the airport, he is curious whether the immigration officer, Kevin Edelman, is Jewish, and the passage commences with the quotation "That this too solid flesh should melt, thaw and resolve itself into a dew" (115). True to Gurnah's denunciation of reductionist ideas of migrants, Muslims, and East Africa, *By The Sea* pacts far more with the mistakenly produced hostility amongst the two men than it does with Saleh's precarity

as an asylum-seeker. However, the novel begins with Saleh's entrance into England as an asylum-seeker and his interactions with his allocated social worker, Rachel, most of the novel tracks the two men's differing narratives of their lives in Zanzibar and their ultimate negotiation of a fragile friendship grounded somewhat insecurely on ethnicity and their common history, which is fixed in this segment. When ageing Saleh Omar, arrives in England seeking asylum, he asserts not to speak English. His name changes to Rajab Shaaban, a name he has acquired for a reason. As Omar settles into a small apartment provided by immigration authorities, spends his days glancing out the local furniture stores and evoking the past as he prosperously ran a shop there and the loan he secured for Hussein, a seafaring merchant from Bahrain, that would invite him and other protagonists much trouble. Meanwhile, poet and professor Latif Mahmud, also from Zanzibar, alerted by the authorities that a fellow Zanzibari might need help with translation, looks back at his past. As order broke down in Zanzibar after it attained independence from Britain, Latif accepted a scholarship to study in former East Germany, escaping soon after to Britain. He still charges Omar as responsible for his family's deterioration. When the two men lastly meet again, the resentful Latif alleges Omar not only of stealing his father's name, Rajab Shabaan but his assets. Omar then re-counts how he honourably inherited the Shabaan property only to lose it; how, in the political mayhem, he was imprisoned on false charges by Latif's family; how he belatedly came to know about the death of his wife and only child; and how he executed the plan to escape additional harassment by fleeing under an assumed name. With these confessions, both men kind of resolve the issue, with hints of fuller lives to come.

The *Memory of Departure*: The background of this work is not prolonged outside East African and Indian Ocean coastal towns but this work recounts Gurnah's comprehensive economic, geopolitical, and historical, legacy via imagination. It describes

how the impact of foreign regimes on trade culture stimulated the movement of the masses. *Memory of Departure* engrosses with disillusionment, violent socio-political situations, and cynicism, just after liberation in Tanzania. This unfavorable ferocious state left many natives as if immigrants were in their land since they have to displace, abandoning their homes. *Memory of Departure* explores the different areas in post- independence Tanzania's political system. One can separate geographically but not intellectually from one's roots.

The novel displays how characters contribute to these socio-political events to establish their independence within the community but not lose their previous identity. It voices the story of Hassan Omar, a character that is claimed to be grounded on Gurnah's own life in Zanzibar. The character of Omar recounts the sense of homelessness, identity crises, and frustration Gurnah witnessed as a teenager in his life. The novel occupies the self-wandering through the first-person voice of Hassan. He navigates the emotional chaos and conflicts throughout his life when he exits his land, memory, and home.

Pilgrims Way: One of the most important works that Gurnah is known globally for, this novel talks about the demise of the literary revolution and one physically known as Black Britain Consciousness. This ideology was formed to combat racism, but the hostilities among various inter-ethnic and inter-racial cooperatives known as 'black Britain' in the 1970s, led to its demise. But this text retains the essence of black Britain thriving via the political awareness of its lead character, which is international, inclusive, and expansive in its symbolic scope. *Pilgrims Way* (1988), Abdulrazak Gurnah's second novel, is stirred by a structuring strain that is at once formal and historical.

The novel's main character is Daud, he is a young, mildly vain, and misanthropic Tanzanian refugee, who works in a hospital in Canterbury. His period is manifested through racial hostility when he is dashed out of bars, jeopardized by rowdy skinheads on

the streets, and even apparently benign marks and signs turn out tools of a racial nuisance to him, like a pub called the Black Dog. It is unusual then, that Daud has a socially reserved relationship with the rest of the black characters, other black subjectivities in the world of the novel, which figuratively speaks to the distress of the entity known as 'black Britain' during the 1970s when the novel is presumably set. Despite this, Daud holds a political awareness (often unsaid and presented in italics) in which his lived experiences attain symbolic sense and are well-ordered into an account of black resistance on an international scale. Blackness is not racially exclusive when Daud's consciousness is structured by black symbolism and iconography. This experience is sensitive.

After Lives: One of the latest novels by Gurnah. The political, social, psycho-traumatic, rootlessness, and alienation of characters are honestly portrayed in this text throughout. Coming to the outlined story of the novel, we see Agitated, ambitious Ilyas was taken from his parents by the *Schutzruppe askari*, the German colonial military; a few years later, he returns to his native village only to witness that his parents are gone, and his sister Afiya given away. Hamza was not stolen but was traded; he has come of this age in the army, at the right hand of an officer whose control has confirmed his security of life but marked him for life. Hamza does not have language to understand how the war ended for him. Recurring back to the town of his childhood, all he wants is work, however modest, and security, and the beautiful Afiya. The Germans, the British, the French and the Belgians, and whoever else have drawn their maps and contracted their treaties to divide up Africa. As they demand complete dominion, they are forced to douse off revolt after a revolt by the natives. The conflict in Europe unbolts an additional arena in east Africa where a ruthless war destroys the landscape. As these intertwined friends and survivors come and go, the silhouette of a new war lengthens and darkens, ready to pounce on them and carry them away.

Research Gap: Despite the growing body of scholarship on Abdulrazak Gurnah's novels, there remains a significant lacuna in the psychoanalytic study of trauma within his works. While scholars have examined themes of migration, exile, and displacement through sociopolitical and postcolonial lenses, the psychological dimensions of trauma, particularly its manifestations in psychoanalysis through Resistance, Repression, Path to the Formation of Symptoms, Somatic Dissociation, Common Neurotic State and Intergenerational Transmission, have been largely overlooked. Existing studies, such as those by Kaigai (2014), Houlden (2022), and Banerjee (2018), often reduce psychological fragmentation to a byproduct of cultural alienation or political instability, failing to engage with Freudian, Caruthian, and Kristevan trauma theories that illuminate deeper psychic ruptures in Gurnah's characters. Moreover, Kali Tal, Van Der Kolk's trauma theory helps bridge the gap of earlier understanding of trauma by Freud and the contemporary understanding of Trauma.

Previous scholarships treat sexual violence and sodomy as either socio-political allegories or as misread symbols of non-normative desire, rather than as mechanisms of hegemonic masculinity and patriarchal trauma. This study fills these critical gaps by offering a psychoanalytic framework that foregrounds the unconscious residues of trauma in Gurnah's *Paradise, Memory of Departure, By the Sea, Afterlives, Pilgrims Way, and Admiring Silence*. By applying Jean Laplanche's theory of the "enigmatic signifier," Freud's concept of repression, and Caruth's work on belated trauma, this research uncovers how traumatic events in Gurnah's fiction do not merely function as narrative devices but actively shape male subjectivity, self-perception, and the psychic economy of colonial and postcolonial violence. This thesis, therefore, stands as a pioneering intervention that not only redefines the scope of trauma studies in Gurnah's fiction but also bridges the gap between masculinity studies, psychoanalysis, and postcolonial criticism, positioning

sodomy and childhood sexual abuse as integral yet critically neglected aspects of Gurnah's critique of power and violence in East Africa.

Conclusion: This chapter has provided a foundational framework for this study by introducing Abdulrazak Gurnah and the select works analyzed within the thesis. It has explored Gurnah's thematic preoccupations, particularly his engagement with trauma, displacement, and psychological fragmentation, establishing the significance of his fiction within psychoanalytic discourse. By situating this research within the broader field of psychoanalytical literary studies, this study emphasized how Gurnah's narratives lend themselves to an in-depth psychological analysis, particularly through the lens of Freudian psychoanalytic theory.

Additionally, it has outlined the key concepts derived from Sigmund Freud's *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, particularly repression, resistance, fixation, and the formation of neurotic symptoms. These foundational theories serve as the primary analytical tools in this study, offering a lens through which the psychic wounds of Gurnah's characters can be examined. Freud's insights into the unconscious, dream analysis, and the mechanisms of trauma provide a theoretical underpinning for the investigation of psychological suffering in Gurnah's fiction.

Building upon this theoretical groundwork, the next chapter delves deeper into the evolution of psychoanalytic theory, tracing its trajectory from Freudian psychoanalysis to contemporary interpretations that extend or challenge its foundational principles. This transition is crucial, as it not only contextualizes psychoanalysis within literary studies but also allows for a nuanced application of both classical and modern psychoanalytic frameworks to Gurnah's work. By engaging with evolving perspectives in trauma studies and psychoanalysis, the forthcoming chapter will refine the methodological approach of this thesis, ensuring a robust and interdisciplinary engagement with the psychological

dimensions of Gurnah's fiction. Before diving into the second chapter of the thesis, below is mentioned the research objectives of the study and the chapterisation of the thesis.

Objectives of the proposed research work:

1. To trace the evolution of psychoanalytical theory and its contemporary relevance
2. To apply Sigmund Freud's theory of "Resistance and Repression", in the works of Abdulrazak Gurnah
3. To analyze The Familial, social, and colonial powers through Sigmund Freud's lecture "Path to the Formation of Symptoms", in the select novels of Abdulrazak Gurnah
4. To evaluate 'child characters' and other 'major characters in the works of Abdulrazak Gurnah through Freud's theory of "Common neurotic state"

Chapterisation:

Chapter 1- Introduction

Chapter 2- Psychoanalysis, Literature and its Relevance

Chapter 3- Resistance and Repression in Gurnah's Characters

Chapter 4- Symptom Formation through Familial, Social, and Colonial Forces

Chapter 5- Common Neurotic State in Child Characters

Conclusion

Chapter 2

Psychoanalysis, Literature and its Relevance

Psychoanalysis has been described as "a theory of the human mind, a therapy for mental distress, an instrument of research, and a profession" (8) by Ivan Ward and Oscar Zarate in *Introducing Psychoanalysis: A Graphic Guide*. They further characterize it as "a complicated sociological, medical, and intellectual phenomenon" (8). This definition highlights the multidimensional nature of psychoanalysis not merely as a therapeutic practice but as a broad intellectual tradition that intersects with various disciplines, including literature, philosophy, and cultural studies. At its core, psychoanalysis seeks to decipher the hidden motivations behind human behavior, offering explanations for experiences that often appear irrational or incomprehensible. Zvi Lothane similarly emphasizes the expansive scope of psychoanalysis, stating that:

It has become many things to many people. It is a science of man, an anthropology, a branch of knowledge, and a body of accumulated observations and generalizations about human nature and behavior. It is a scientific method, an investigative tool used by the science of psychoanalysis. It is a therapeutic procedure, the fountainhead of the varieties of psychotherapy. (711)

Lothane's perspective underscores the evolving nature of psychoanalysis, not only as a clinical and investigative tool but as a critical framework for understanding human experience across disciplines. In literature, psychoanalysis serves as a powerful interpretative method, illuminating the unconscious dimensions of character development, narrative structures, and thematic preoccupations. One of the most significant areas where psychoanalysis has left an indelible mark is in the study of trauma. Initially, trauma was understood primarily in its physical sense, referring to bodily wounds, scars, and injuries. The term itself originates from the Greek *traumatos*, meaning "wound," which John

Wilson, in *Assessing Psychological Trauma and PTSD* (2004), explains as a condition that "results in a state of being wounded" (12). This early understanding of trauma maintained a strong emphasis on its physicality. However, as research evolved, scholars recognized that trauma extends beyond the body, profoundly affecting the psyche. John Wilson (2004) further asserts that "the whole person is wounded by trauma" (11), highlighting that the psychological impact of traumatic experiences is just as significant as the physical. This expanded understanding of trauma aligns with psychoanalytic theory, which has long examined the ways in which unprocessed traumatic experiences manifest through repression, neurosis, and fragmented identity.

Freud and Breuer in *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) describe psychical trauma as analogous to physical injury, emphasizing that hysterical symptoms stem from repressed traumatic memories. They use metaphors like "foreign body" to depict unresolved psychological wounds. For example: "The psychical trauma or more precisely the memory of the trauma acts like a foreign body which long after its entry must be regarded as an agent that is still at work." (6). Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), describe 'traumatic' as any excitations from outside which are powerful enough to break through the protective shield [Reizschutz]" (29). The term *Reizschutz* (literally 'stimulus protection') is Freud's own phrasing (German Original). The metaphor of a breached shield aligns with his broader analogy of trauma as a psychic 'wound.' Freud also asserts that individuals are often unaware of their trauma at the time of the event and only recognize it retrospectively, when revisiting past pain.

Trauma manifests in different forms and can arise from both internal and external factors. Internal factors include personal experiences such as rape, bullying, and emotional or sexual abuse, which affect an individual rather than a group. Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery* (1992), explains it as:

> Psychological trauma is an affliction of the powerless. At the moment of trauma, the victim is rendered helpless by overwhelming force. When the force is that of nature, we speak of disasters. When the force is that of other human beings, we speak of atrocities. Traumatic events overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection, and meaning. (33)

Judith Herman defines psychological trauma as fundamentally linked to powerlessness. She asserts that "psychological trauma is an affliction of the powerless," emphasizing that trauma occurs when an individual is rendered helpless by an overwhelming force (33). This definition highlights the fundamental disruption that trauma causes to an individual's sense of agency and control. Herman distinguishes between two broad categories of trauma: natural disasters and human-inflicted atrocities. While natural disasters like earthquakes, floods, and other catastrophic events are traumatic, they do not carry the same moral weight as atrocities committed by humans. When trauma is inflicted by other people such as in cases of war, genocide, abuse, or political oppression, it introduces an additional layer of psychological complexity. The perpetrator-victim dynamic in human-inflicted trauma can lead to profound feelings of betrayal, distrust, and existential rupture, further deepening the psychological wounds.

Moreover, Herman points out that traumatic events "overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection, and meaning" (33). This observation underscores how trauma not only affects an individual internally but also disrupts their external support systems. In a psychoanalytic sense, trauma fractures the ego's ability to process experience coherently, leading to repression, dissociation, and symptoms of neurosis or PTSD. The inability to integrate the traumatic experience into a coherent narrative often results in psychological fragmentation, as seen in survivors who

struggle with intrusive memories, flashbacks, and emotional numbness.

With its evolution, trauma studies have transcended the medical field, becoming a major interdisciplinary focus in literature, philosophy, and psychoanalysis. No longer confined to clinical discussions, trauma is now central to global intellectual and artistic discourse, informing the works of historians, sociologists, psychiatrists, filmmakers, sculptors, photographers, and novelists. This widespread engagement with trauma reflects its complexity, as it is not merely an academic concept but a deep human experience that resonates across cultures and historical contexts. Literature, in particular, has proven to be a vital medium for representing trauma, offering nuanced explorations of memory, repression, and psychological recovery. Through the lens of psychoanalysis, literary narratives become intricate psychological spaces where trauma is expressed, negotiated, and sometimes resisted, providing a crucial perspective on the enduring impact of suffering and survival. Despite these wide-ranging interests, the need for the depiction of an authentic collection of throbbing experiences cannot be overstated. The concept of trauma according to Marder (2006), is expansive, encompassing a range of fields, from law to "psychology, psychiatry, history, public health, sociology, and literature" (1). While contemporary trauma studies have expanded significantly beyond Freudian psychoanalysis, incorporating sociocultural models, memory studies, and affect theory, this thesis deliberately anchors its framework in the Freudian tradition, supplemented selectively by later theorists such as Cathy Caruth, Dominick LaCapra, and Judith Herman. The rationale for this choice lies in the psychoanalytic model's unique capacity to illuminate the intrapsychic mechanisms, (psychodynamics like elements that are universal) repression, fixation, displacement, and resistance through which Gurnah's characters register and negotiate traumatic experience.

While Freud's psychoanalytic framework originates within a European intellectual

tradition, the present analysis utilizes his concepts not in a narrowly clinical sense but as interpretive tools that open Gurnah's fiction to richer psychoanalytical readings. Freud, in *Studies on Hysteria* (1895/2000), acknowledged that his case studies "read like short stories and lack the serious stamp of science" (160), and in the *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1977), he affirms that his case studies could be approached as literary novels, signaling that psychoanalysis was from its inception open to literary interpretation and available for wider cultural critique. This perspective enables concepts such as repression, symptoms, and psychic conflict to be understood not as strictly Eurocentric categories but as universal psychodynamic patterns. Such an approach echoes Cathy Caruth's (1996) insight that trauma embodies "the impossibility of being simply located in the past" (9), highlighting its cross-cultural resonance. In this manner, Freud's terminology does not stand in isolation but is placed in dialogue with postcolonial thinkers and trauma theorists. Walter Mignolo's (2000) notion of "border thinking," which "thinks from the borders of modernity/coloniality" (67), facilitates precisely such a negotiation, where Western psychoanalysis is reframed through colonial and postcolonial experience. Frantz Fanon (1952/2008), for instance, reworked psychoanalysis for the colonial encounter, observing that "the black man has two dimensions" (8), while Homi Bhabha (1994) maintains that "the theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualizing an international culture" (38). By bringing Freud into conversation with Fanon, Bhabha, Caruth, Laub, Van der Kolk, L. Terr, and Kenneth Kidd, this analysis foregrounds a synthesis where universal psychodynamics illuminate characters fractured subjectivity without diminishing the specificity of Gurnah's cultural and historical contexts. Thus, the psychoanalytic lens becomes not an epistemic imposition but a productive site of tension through which new, plural histories of trauma and resistance can be articulated. Michael O'Loughlin (2020), drawing on Claudia Tate, emphasizes that psychoanalysis,

despite its complicity with Eurocentric assumptions, holds the potential to examine 'racist, ethnic, and gender displacements,' provided it cultivates a politically and socially conscious self-reflexivity. He contends that psychoanalysis remains a 'master discourse,' yet its very vitality depends on testing whether Tate's vision of a critical, decolonized, and racially self-reflexive psychoanalysis can be more fully realized and enacted. Furthermore, trauma continues to pose the ongoing challenge of negotiating these symptoms in a manner that is meaningful, even if never entirely resolved.

Whereas much contemporary trauma theory privileges collective memory, social structures, or cultural representation, this analysis foregrounds the psychic life of the individual, tracing how historical, social, cultural and political violences are internalised, symbolically refracted, and symptomatically enacted within the fictional consciousness. Selective engagement with later trauma theorists serves to enhance, rather than dilute this focus, ensuring theoretical coherence and interpretive depth. Thus, the approach is not a rejection of contemporary perspectives but a strategic narrowing, grounded in the conviction that sustained, textually embedded psychoanalytic reading can yield insights that broader, multi-model frameworks risk overlooking.

Due to its interdisciplinary nature and lack of a singular definition, trauma is often considered a complex and multifaceted term. Cathy Caruth, a prominent scholar in psychoanalysis and trauma studies, particularly within literature, explores trauma as an unresolved phenomenon. In her work, *Unclaimed Experiences* (1996), she traces the etymology of the term "trauma" to its Greek roots, where it originally meant "wound," though the Greeks applied it exclusively to physical injuries (3). Over time, however, the concept has evolved into a contested subject, with various psychiatrists and philosophers offering interpretations. Freud, for instance, posits that trauma should be "understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind" (3). Unlike its physical origin, this

wound pertains to psychological suffering, representing "the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available" (4). Consequently, the interpretability of trauma emerges.

External factors are collective in nature and include events such as wars, the Holocaust, ethnic cleansing, genocide, and colonialism. Those who endure such collective traumas often experience profound shared emotional consequences, such as misery, silence, stress, low self-esteem, feelings of shame, guilt, alienation, and loss. Jeffrey C. Alexander (2004) highlights in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*:

> Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways. (1)

Jeffrey C. Alexander defines cultural trauma as a collective psychological wound inflicted by external forces such as wars, colonialism, or genocide that violently disrupt a group's identity. These events, imposed by outside agents (e.g., oppressors, invaders), scar the shared consciousness of a community, altering how they perceive their past and future. For example, slavery or the Holocaust, perpetrated by external powers, leave indelible marks on group memory, fostering intergenerational suffering (shame, alienation) and reshaping identity around survival and resistance. Unlike individual trauma, cultural trauma stems from systemic, large-scale harm, embedding itself in a community's narrative and perpetuating emotional consequences across generations. The onset of colonialism and its aftermath have left scars enduring, with many suffering from its repercussions. As noted in Craps & Buelens (2008) work, "Colonial traumas such as dispossession, forced migration, diaspora, slavery, segregation, racism, political violence, and genocide" (4) not only fostered discrimination but also reinforced the notion

of white superiority imposed on other races. The physical and psychological harm inflicted upon colonized populations by Western powers resulted in profound suffering. Also, individuals left their homelands for a variety of reasons like economic, social, environmental, and political. This exodus often stemmed from wars and the struggles for independence in formerly colonized regions. Consequently, these individuals- immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees found themselves in foreign lands, grappling with deep emotional pain and homesickness. While some immigrants manage to adapt seamlessly to their new environments, they cannot be deemed traumatized, as their lifestyles, mindsets, clothing, customs, and identities evolve to align with the prevailing culture. This adaptive capacity may be particularly evident among second- and third-generation immigrants, who are born and raised within Western societies, inherently absorbing their cultural knowledge. Conversely, first-generation immigrants, who originate from their native lands and relocate to unfamiliar territories, often experience heightened stress and trauma stemming from their separation from their homeland. Those who struggle to assimilate into Western culture face feelings of identity loss, ultimately rendering them as "living ghosts" (2) as understood by Marder in his work *Trauma and literary studies* (2006). This notion of becoming a ghost is deeply psychological, reflecting the emotional turmoil that arises from traumatic experiences.

The trauma experienced by immigrants, including asylum seekers and refugees, manifests as a profound 'wound' in both their hearts and minds, attributable to a myriad of economic, social, political, and environmental factors. Many immigrants who leave their homes to establish themselves in a new country endure a multitude of hardships. They grapple not only with adapting to the unfamiliar culture and language but also with a pervasive sense of dislocation, as they often feel they belong nowhere. As articulated by Ali (2003), "they don't ever really leave home. Their bodies are here but their hearts are

back there" (24). Homi K. Bhabha elucidates this phenomenon in *The Location of Culture* (1994) by introducing the concept of "unhomeliness." According to Bhabha, this unhomeliness is not merely a physical state but primarily manifests in the psyche of the colonized. He describes it as "the 'unhomely' that can easily be accommodated in that familiar division of social life into private and the public spheres" (9) and further characterizes it as "the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world in an unhallowed place" (9). This study integrates the psychoanalytical understanding of trauma's internal mechanisms, the literary understanding of trauma as expressed through narrative form and silence, and the colonial understanding of trauma as a product of historical dispossession, forging a unified interpretive bridge that illuminates how psychic wounds are inscribed across both personal consciousness and collective history. Trauma, as understood in psychoanalysis, signifies an overwhelming experience that breaches the mind's protective shield, leading to psychic wounds that persist through symptoms, repression, and unconscious repetition (Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, 1977). In literary studies, trauma is conceived not only as a psychological disruption but also as a representational challenge, an event so intense that it resists straightforward narration, instead emerging through fragmented, nonlinear, and symbolically mediated storytelling (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, 1996). From a postcolonial and colonial-historical perspective, trauma extends beyond the personal to encompass collective wounds inflicted by imperial domination, displacement, and cultural erasure, embedding itself in the socio-political memory of subjugated communities (Craps, *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds*, 2013). Bringing these approaches together, trauma can thus be seen as a multidimensional phenomenon, psychically inscribed in the unconscious, aesthetically refracted through narrative, and historically embedded in structures of colonial violence making it an indispensable concept for

understanding both the inner lives of individuals and the shared histories of oppressed societies. Bringing these three perspectives together allows for a reading of Gurnah's fiction that recognises trauma as simultaneously psychological (intrapsychic rupture), aesthetic (narrative fracture), and historical-political (colonial and migratory violence). This integrative approach ensures that the analysis does not reduce trauma to a single register but captures its layered imprints on both the inner life of characters and the broader sociohistorical fabric they inhabit. This methodology is depicted below as:

When the patients were examined by Freud or other psychiatrists, they saw that they lagged the story, fumbled, or were stuck while telling them the traumatic experiences that they had to deal with in the early or later stages of their life. In response to these outcomes, Brison in *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of a Self* (2002), asks how trauma, "which is by its very nature outside the bounds of everyday experiences, can be described in a language that can truly reveal the experience." (39). According to Brison, psychologists have a much more well-defined professional agreement regarding what qualifies as a traumatic event than philosophers do about the nature of the self. When facing what appears to be an existential threat, a person may feel entirely helpless, which is a painful experience. Terror, a loss of control, and a severe dread of annihilation are some of the immediate psychological reactions to such trauma. Freud was aware that trauma might be either physical or experienced in the psyche, or both. While conducting his research Freud came to several realisations that formed the basis of his trauma theory. He states in *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1916-1917) "We give the name of traumas to those impressions, experienced early and later forgotten, to which we attach such great importance in the etiology of the neuroses" (370). To the forgotten events that cause trauma, Psychologist Jousha Pederson (2014) call the inability to remember an intensely painful experience traumatic "amnesia" (334).

Freud postulated that the trauma is eventually 'forgotten' by the conscious mind and resurfaces as neurosis. Freud claimed that trauma can have one of the two effects on a person: either positively, in which case efforts are made to 'make it real,' to deal with it, or adversely, in which case various defence mechanisms are implemented and the person gets obsessed, resulting in a 'compulsion to repeat.' In, *Introductory lectures on psychoanalysis (1977)*, Freud in *Fixation to traumas – The Unconscious* talks about how a patient becomes fixated on certain experiences, "been fixated" on a particular portion of their past, as though they could not manage to free themselves from it and were for that reason alienated from the present and the future (305). Both negative and positive responses to trauma imply a "compulsive" feature, creating what Freud in *Moses and Monotheism* (1974) calls "state inside a state, an inaccessible party" in the unconscious where the trauma is kept separate from the person's ordinary conscious workings but where it still stays to alter the person's worldview (76). Brison (2002) states that the physiological reactions of outliving oneself have long-term repercussions (39). A contemporary of Freud, Pierre Janet (1925) work *Psychological Healing*, provided an alternative viewpoint on trauma by examining how language and imagery created or attached themselves to memories and highlighted the role played by the body in processing trauma. The traumatic version of the self is isolated from other versions of the self, according to Janet's notion in his book *Psychological Healing*. Because the memories were kept in the subconscious, they resulted in symptoms. Janet states that:[…]such fixed ideas are dangerous because they are no longer under the control of the personality because they belong to a group of phenomena which have passed beyond the dominion of the conscious will (596).

The time in which the traumatic experience occurs, as well as how expected or unexpected the incident was, and how physical or intangible its occurrence was, all play significant roles in its impact. Otto Fenichel also defines trauma as :

> An increase in tension, brought about by an uncontrollable influx of stimuli, which the apparatus is not able to master… constitutes the traumatic situation. The traumatic effect depends on the suddenness of the influx and the unpreparedness of the ego. (124)

Fenichel's model reframes Freud's economic theory of trauma, emphasizing the ego's failure to manage overwhelming stimuli. While his focus on the 'unprepared ego' underscores the role of unexpectedness, critics argue this framework reduces trauma to a mechanical failure of psychic 'binding,' neglecting socio-cultural contexts (e.g., systemic oppression). His reliance on Freudian energy metaphors (excitation, discharge) also risks oversimplifying trauma's embodiment and relational dimensions. Modern trauma theorists, like Judith Herman, challenge such models for ignoring power dynamics and the survivor's agency. Nevertheless, Fenichel's work remains foundational for understanding anxiety's role in trauma responses.

Sandler (1991) in his work *conceptual research in psychoanalysis,* a working group on 'Conceptual research' headed by Joseph Sandler and based at the Sigmund Freud-Institute in Frankfurt examined the wide range of meanings covered by it. With the assumption that the concept of 'trauma' might be seen as the prototype for an elastic term from a meaning standpoint, the study demonstrated that, at best, it was difficult to draw clear lines between the various aspects of trauma and how they interacted. But it's important to distinguish between the traumatizing process, the traumatized state, and the pathological alterations that follow. Apart from enormous or extreme traumatization, not every traumatic event affects people in the same way (134). This means that a trauma's impact is often only understood considering the effects it has had on the psyche. The development of a theory and technique of traumatization and its effects has become an urgent task in psychoanalysis because of the horrific events of the 20th and 21st centuries,

including wars, the holocaust, racist and ethnic persecution, as well as an increase in social violence. Kali (1996) *Worlds of hurt* further illustrate that, the newly developed awareness of violence in families, maltreatment and sexual abuse of children and women also add to the causes (6). In therapeutic jargon, psychoanalysis is the scientific discipline that would address trauma as a subject to explore its underlying causes.

To show how trauma theory can be applied to works of literature that portray the psychoanalytical study of trauma, this chapter also examines the theoretical foundation and development of trauma theory. In addition to becoming a clinical concept, trauma evolved in the 1980s as a theoretical framework that could be used in literature to help readers comprehend how the politics of memory function during times of crisis as we discussed above in the first section. Anthea Cordner in her thesis, *Writing the Troubles: Gender and Trauma in Northern Ireland* (2014) states that, trauma was first studied as a component of hysterical research, but during the Vietnam War, the terms Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and trauma were given their embryonic definitions (25). The idea of trauma Hamber and Lewis (1997), state that it has since evolved to encompass structural violence or the fear that can emerge from unequal power relationships like an old man abusing a child, a colonial subjugation, police or state brutality against minority groups or individuals, in addition to personal experiences of violence and death (8). Anthea Cordner also mentions that trauma can be experienced by an individual or on a collective basis; that it exists beyond a linear spatial position; that it involves issues of definition and of containment; that it is primarily experienced through the body and remains deeply connected to the senses; that it is not a response to ordinary experience, which suggests that it is difficult to translate into language; and that there is an interconnectedness between trauma and other psychological processes. It is feasible to increase the ways that trauma theory can be used in conversation by comprehending the fundamental problems

with it and how it has developed (25).

The idea of trauma, which is subject to criticism, is typically regarded as a highly upsetting experience that has a significant negative impact on how the self organises its emotions and interprets the outside world. Trauma studies have investigated the psychological, rhetorical, and cultural relevance of trauma to understand how it affects literature and society. The numerous psychological and social aspects that affect how one understands a traumatic experience and how language both affects and is shaped by that experience are the subject of scholarly analysis. A model of trauma that imagines an intense event that pushes the boundaries of language and even ruptures meaning completely was developed by trauma studies in the 1990s, which drew on Freudian philosophy. The conventional trauma model developed by Cathy Caruth sees trauma as an event that shatters consciousness and inhibits direct linguistic representation. The paradigm emphasizes the severity of distress by stating that the traumatic event permanently impairs the psyche. Trauma is an unassimilated event that shatters identity and remains outside normal memory and narrative representation. Cathy Caruth defines trauma as an event experienced too abruptly to be fully processed, returning intrusively through flashbacks or nightmares. In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), she writes: "Trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event… but in the way its unassimilated nature… returns to haunt the survivor" (4). Building on Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), Caruth reframes trauma as inherently linked to belated comprehension, critiquing Freud's focus on individual repression by emphasizing trauma's *unrepresentable* quality and its resonance in collective history. Her work bridges psychoanalysis and cultural studies, expanding trauma's scope beyond the psyche to societal memory.

In a similar pattern, Bessel van der Kolk (1996) contends that since trauma cannot

be "structured on a verbal level," the neurobiological response to it always culminates in a "speechless horror" that prevents the possibility of narrative recall in memory (172). The psychological principles that underpin the field are defined by Freud's views on memory, psyche and traumatic experience. According to this trauma theory, suffering is unrepresentable. Usually, the patient is attempting to suppress an emotive response that is too unpleasant to remember. Psychological trauma, and its illustration in philological spheres, with the role of memory in determining individual and social identities, are the fundamental concerns that express the field of trauma studies. Psychoanalytic models on trauma corresponding with supplementary theoretical contexts such as postcolonial, sociocultural, and poststructural, develop the foundation of criticism that elucidates the portrayal of radically excruciating experiences and their consequences upon identity as land and memory as mind. The notion of trauma, itself a foundation of critique, is generally understood as a severely disruptive experience that profoundly impacts on the self's emotional organization and perception of the external world. According to Freud, the split ego results from the mind's inability to process what it has seen. The trauma is pushed into the unconscious, where it is suppressed but repeatedly resurfaces to be recognised as the trauma. Freud in *Beyond the pleasure principle* writes:

> The patient can go on spinning a thread of such association, till he is brought up against some thought, the relaxation of which, to what is repressed, becomes so obvious that he is compelled to repeat his attempt at repression. (149)

Freud's statement here underscores the cyclical struggle between repression and recurrence in trauma. He suggests that repressed trauma, though buried in the unconscious, inevitably resurface through associative thoughts, forcing the patient to confront and re-repress it. While this highlights Freud's insight into trauma's persistent, intrusive nature,

critics argue his model risks reducing trauma to a mechanical failure of repression, sidelining the socio-cultural or embodied dimensions of suffering. The metaphor of "spinning a thread" implies linearity, yet trauma often manifests non-linearly (e.g., fragmented flashbacks). Freud's focus on intrapsychic conflict also neglects systemic or collective traumas, a limitation later theorist like Caruth or Fanon address.

Freud asserts that traumatic experiences are constantly at war within the unconscious, even though an individual is unable to articulate them consciously. The trauma once again is buried after being recognized by the conscious mind, until it eventually resurfaces through another unconscious association. Trauma studies explore the impact of trauma in literature and society by analysing its psychological, rhetorical, and cultural significance. Scholarship analyzes the complex psychological and social factors that influence the comprehension of a traumatic experience and how such an experience shapes and is shaped by language. The formal innovations of texts, both print, and media, display insights into the ways that identity, the unconscious, and remembering are influenced by extreme events and thus remain a significant focus of the field.

Dreams, storytelling, or even hallucinations are all examples of repetition of such traumatic incidents. These studies gave rise to psychoanalytic theories about the causes and effects of trauma. Today's literary trauma critics use Freud's early theories, which he co-wrote with Joseph Breuer in *Studies on Hysteria (1995),* and especially his modified theories from later in his career, which he published in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920),* to conceptualise trauma. In his early writings, Freud makes the case that traumatic hysteria arises from a sexual assault that has been suppressed in the past. In *Studies on Hysteria (1995),* Freud and Breuer stress that the traumatic nature of the initial event only existed in the remembrance of it. It's crucial to note that the traumatic experience is only realised following a latency period of delayed action (*Nachträglichkeit*), which postpones

the consequences and significance of the past (192). Freud & Breuer (1955) "Hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences" (7). The past event can only become known in the remembering process once a contemporary occurrence brings to light the previously suppressed event. So, this act of reminiscence or remembering causes emotional suffering, but it also gives meaning to an earlier unconscious experience that had been suppressed. "Pathogenic reminiscences" (40) refers to this traumatic recollection since it creates pathologic symptoms. Although there is typically a period of latency during which the person may seem to be symptom-free, Freud proposed that the scars eventually become visible in *Moses and Monotheism*:

> This latter illness may also be looked upon as an attempt at a cure – as an effort once more to reconcile with the rest of those portions of the ego that have been split off by the influence of the trauma and to unite them into a powerful whole vis-a-vis the external world. (7)

Since the inception of psychoanalysis, the practice of 'psychoanalytic reading' has evolved into a rich and diverse interpretive tradition, enabling a deeper understanding of literary characters and their subconscious motivations. When discussing psychoanalysis and its relationship to literature, Celine Surprenant writes in *Freud and Psychoanalysis* (2006):

> Psychoanalytic literary criticism does not constitute a unified field. Just as psychoanalytic theory has infiltrated the whole of culture and decisively marked our mode of thinking in many domains, psychoanalysis has diffusely impacted literary studies. However, all variants endorse, at least to a certain degree, the idea that literature (and what closely relates to it: language, rhetoric, style, storytelling, poetry) is fundamentally intertwined with the psyche… (378)

Pierre Bayard and Rachel Bourgeois in their 1999 seminal work about '*Is it Possible to Apply Literature to Psychoanalysis?*', initiate a discussion on Hermeneutic criticism as an interpretive approach grounded in a specific understanding of meaning. This critical method asserts that within any text or artwork, there exists an unconscious or latent meaning. This meaning may or may not be directly connected to the artist's or author's life, but it is thought to be inherently present or inscribed within the work. The process involves paying close attention to certain indices or clues within the text or artwork and systematically checking one's subjective interpretations. This approach is often associated with psychoanalytic theory, which views interpretation as a form of uncovering hidden or repressed meanings. The pressing need I felt to mention Bayard here is that literature would also give insights into psychoanalysis as well, as Freud often turned to literature to seek inspiration and knowledge. It is said that he refers to literature and other art in 22 of his works (Segal, 1991, as cited in Kristiansen, 2013). In his analysis of *Gradiva* (1907), he accentuates admiration of how reading poetry can value the intuitive knowledge:

> But creative writers are valuable allies, and their evidence is to be prized highly, for they are apt to know a whole host of things between heaven and earth of which our philosophy has not yet let us dream. In their knowledge of the mind, they are far in advance of us everyday people, for they draw upon sources which we have not yet opened to science. (8)

Lawrence L. Langer's seminal work, *The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination* 1975, represents one of the earliest comprehensive critical examinations of 'literature of atrocity.' While Western culture has only recently started to come to grips with the Holocaust, this engagement has primarily been through literary and psychological perspectives. The initial responses emerged in the form of Holocaust memoirs and diaries, followed by historical analyses, depicting the cultural shared trauma and unconscious, and

eventually fictional portrayals, all contributing to the development of academic trauma theory. Kenneth Kidd in 2005 work gives the account of psychoanalysis and literature as: The deliberate and significant use of psychoanalysis to interpret Holocaust and trauma literature reflects a profound connection between the two fields as,

> The psychoanalytic conceit is not accidental. The recent surge of Holocaust and trauma writing has many causes and vectors, among them the success of the progressive social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, and the residual faith in literature as a form of identity, empathy, and community in a pluralist society. (121)

In Literature and Psychoanalysis: Intertextual Readings (2001), Ruth Parkin discusses with regard to literature the significance Freud accorded to memories, the past, and the retrieval of thoughts from past. She stated that psychoanalysis realized quickly that it "could explain nothing belonging to the present without referring back to something past" (2001). Parkin discusses the importance of memories in literary context, maintaining that the influence of memory and the past on our present and future is something that concerns both literature and psychoanalysis. According to Parkin, analysing literary texts critically can help us understand the intricate connections between memory, trauma, and identity. By analysing the intertextual linkages between literature and psychoanalysis, she confers insight into the significance of traumatic memories in shaping our experiences and our perception of the world around us. Laplanche & Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (1973) similar stances hold that, the quote reflects Freud's theory of *Nachträglichkeit* (deferred action), where past events retroactively shape present symptoms. For example: "The traumatic scene only becomes traumatic afterwards, in its reproduction" (112).

Luis César Sanfelippo & Alejandro Antonio Dagfal in their work '*The Debate Between Janet and Freud Revisited: Trauma and Memory*', state that the link between

trauma and memory disorders appeared in the literature no earlier than the 1890s. During the nineteenth century, the term "trauma" was rarely used in the medical field. It referred to a mechanical action that impacted the body, causing a lesion that appeared to directly produce symptoms. When nerve centers associated with memory functions were damaged, it could result in memory anomalies. Trauma literature also studies its psychological, linguistic, cultural, and social importance. It proficiently details out the tasks which memory plays in influencing personal and social identities. However, trauma was not considered inherently a memory issue. By the 1880s, a shift towards the psychological interpretation of trauma emerged (Hacking 1995, Leys 2000), suggesting that ideas or emotions could cause symptoms without a physical lesion.

Despite this shift, memory has not yet been recognized as central to the pathogenic process. It was only in the final decade of the nineteenth century that now obvious and enduring connection between trauma and memory was established. This evolution in understanding was primarily influenced by the works of Janet and Freud, who explored the interaction between memory and amnesia. They proposed that a traumatic event was neither a physical injury nor merely an emotion or idea, but rather the memory of an experience. This memory, though forgotten by the individual, remained active beyond their conscious awareness and control. Since Pierre Janet's writings in 1889 on the relationship between trauma and memory, it has been widely acknowledged that declarative or explicit memory functions as an active and constructive process. A person's recollection is shaped by their pre-existing mental schemata and that is how this study becomes relevant when Gurnah in an interview says that all he is writing is from his memory of the land he left. Once an event or specific information is assimilated into these mental frameworks, it does not remain a distinct and immutable entity. Instead, it becomes subject to distortion by related experiences and the emotional state during recall.

Bessel A. Van Der Kolk in *Memory and Trauma* states that the study of traumatic memories challenges several conventional ideas about how memory works. Typically, it is believed that memory is always a constructive process, primarily declarative (meaning that people can articulate what they remember in words and symbols), continuously present in consciousness, and that it becomes less accurate over time. However, research into traumatic memories over the past century has shown that these assumptions do not always hold true. Traumatic memories can coexist as both semantic representations (narrative memories) and sensory imprints (vivid sensory experiences). Unlike ordinary memories, these sensory experiences can remain stable and unchanged by other life events. They can resurface suddenly and vividly, triggered by reminders, making the person feel as if the traumatic event is happening again. During these flashbacks, nightmares, feeling of being unsafe and threatened, individuals often struggle to articulate their feelings and thoughts precisely.

To critically grasp the intensity of such nightmares, Dori Laub (1992) observes that trauma frequently shatters the subject's capacity to witness their own experience, leaving them haunted by repetitive, intrusive images that stand in place of an integrated memory. As he explains, the "loss of his internal witness… caused the boy to fall apart. He begins to have a nightmare that will recur all his life. In it he finds himself on a conveyor belt moving relentlessly toward a metal compactor" (89). In *Paradise*, Yusuf's recurring dog-dreams exemplify this precise failure of inner witnessing. Early in the novel, Yusuf notes that "dogs were already beginning to edge out of their doorways with that calculating patience of street dogs which gives them their air of particular intelligence" (52). This perception later intensifies into the oppressive imagery of "the dogs that prowled the lanes of his nightmares" (84). The narrative emphasizes how fear exceeds containment, likenesses, sounds, and sudden shapes summon terror, blurring the distinction between

waking perceptions and dreamscapes. Laub (1998) maintains that when trauma erases the capacity to sustain an "internal other whose presence is a prerequisite for the dialogue with oneself" (65), what follows is not memory but compulsive recurrence. Yusuf's dog-dreams enact exactly this: they are not merely symbolic riddles but traumatic repetitions that testify to an unprocessed wound. His nightmares externalize the psychic terror of captivity, humiliation, and predation, yet they remain trapped in recurrence rather than transformed into narration. This supports Laub's (1992) claim that without a functioning internal witness, trauma "obliterates" (91) reflective selfhood and returns as frozen imagery. In Yusuf's case, the dream of dogs becomes testimony without a testifier, a closed circuit of dread that mirrors Laub's nightmare of the compactor, an affective core around which life continues to circle until witnessing, internally or relationally, can finally take place.

Judith L. Alpert (2001) observes that "loss of traumatic material begins early, and children work as ferociously to forget as adults do to remember" (729). This observation sheds light on Yusuf's condition, where his childhood memories are neither entirely present nor completely lost (Freud's distorted substitutes), but continually repressed and displaced into dreamscapes. As Alpert emphasizes, "trauma is not simply remembered or forgotten. It is much more entangled than a mere dichotomy" (732), and Yusuf embodies precisely this entanglement: his dog-nightmares and sudden silences signal a psyche suspended between intrusive recollection and defensive repression. His fractured selfhood echoes Alpert's claim that the traumatized subject "appears to be one person but is, in fact, many. There is a battle as to what, if anything, is spoken" (736). Yusuf's muteness thus represents not mere passivity, but the paradox Alpert identifies: "they want to tell. Yet they cannot. It is an intricate adventure of hide-and-seek" (735). In Yusuf's case, trauma "cannot be made mute" and "lives forever" (735), shaping his silences, dreams, and sense of alienation even as the narrative appears to progress. Within psychoanalytic theory, such

recurrent dreams are interpreted as efforts by the unconscious to surface unresolved conflicts, fears, and desires, offering an ongoing- though incomplete attempt at psychic working-through.

In recent research, Dominick Lacapra states that trauma has become a significant focus within memory studies, and justifiably so. It accentuates the crucial importance of emotions and their effect on memory, demonstrating how traumatic memories can manifest as post- traumatic symptoms like compulsive repetition, exaggerated startle responses, heightened reactions, and severe sleep disorders, including persistent nightmares. Moreover, trauma presents the persistent challenge of processing these symptoms in a way that is practical, albeit potentially never completely effective. Robyn Fivush in '*Children's Recollections of Traumatic and Nontraumatic Events'* further elaborate these conditions writing that, statistics from clinical and community samples reveal that one in four individuals in our society undergoes trauma during childhood (699). Despite the widespread nature of this issue, there is a surprising scarcity of developmental research dedicated to understanding how young children process their traumatic experiences. This understanding hinges on how children represent, interpret, and remember these traumatic events. When traumatized children encounter reminders of the initial traumatic event, they may feel so much pain and anxiety that they become overwhelmed. In such situations, where they cannot physically escape these reminders, they may resort to dissociation. After experiencing trauma, children might appear stunned or numb often staring off into space. They may not respond promptly to questions from adults, and their answers might seem unclear, unfocused, or evasive. Caruth, C. (1996) similar stance helps explain this condition more strongly as she states:

> The trauma is not experienced in the first instance as a straightforward event that can be located in time and place, but is only fully evident in its

> belated repetition. […] The traumatized, we might say, carry an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess. (4)

Caruth's emphasis on trauma's belatedness and its unassimilated return (e.g., dissociation, numbness, fragmented responses) mirrors your discussion of children's overwhelming reactions to traumatic reminders. Her concept of trauma as an "impossible history" that manifests symptomatically (e.g., staring blankly, evasive answers) aligns with the idea that children cannot "process" trauma in real time. Caruth's work often highlights how trauma disrupts linear memory and communication. In *Unclaimed Experience*, she argues that trauma's "double telling" (7) involves both silence and repetition, which resonates with your description of children's stunned, unclear responses. This behavior is understandable when considering that, although these children are physically present, their minds may be 'elsewhere,' dissociating to avoid the painful reminders of the original trauma (7-8). Cathy Caruth's analysis of Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* that addresses dissociation and the belatedness of trauma:

> The trauma consists not only in having confronted death but in having survived, precisely, without knowing it. What one returns to in the flashback is not the incomprehensibility of one's near death, but the very incomprehensibility of one's own survival. […] Trauma is not the confrontation with death, but the ongoing experience of having survived it. (64)

Caruth's analysis here aligns with the description of traumatized children dissociating or appearing "stunned" when reminded of their trauma. She frames dissociation as a symptom of the belatedness of trauma, the survivor's inability to fully grasp the event when it occurs. The "incomprehensibility of survival" (64) mirrors the child's fragmented, evasive

responses, as their psyche struggles to reconcile the unprocessed past with the present. In this chapter (57–72), Caruth uses Freud's theory of trauma as a "breach in the mind's protective shield" to argue that dissociation arises from the temporal delay (*Nachträglichkeit*) inherent to traumatic memory. Trauma's effects, she writes, "return to haunt the survivor" (4), manifesting as dissociation or numbness when triggered, directly echoing your observations of children's overwhelmed reactions.

Similar arguments appear in Homi K. Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994), which critiques fixed notions of nation and identity "Cultural identities emerge through the 'in-between' spaces of transnational negotiation" (5). This dispersed narrative technique is not only a rhetorical strategy but also a reflection of the shifting cultural, social, and historical dimensions Gurnah has navigated throughout his life, notably the colonial history of Tanzania and his own exile. Zanzibar, Gurnah's birthplace, has experienced centuries of foreign rule, from Portuguese colonization in the 16th century to British control in the 19th century, culminating in the union of Zanzibar and Tanganyika to form the United Republic of Tanzania in 1964. Gurnah's departure from Tanzania in 1966 and subsequent exile in the UK shaped his experience of temporal and spatial dislocation, which, in turn, deeply influences the dispersed narrative style evident in his novels.

Abdulrazak Gurnah's literary oeuvre emerges from the complex intersections of post- colonial history, migration, and the fractured identities resulting from dislocation and exile. Born in Zanzibar and forced to leave his homeland in the wake of the 1964 revolution, Gurnah's personal history of migration informs the thematic and narrative fabric of his works. The contexts of colonialism, postcoloniality, and the psycho-social impact of displacement shape the stories he tells, where trauma becomes a central leitmotif, haunting both individual and collective memory. Informed by the psychoanalytic models

of trauma, particularly those theorized by Freud, Cathy Caruth, Bessel van der Kolk, and Fenichel, Gurnah's novels explore the psychic scars of colonialism, familial disintegration, and socio-political upheaval. His narratives are layered with subtle representations of repression, displacement, and resistance. The characters' inner turmoil often reflects a repression of traumatic experiences, which resurface through fragmented memories, dreams, and behavioral symptoms, echoing Freud's ideas of symptom formation and the return of the repressed.

This approach aligns closely with Caruth's notion of trauma as an unassimilated experience that returns through repeated intrusion into consciousness, often beyond the control of the sufferer. One of Gurnah's most compelling narrative strategies is his fragmented, non-linear storytelling, which mirrors the disjointed nature of memory and trauma. This technique aligns with van der Kolk's theory that traumatic memories are often stored differently from normal memories, leading to fragmented, sensory-driven recollections rather than coherent narratives. Gurnah's protagonists often grapple with fragmented identities and histories that cannot be easily reconstructed. Yusuf in *Paradise* (1994), for instance, embodies the complexity of navigating the aftermath of colonial exploitation and personal displacement, where memory operates not as a cohesive narrative but as a series of disorienting fragments. Moreover, Gurnah's narratives, while steeped in the cultural specificity of East African society, also adopt a universal exploration of trauma and loss. His portrayal of male characters who have experienced sexual trauma, often through the lens of hypermasculinity and patriarchal violence, reveals the multifaceted nature of victimhood and power. The male rape narratives in *Memory of Departure* (1987) and *By the Sea* (2001) challenge prevailing assumptions about gendered experiences of violence, illustrating how Gurnah destabilizes conventional gender roles. Through the psychoanalytic lens, these experiences are not only personal afflictions but also reflect

societal dysfunction and inherited colonial violence.

In terms of narrative style, Gurnah employs a restrained, almost minimalist prose, where much is left unsaid. This mirrors the psychoanalytic idea of resistance, the refusal to confront certain truths. Gurnah's characters often resist their own histories, their memories, and the traumatic events that have shaped their present, encapsulating Freud's concept of repression. By withholding complete narratives and offering fragmented, often unreliable perspectives, Gurnah engages the reader in an active process of piecing together trauma and memory, much like a psychoanalytic interpretation where the analyst must decode what is hidden beneath the surface. Furthermore, Gurnah's use of multiple narrative perspectives, especially in *By the Sea* and *Desertion* (2005), allows him to explore the multiplicity of truth and the impossibility of singular, authoritative histories. This technique can be seen as resonating with Fenichel's trauma model, where trauma disrupts the normal psychic function, leading to competing narratives of reality within the traumatized subject.

Overall, Gurnah's narrative strategy, deeply embedded in the psychoanalytic understanding of trauma, operates through disjointed, fragmented storytelling, unreliable narration, and an emphasis on silence and repression. His works not only explore the aftermath of colonialism but also delve into the universal human experience of loss, dislocation, and the often-unarticulated trauma of migration. Gurnah's protagonists, much like patients in psychoanalysis, are haunted by the past and compelled to confront the unassimilated memories that shape their identities in an uncertain present. This study reveals the complexity of migration, being a refugee, feeling of rootlessness in one's own land like in case of Yusuf, with all despair condition of life, and the cultural transactions within the Swahili coast, in Zanzibar, in the Indian Ocean. Characters of both sexes that exhibit such complex behaviour suffer from traumas that decline their ability to operate as

humans normally do. This study also comprehends on how Gurnah speculates about familial, cultural, social, and political ties on the East African coast from the start of colonialism until the end of the twentieth century by using his art of characterization. The main objective of this study is to analyse Abdulrazak Gurnah's fundamental concern about how the main characters or even minor ones, develop neurotic symptoms at the earliest stages in their families, societies, or after being uprooted or migrating to other cultures and lands, through various exposures and abuses. There is a constant struggle, and restlessness in the characters. Through this narrative strategy, Gurnah builds on to a personal reconstruction of narrating the fundamentals of his writing purpose. To this restlessness Edward Said in *Reflections on exile* (2013) appropriates that:

> Expatriation/exile for the intellectual is restlessness, movement, constantly being unsettled and unsettling others. You cannot go back to some earlier and perhaps more stable condition of being at home; and, alas, you can never fully arrive, be at one with your new home or situation. (173)

The issue of alienation or rootlessness is palpable in most of the works of Gurnah, as Monica Bungaro precisely remarks, 'The rootless nomadic traders of Gurnah's controversial novel, *Paradise* (1994), who exist in many languages, races, and religions, as well as *Dottie*, a mixture of African, Punjab, English components, and the Tanzanian emigre school teacher who eventually decides to go back to his country in *Admiring Silence* (1997), are symptomatic examples of this 'restlessness' and 'movement' and the author's experimentation with a changing reality observed from a continually de-cantered and decentring position'(3).

Throughout his literary career, Abdulrazak Gurnah has consistently engaged with themes of self-reconstruction and the psychodramatic experiences of homelessness, alienation, and cultural distinctiveness. While much of his work examines the

displacement caused by war, oppression, and the refugee experience, Gurnah also explores a more ironic and deeply personal form of alienation, one that originates within the family unit, in one's own homeland. This form of familial alienation is devoid of direct colonial influence, instead positioning the family as the principal agent of psychological breakdown. In many of Gurnah's novels, the family assumes a destructive role, displacing its members in extreme circumstances of psychological suffering. Here, the individual is driven toward neurotic tendencies, manifesting symptoms such as nightmares, fear, shame, repression, and the formation of unconscious defense mechanisms, all of which align with psychoanalytic theory. Gurnah frequently portrays child characters who endure intense hardships, abuse, and harassment at the hands of their own families, underscoring the dysfunction of familial and social structures. In this context, children become both direct and indirect victims of trauma, often witnessing violence between adults or experiencing abuse themselves. As psychoanalytical research suggests, children, due to the ongoing development of their minds, bodies, and brains are particularly vulnerable to trauma. While they may employ a variety of coping mechanisms to survive these stressful situations, the lasting psychological effects of such experiences can be profound.

This perspective is supported by Kaminer's study, which revealed that 80% of adolescents in Kenya and South Africa had been exposed to extreme trauma, either as direct victims or witnesses. This statistic highlights the widespread impact of familial and social dysfunction on the psychological development of young people in post-colonial African contexts. In Gurnah's *Paradise*, the protagonist Yusuf serves as a compelling example of the narrative strategy Gurnah employs to depict the frail, voiceless, and marginalized. Yusuf's journey through various phases of life reflects the broader plights faced by those subjected to familial alienation and societal dysfunction. By focusing on Yusuf's experiences, Gurnah adopts a narrative strategy that gives voice to the silenced

and oppressed, using psychoanalytical insights to underscore the deep psychological scars left by familial betrayal and the trauma of growing up in environments marked by violence and neglect. Gurnah's nuanced portrayal of these themes speaks to the complexities of trauma, particularly how it operates within intimate, familial spaces, spaces traditionally associated with safety and belonging, yet in his narratives, they become sources of profound alienation. Through this narrative strategy, Gurnah reveals how trauma, both witnessed and experienced, erodes the psychological foundation of his characters, driving them into neurotic states, where repression, shame and fear dominate their consciousness. The concept of parenting in dysfunctional families has always remained to be problematic in unhealthy conditions like in Africa, be it south Africa or East Africa. About bad parenting and its repercussions, Seedat (2009) writes:

> Because of orphaning, poverty, the irregular structure of the country's families, and the social norms around extramarital pregnancy and childrearing, many children are not raised by their parents. This situation leaves children vulnerable to abuse and neglect. (1015)

Thus, Gurnah's placing of such characters into the central narrative strategy plays an important role in seeking the 'contamination' through the dysfunctional and non-linear narrative that reflects trauma in a broader sense. Gurnah's narrative spectrum is described as; Their stories are all based on the identity-shattering effects that moving to a new geographical and social setting has on the characters (2). Gurnah's primary protagonists upend the stories of the Europeans they encounter in the places they migrate. According to cultural critic Paul Gilroy's seminal study *Between Camps*:

> The ever-present risk of contamination that is associated with these population movements and with the proximity of strangers is a danger not only to the body but also to the nation. It endangers the fantasy of

uncontaminated national and ethnic culture. (127)

This is how the concept and context of the evolution of trauma from physical wounds to the psychic wounds transcended the empirical structures into the literary representation of trauma. In this chapter, different trauma theories, models and theorists were analysed and discussed like Caruth, Van Der Kolk, O. Fenichel, Kali Tal etc, in relation to developmental psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud, J. Breuer etc and literary world of Abdulrazak Gurnah.

The trajectory of trauma's conceptual evolution from its early somatic framings to its crystallization as a spectral wound inscribed in the psyche, reveals a dialectic between empirical inquiry and literary imagination. This chapter has traced trauma's ontological shift through Freud and Breuer's foundational *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), where trauma emerged as an unassimilated "foreign body" festering in memory (6), to Caruth's postmodern insistence on trauma as an "unclaimed experience" (4), a belated rupture that defies linear temporality. The psychoanalytic models of Fenichel and Van der Kolk further illuminate trauma's somatic-psychic duality: Fenichel's "uncontrollable influx of stimuli" (124) and Van der Kolk's "body keeping the score" (21) underscore its indelible imprint on both mind and flesh. Kali Tal's incisive critique of trauma's politicized narratives (1996) further destabilizes notions of universal suffering, foregrounding instead the intersectional violences of race, empire, and displacement.

In Abdulrazak Gurnah's oeuvre, these theoretical frameworks coalesce into a poetics of dislocation. His characters exiles, refugees, and diasporic subjects embody the *Nachträglichkeit* of colonial trauma, where the aftershocks of rupture reverberate across generations. Gurnah's narratives, like Freud's *Wunderblock*, layer memory upon memory, rendering trauma not as a static event but as a recursive haunting. In *Paradise* (1994), Yusuf's silenced subjugation under German colonialism mirrors Caruth's

"impossible history," while *Afterlives* (2020) refracts the psychic debris of empire through Hamza's fractured identity, a palimpsest of erasure and survival. Gurnah's prose, steeped in the "gulf between cultures and continents" (Nobel Committee, 2021), interrogates the epistemic violence of borders, rendering the refugee's liminality as both wound and witness.

This excavation of trauma's theoretical and literary contours lay bare its dual role as a diagnostic category and a narrative apparatus. Yet, as Gurnah's characters oscillate between remembrance and erasure, their stories gesture toward the unresolved tension between repression and resistance a tension that anchors the subsequent chapter, Resistance and Repression in Gurnah's Characters. Here, the focus shifts from trauma's structuring absence to its performative aftermath: how silenced histories erupt into acts of defiance, how survival becomes a subversive praxis, and how the unspoken legacies of empire are reinscribed through the body politic. If trauma, as Freud posited, is a "breach in the mind's protective shield" (29), resistance emerges as the suture imperfect, insurgent that binds the fragmented self to the possibility of narrative reclamation.

Chapter 3

Resistance and Repression in Gurnah's Characters

In his pursuit of unravelling the intricacies of the human psyche, Freud employed a triad of psychoanalytical characteristics to deepen our comprehension. The interplay between psychoanalysis and literature, as explored in the preceding chapter, reveals to what Freud (1908), *Creative Writers and Daydreaming* says, narrative art excavates the unconscious, transforming repressed desires into symbolic acts of creativity (153). This dynamic finds urgent resonance in the fiction of Abdulrazak Gurnah, where repressed histories and silenced traumas of institutional dysfunctions and identity fracture erupt through the fissures of seemingly restrained prose. If Freud's (1899) assertion that "unresolved conflicts resurface as neuroses" (373) holds true for the individual psyche, Gurnah's characters exhibit the similar responses to conflicts. Their psychological resistance mirrors Freud's framework of repression, yet this also be true that it is rooted in the political as well: what is repressed is not merely personal memory in Gurnah's case but the unresolved legacies of empire. But as Gurnah states that the evils existed way before Colonialism started in East Africa, people especially perceived weak were sexually assaulted, feminized, and raped, women subjected to abuse, violence, theft and slavery existed way before colonialism. This study validates and acknowledges the gruesome atrocities on the natives by colonized, but it does not consider colonialism as the only root cause of all the evils and dread existing in East Africa, but a dimension of one tree term of Trauma.

Gurnah's novels, such as *Paradise* (1994) and *By the Sea* (2001), stage repression as both a psychological defense and a colonial strategy. The protagonists' fragmented narratives and elliptical recollections exemplify Freud's (1899) claim that "latent psychological meaning" (373) lurks beneath overt actions, but here, the "overt" is the

official history, while the "latent" is the subaltern counter-memory. This chapter argues that Gurnah's characters enact a dual resistance: against the external forces of dysfunctional familial, social, cultural, religious and colonial repression and the internalized self-censorship that Freud (1923) termed the "superego's tyranny" (48). Their stories, like the analysand's free associations, disrupt the surface coherence of dominant narratives, revealing what has been buried not only in the unconscious mind, but in the archives of empire. Because both psychoanalysis and literature deal with the unconscious, there is no separating the two, with the writer's association primarily with the inner mental world of his characters. William Shakespeare, the greatest author of all time, allows us to peek into his characters' psyche, and as a result, his characters are enduring. Similar attention is given to the characters in Abdulrazak Gurnah's works; the main protagonists' characteristics are complex and merit a more in-depth examination. This research examines Sigmund Freud's theory of psychoanalysis and focuses mostly on the Defence Mechanisms, such as *Resistance and Repression*.

This chapter particularly delves into the examination of the main characters in Abdulrazak's literary works to highlight the manifestation and impact of Freudian concepts of Resistance and Repression. This chapter critically examines the experiences of protagonists across select novels, scrutinizing the profound influence of their physical afflictions within the context of social and cultural exchanges, thereby necessitating the application of psychoanalytic theory. In line with the observations made by the British Council Global, Gurnah "creates fictional characters who are constantly negotiating past and present in the construction of new identities to fit their new environments" (3).

Building on this foundation, Gurnah's literary project exemplifies Bhagya, C. S (2021) email interview with Monica Ali, her assertion that "the novel offers the greatest opportunity to go under the skin of others, explore their psychological terrain, their

worldview and walk in their footsteps" (4). His narratives become psychoanalytic case studies of colonial aftermath. Like a therapist reconstructing repressed trauma from fragments, Gurnah's readers must decipher histories encoded in silence and ellipsis. This technique manifests Punter's (2000) concept of the African text as a site where "repressed traumas return as spectral presence" (87), particularly in *By the Sea* where Saleh Omar's strategic silences about Zanzibar's revolution constitute what Punter terms "textual repression" (92). The novel's structural gaps, those deliberate omissions of historical detail, function simultaneously as psychological defense mechanisms and what Punter identifies as political strategy through "the unsaid" (95).

The spectral quality of Gurnah's narration achieves what orthodox psychoanalysis cannot: it renders the individual psyche in conflict visible and the collective unconscious of colonialism. Where Freud analyzed individual neuroses manifesting through slips and dreams, Gurnah's characters display what might be termed 'colonial neuroses', Latif's compulsive retelling of his migration story in *By the Sea* mirrors the Freudian compulsion to repeat, but transposed to the geopolitical realm. This aligns with Punter's observation that postcolonial texts disrupt linear historiography (87); Gurnah's non-chronological narratives formally replicate the psychological process of traumatic recollection. The "walk[ing] in their footsteps" that Ali (2024) describes becomes, in Gurnah's hands, an archaeological excavation of layered colonial psyche, each narrative layer revealing another stratum of cultural repression.

This synthesis of form and content creates what we might call a 'literary superego', the narrative itself performs the cultural censorship Freud (1923) attributed to individual psychology (48), while simultaneously subverting it through what Punter(2000) calls "literary resistance" (95). Gurnah's triumph lies in making the textual repression visible, turning the defensive mechanism against itself by highlighting its very operation. The

novels thus become what Freud might call the 'return of the repressed' for colonial history, but transformed through Punter's lens into deliberate aesthetic strategy rather than involuntary symptom.

Building on this framework where Gurnah's narratives transform involuntary psychological symptoms into deliberate aesthetic strategies, we must first establish the foundational psychoanalytic concepts at work. Freudian (1923) theory posits defense mechanisms as unconscious psychological processes that protect the ego from anxiety arising from internal conflicts (48). Among these, repression - the unconscious exclusion of distressing memories or desires from conscious awareness and resistance - the psyche's opposition to revealing repressed material emerge as particularly relevant to Gurnah's literary project. These mechanisms, which normally function to maintain psychological equilibrium in individuals, take on collective dimensions in Gurnah's fiction. Where Freud examined how repression manifests in individual neuroses, Gurnah's novels reveal how entire communities develop narrative defenses against historical trauma or the individual. This transition from individual psychology to collective experience mirrors our earlier observation about Gurnah's transformation of Freudian concepts, as his characters' psychological maneuvers become both personal survival tactics and political statements against colonial erasure.

Resistance: Sigmund Freud's concept of resistance stands as one of the cornerstones of psychoanalytic theory, representing the unconscious psychological forces that oppose the revelation of repressed thoughts, memories, and desires during therapeutic treatment. First systematically articulated in *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), co- authored with Josef Breuer, Freud observed that patients frequently exhibited an "unconscious opposition to the recall of repressed material" (268), a phenomenon he later termed resistance (Widerstand). This resistance, Freud argued, was not a deliberate refusal to cooperate but rather an

automatic defense mechanism designed to protect the ego from the anxiety and distress associated with confronting repressed trauma. Over time, Freud refined this concept, identifying multiple forms of resistance that manifest in both clinical and everyday psychological functioning.

Freud's theory of resistance emerged from his early work on hysteria, where he noted that patients often struggled to articulate traumatic memories, despite their conscious efforts to do so. Freud (1912) described resistance as "the force that defends the status quo of neurosis by opposing the work of analysis" (103). This resistance was not merely an obstacle to therapy, but a crucial indicator of where repressed conflicts lay buried. Freud later expanded this idea into *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (1926), where he positioned resistance as a fundamental aspect of the ego's defensive operations, working in tandem with repression to maintain psychological equilibrium. Freud categorized resistance into several distinct types, each corresponding to different psychic structures and defense mechanisms.

Ego Resistance: The most common form, arising from the ego's reluctance to confront repressed material that threatens its stability. Freud classified rationalization as the second phase of resistance. To lessen the threat of an event or an inclination, one must cognitively misrepresent the facts as E. Jones (1908) writes it as "the unconscious construction of logical but false explanations to justify behavior or emotions" (164). Instead of looking at the underlying emotional or unconscious issues, the patient does this when they try to rationalize away their behaviour or feelings using logical or rationale arguments. In the face of challenging emotions or experiences, the patient might keep their equilibrium and sense of control by using rationalisation as a defence mechanism. This term was introduced in psychoanalysis by Ernest Jones in *Rationalisation in Everyday Life* (1908). To elaborate the term more, Mijolla in *International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*,

writes it as:

> Rationalization is not really a symptom. It is more of a way masking and denying the symptom. Nor is it a compromise formation, since within certain limits it satisfies the drive. It is more of a way to keep from recognizing neurotic conflicts. It is the conscious secondary thought process of covering the symptom with a screen. (1448)

Intellectualization: Freud (1917) *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* understood it as, a detachment from emotional content by over-engaging in abstract analysis (324). Intellectualization is the third phase of resistance in his *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*. Although it requires a more cerebral or analytical approach to analysing one's behaviour or feelings, this is akin to rationalisation. By assessing things objectively and detachedly, intellectualization enables the patient to step back from their feelings and experiences. Freud in his lecture *Resistance and Repression,* defines intellectual resistance "as an intellectual resistance; it fights by means of arguments and exploits all the difficulties and improbabilities which normal but uninstructed thinking finds in the theories of analysis" (324). In psychology, this behaviour pattern is known as intellectualization, a defence strategy that, according to Freud, entails becoming so preoccupied with the rational side of a situation that you entirely ignore the emotional side that is involved. Freud (1915) *Repression* writes it as the primary defense mechanism that keeps distressing thoughts out of conscious awareness (146). This must be noted that we understand Repression on a broader dimension ahead in this chapter.

Id Resistance: Stemming from the pleasure principle's resistance to relinquishing instinctual gratification. Freud (1914) *Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through,* noted that patients often exhibit a "compulsion to repeat" traumatic patterns rather than remember them (151). Superego Resistance occurs when unconscious guilt or moral

anxiety prevents the patient from acknowledging repressed desires. Freud (1923) *The Ego and the Id*, observed that some patients resist recovery because they feel undeserving of health (49).

Transference Resistance: Freud, (1912), *The Dynamics of Transference* understands Transference resistance as a unique form where the patient redirects unconscious emotions (often from childhood relationships) onto the analyst, creating emotional barriers to treatment (108). Secondary Gain Resistance is defined in Freud, (1916) *Introductory Lectures* as when a patient unconsciously clings to symptoms because they provide hidden benefits, such as attention or avoidance of responsibility (358).

Freud emphasized that resistance is not merely an obstacle but a guidepost for therapy. In *The Question of Lay Analysis* (1926), he wrote, "The resistance accompanies the treatment step by step. Every single association, every act of the person under treatment must reckon with the resistance" (71). Overcoming resistance requires careful interpretation, free association, and the development of transference, where the patient's projections onto the analyst are analyzed rather than acted upon. Freud's concept has been widely adapted in literary criticism, particularly in analyzing postcolonial and trauma narratives. Abdulrazak Gurnah's novels, for instance, Punter (2000) Postcolonial *Imaginings*, depict characters whose silences and fragmented memories function as textual resistance both a psychological defense and a political statement against colonial erasure (92). Similarly, Bakhtin, (1984) *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, Raskolnikov's refusal to confess mirrors Freudian id resistance, where repressed guilt manifests as self-destructive behavior (127).

Mitchell, (1993) *Hope and Dread in Psychoanalysis* opines that modern psychoanalysis views resistance not just as a barrier but as a dynamic interaction between patient and therapist (45). Postcolonial theorists like Frantz Fanon (1952) *Black Skin,*

White Masks reinterpret resistance as a survival strategy, arguing that marginalized individuals resist dominant narratives to preserve identity (112). So, Freud's theory of resistance remains a vital framework for understanding unconscious defense mechanisms in psychology, literature, and cultural studies. From clinical repression to literary subversion, resistance reveals the psyche's intricate strategies for self-preservation whether in the analyst's office or the pages of a postcolonial novel.

Repression: In *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1977), Freud uses a vivid metaphor to explain the concept of repression. He likens the unconscious to a large entrance hall, where various mental impulses gather and jostle for attention. Adjacent to this hall is a smaller, more refined room, representing consciousness. A watchman, or censor, stands at the threshold between these two spaces, examining the impulses and determining which may be admitted into consciousness. If an impulse displeases the watchman, it is either denied entry or pushed back after briefly crossing the threshold. Freud describes this process as repression when mental impulses are blocked from entering conscious awareness, either immediately or after an initial assessment. Consequently, these impulses remain within the unconscious, out of sight and inaccessible to the conscious mind (331,332). Sigmund Freud's concept of repression (*Verdrängung*) is the cornerstone of psychoanalytic theory, defined as the unconscious exclusion of distressing memories, thoughts, or impulses from conscious awareness to prevent psychological distress. In *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), Freud and Breuer first described repression as a defensive process where "the psyche actively pushes pathogenetic experiences out of consciousness" (154). Freud in (1915) *Repression* states that unlike voluntary suppression," repression operates unconsciously, often distorting reality to shield the ego from anxiety, particularly from unresolved childhood conflicts or taboo desires" (146). Freud in, *On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement* later called it the "foundation-stone on which the

whole structure of psychoanalysis rests" (146), emphasizing its role in neurosis formation when repressed material resurfaces as symptoms (e.g., phobias, hysterical paralysis). This theory has helped to explain the complex and strange occurrences of psychoneurosis and related conditions, but it has also had a significant impact on research in sociology, anthropology, art, literature, religion, politics, and even philosophy. In his theory of psychoanalysis, Freud advocated a variety of defence mechanisms, Matthew Hugh Erdelyi (2006) writes:

> In the unified theory, repression is divided into two subclasses: (1) inhibitory or subtractive processes (e.g., degrading the "signal"), and (2) elaborative or additive processes (e.g., adding "noise" to the signal)… "repression" was of the inhibitory or subtractive variety ("suppression," "inhibition," "dissociation") followed in short order by a number of elaborative "transformations" ("constructions," "distortions"), among them, rationalization, projection, reversal, displacement, symbolization. (502)

Freud believed that repression was a necessary and natural aspect of the human psyche that assisted individuals in protecting themselves from the overpowering influence of unconscious urges and wants. Nevertheless, he also thought that repression may be detrimental if it led to the unconsciously suppressing of distressing memories and feelings that had to be handled for the person to achieve psychological wellness. Sigmund Freud in his work *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (1926) defines repression as:

> Repression proceeds from the ego when the latter it may be at the behest of the super- ego refuses to associate itself with an instinctual cathexis which has been aroused in the id. The ego is able by means of repression to keep the idea which is the vehicle of the reprehensible impulse from

> becoming conscious. Analysis shows that the idea often persists as an unconscious formation. (91)

We can see how Freud explains that the ego, the conscious part of the mind that mediates between the impulses of the id, the unconscious part of the mind driven by primal instincts, and the moral standards of the super-ego, the internalised societal rules and values, is responsible for repression. Under the influence of the super-ego, the ego may reject or disconnect with a natural instinct that has been aroused in the id. Rejection and suppression of an impulse is known as repression. Repression is another tool the ego tries to prevent cognitive awareness of the idea or concept associated with the disagreeable impulse. Repression is a coping strategy the ego employs to keep unpleasant drives or desires hidden from conscious awareness. In an effort to uphold moral integrity and avoid any potential guilt, embarrassment, or worry that would arise from admitting and facing the wrong inclination, the ego suppresses the thought. Freud notes that despite the ego's attempts to suppress the idea or concept associated with the repressed urge, the repressed content does not simply disappear. Instead, it persists as an unconscious formation that nevertheless affects the person's ideas, feelings, and actions even though they are not consciously aware of it. During psychoanalytic analysis, these unconscious structures might appear in a variety of ways, such as verbal gaffes, nightmares, or symbolic behaviours, and they can give indirect hints to the repressed material. Freud explained how repression functioned in the unconscious mind in his book *The Interpretation of Dreams*, writing that "the repressed is the unconscious, but it is the unconscious only in so far as it is something that was once conscious and is now forgotten, something that was repressed and has now become unconscious" (476). He asserted that memories, feelings, and thoughts that have been repressed may eventually reappear through a variety of channels, including dreams, verbal slipups, and other instances of unconscious behaviour, also giving us different types of

repressions as below:

Primal Repression: Freud's *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1917) distinguishes *primal repression* as the initial barrier preventing instinctual drives (e.g., infantile sexuality) from ever entering consciousness. It creates as Freud in *The Unconscious*, (1915) states, a "fixation point" in the unconscious, often linked to "the earliest outbreaks of anxiety" (86). For example, a child's unfulfilled oral needs might be primally repressed, later manifesting as compulsive eating or smoking in adulthood.

Repression Proper (After-Pressure): This secondary phase targets mental derivatives of repressed content. Freud notes in *The Ego and the Id* (1923) that the superego enforces repression proper by moral censure: "The ego, under influence of the superego, rejects the incompatible impulse" (29). A clinical example is a patient who, after witnessing parental violence, represses anger but develops chronic migraines, a somatic displacement of the forbidden emotion.

Repression and Dreamwork: In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), Freud argues dreams are "the royal road to the unconscious" because repression distorts latent content into symbols (p. 373)8. For instance, a repressed desire for a colleague might appear as a dream about climbing a ladder, a disguised fulfillment avoiding conscious guilt.

Later psychoanalysts *Écrits* (1966) expanded Freud's model: Jacques Lacan reinterpreted repression linguistically, stating the "primal repressed is a signifier" (428), emphasizing how language structures unconscious gaps (e.g., a patient's slip like 'I hate my mother' revealing repressed love). Otto Fenichel linked repression to sublimation, noting successful repression redirects energy into creativity (e.g., an artist channeling repressed grief into paintings). Frantz Fanon (1952) postcolonialized repression, arguing "colonial violence creates collective repression in marginalized groups, manifesting as cultural amnesia" (112). While resistance (discussed earlier) is the ego's active opposition

to recalling repressed material during therapy, repression is the unconscious process enabling resistance. Freud illustrates this in *The Dynamics of Transference* (1912): "Resistance guards the repression; repression fuels resistance" (108). For example, Gurnah's character Saleh Omar in *By the Sea* resists narrating his trauma (resistance) because his psyche represses memories of colonial violence until fragmented flashbacks breach his defenses. As Freud (1939) noted, "The repressed always returns" (127).

Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Paradise* (1994) is a profound exploration of familial betrayal, psychological survival and colonial trauma. Through the journey of Yusuf, a young boy pawned into servitude in early 20th-century East Africa, Gurnah illuminates the interplay between individual and collective trauma. By applying Sigmund Freud's theories of repression and resistance, this analysis reveals how Yusuf's psyche navigates the violence of existing structures of society and colonialism through unconscious defense mechanisms. Freud's *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1917), *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), and *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) provide a framework for understanding Yusuf's psychological maneuvers, while postcolonial theorists like Frantz Fanon and Homi Bhabha contextualize these defenses within systemic oppression. Freudian Foundations: Freud (1915) defines repression (Verdrängung) as the unconscious exclusion of distressing memories, desires, or impulses from conscious awareness (146). This defense mechanism protects the ego from anxiety but often resurfaces through symptoms like dreams, slips of the tongue, or neuroses. Resistance according to Freud (1912) (Widerstand), meanwhile, refers to the psyche's opposition to recalling repressed material during therapeutic treatment, manifesting as evasion, transference, or intellectualization (108).

In *Paradise*, Yusuf's repression begins with the primal trauma of familial betrayal. Sold by his father to settle a debt, Yusuf "folds the knowledge away, as one might hide a

stolen object" (12). This act of psychic concealment mirrors Freud's (1915) description of primal repression, where traumatic experiences are "fixated" in the unconscious (86). Yusuf's journey marked by sexual predation, cultural erasure, and colonial violence, exemplifies how these defenses operate as survival strategies under systemic oppression.

Through his journey, Yusuf learns about the complexities of identity and the ways in which history, memory and identity intersect, we are left to wonder what exactly counts as 'paradise.' This remark sets our stage to discuss the possibilities, limitations, struggles, resistance, and repression that Yusuf offers to the conflicting situations that he is subjected to. Mark H. Bickhard and John Chambers Christopher in *The Influence of Early Experience on Personality* (1994) suggest that various models of personality development propose that there is a strong influence of "early experiences on later personality" (1). The early familial experiences that a person has have an impact on how they relate to other people and events as adults, according to the object relation theory of psychoanalytic psychology. Gurnah's characters grapple with competing notions of social constructs like pawning or servitude, the sexual abuse and vulnerability, the voicelessness and resistance, relationships and dysfunctionality within and across. The characters' past serves as a constant reminder of what has gone awry as they attempt to set new relational limits for themselves.

In Gurnah's works, two distinct forms of control are portrayed: one that stifles individual growth and another essential for development. African family structures and societal orientations are depicted as rigid, with parents often punishing children for venturing beyond domestic boundaries. While these actions reflect patriarchal norms, the underlying parental strictness can be viewed as a form of 'resistance' against the dangers prevalent in the community. Preventing children from playing outside serves as a defense against bullying, racism, and harmful practices such as sodomy and sexual abuse. This

parental control, though protective, often has unintended psychological consequences, as children either rebel against these societal evils later in life or repress their experiences, both of which lead to internal conflict and trauma. In this case, the child is living in the shadow of the father's abject failure, the presence is perceived in such a way as to impede growth and development, a tyrant or oppressive presence is actually an act of absence.

The use of narrative technique in *Paradise* (providing the sense of offing and unfolding of events, yet oblivious of the results) suggests that something dreadful is about to transpire. With the novelty of thought Yusuf does take it for granted for a while and this is how Yusuf resists the traffic to avoid the whirlpools of distress. Here the psyche resists all such possible threats to avoid being uncomfortable. The narrative arc of Yusuf hinges around these aspects, and it is only within this framework that Yusuf's behaviour would be examined using psychoanalytical paradigms and applications as he commences to exhibit the defence mechanisms from the very onset of the novel. This initiated questions and ambiguous concerns to arise in Yusuf's psyche, and 'his heart leapt with terror' (13). When the dust of thoughts in his psyche settles down "and the novelty of it began to wear off for Yusuf", Yusuf realises he has left his home, "and then the thought that he had left home became irresistible and began to cry" (18). Initially, Yusuf does not confront the gravity of his departure, indicating a form of resistance, his psyche defensively holds back the emotional impact. This resistance shields him from immediate distress, allowing him to function and adapt to the unfamiliar environment without being overwhelmed by anxiety. In Freudian terms, resistance operates as a defense mechanism, preventing unconscious material, such as the grief or fear associated with loss from rising to the conscious mind too quickly. As "the novelty of it began to wear off" (18), the defense begins to weaken, allowing repressed feelings to surface. Yusuf's eventual realization of his separation from home and his subsequent crying represents the moment when repression breaks down. His

emotions, which had been pushed into the unconscious to protect him from immediate distress, become "irresistible." This emotional outburst marks the return of the repressed, the painful awareness of loss that had been kept at bay. Freud states the exact situation in *Resistance and Repression* as "The patient endeavours in every sort of way to extricate himself from its provisions. At one moment he declares that nothing occurs to him, at the next that so many things are crowding in on him that he cannot get hold of anything" (323).

Once the initial protective barrier in the form of family is blurred, Yousuf in *Paradise* is thrown into the society of evil and power imbalanced institutions, where he is vulnerable to any immorality already prevailing. Abdalla, infamous for being a merciless sodomizer who is frequently caught caressing his loins carelessly. A good portion of text is devoted to Yusuf's worries about this degradation. Abdalla looks at him "with a frightening smile, shaking his head in small delight" and releasing "heavy sighs of lust" (47). When Abdalla reveals to Yusuf that he will be accompanying the impending trading expedition, "a smile grew upon his face, a predatory grimace which made Yusuf think of the dogs that prowled the lanes of his nightmares" (84). Yusuf's intense fears and disgust toward Abdalla's predatory behavior, manifested in his focus on Abdalla's gestures, smile, and lustful sighs, reflect the internal turmoil associated with repressed desires and anxieties. While Abdalla's dominance is overtly expressed through violence and sexual predation, Yusuf's responses represent a more subtle psychological struggle. Freud would argue that Yusuf is unconsciously repressing his fears and anxieties related to his vulnerability, especially as these emotions conflict with his need to maintain some semblance of emotional control or stability in the threatening situation.

The language describing Abdalla as a "merciless sodomizer" and Yusuf's subsequent horror and fixation on Abdalla's "frightening smile" and "heavy sighs of lust" hints at Yusuf's inability to process his emotional reaction to the potential trauma of sexual

violation. The repression occurs because Yusuf's psyche seeks to keep these traumatic thoughts out of his conscious awareness, his mind is actively resisting the overwhelming fear associated with Abdalla's violent masculinity. However, this repression is unstable, as suggested by Yusuf's nightmares and subconscious associations (like the comparison of Abdalla's smile to "dogs that prowled the lanes of his nightmares"). The unconscious is attempting to bring repressed fears to the surface through symbols, but Yusuf's conscious mind resists this by diverting the disturbing emotions into dreams, a classic Freudian mechanism of displacement.

Freud's *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) identifies early familial trauma as a catalyst for repression. Co-authored with Josef Breuer, the text argues that "hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences" (7), unresolved childhood traumas that resurface as somatic or psychological symptoms. Yusuf's paternal betrayal constitutes such a trauma. His father's decision to pawn him, described by Gurnah (1994) as casually as "picking a fruit from the tree" (131), ruptures Yusuf's trust in familial bonds, initiating a cycle of repression. Primal Repression: Familial Abandonment Yusuf's repression begins with his father's betrayal. The transaction is described with chilling detachment: "You'll be going with Uncle Aziz," his father said, and then gave him a small, bitter smile (16). The father's casual cruelty comparing Yusuf's enslavement to a train ride he might "enjoy" reflects Freud's (1895) observation that traumatic memories are often "split off" from consciousness to avoid emotional pain (7). In *Paradise*, Yusuf's inability to process his abandonment is evident in his fragmented memory: "He could not remember what his mother did or said, but he remembered that she looked ill or dazed" (16). Freud (1917) argues that such memory gaps signify repression, where the ego "expels" (294) unbearable realities. Repression Proper: Cultural and Colonial Violence Yusuf's repression extends to his internalization of colonial hierarchies in *Paradise*. His adoption of European clothing (201) exemplifies

what Fanon (1952) terms "epidermalization" the colonized subject's internalization of racial inferiority (112).

This cultural repression mirrors Freud's (1923) concept of the "ego ideal," where external authority figures (e.g., colonizers) are introjected as psychic regulators (37). Yusuf's compliance with Aziz's demands "He did not speak to Yusuf as they walked through the streets" (Gurnah, 19), reflects a repressed rage that Freud in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930) associates with societal oppression (97). The Return of the Repressed: Dreams and Nightmares Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899) posits that repressed material resurfaces through dreams, which he calls the "royal road to the unconscious" (608). Yusuf's nightmares "He dreamt that his mother was a one-eyed dog he had once seen crushed under the wheels of a train" (18) symbolize his unresolved trauma. The dream's grotesque imagery reflects Freud's (1899) theory of "dream-work," where latent content (trauma) is disguised through distortion and symbolism (373). The "one-eyed dog" symbolizes Yusuf's fractured maternal bond, while the train embodies the inexorable force of colonial violence. III. Resistance in Paradise: Psychological and Narrative Defenses 1. Intellectualization: Emotional Detachment Yusuf intellectualizes his enslavement to avoid emotional collapse. He romanticizes his journey as an adventure: "He imagined himself a traveler, not a pawn" (67). Freud in *Introductory Lectures* (1917) links this defense to the ego's substitution of "abstract thought for affective experience" (324). By reframing his trauma as a quest, Yusuf temporarily mitigates anxiety but prolongs repression. Transference Resistance: Projection onto Khalil, Yusuf projects filial longing onto Khalil, Aziz's enforcer, addressing him as "uncle" despite his cruelty (23). Freud in *The Dynamics of Transference* 1912 identifies transference as the displacement of "infantile prototypes" onto new figures (108).

Khalil's role as a surrogate father allows Yusuf to avoid confronting his biological

father's betrayal. However, Khalil's violence "He stepped forward and slapped him precisely on the meat of his left cheek" (22), forces Yusuf to confront the impossibility of this projection, mirroring Freud's assertion that transference ultimately "becomes the greatest resistance to treatment" (108). Narrative Resistance: Fragmented Chronology Gurnah's nonlinear narrative mirrors Yusuf's psychological resistance. The novel's fragmented chronology jumping between Yusuf's childhood and adolescence, reflects his avoidance of traumatic memories. Freud (1895) observes that patients often "rearrange chronology to disguise painful truths" (154). Yusuf's omission of his mother's fate ("He could not remember what his mother did or said") exemplifies this narrative evasion, creating gaps that Freud (1901) *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* terms "screen memories" (43). IV. Colonialism as Collective Neurosis Freud's *Moses and Monotheism* (1939) posits that repressed traumas resurface generations later as "archaic heritage" (127). Gurnah extends this to colonial history: Yusuf's enlistment with German troops symbolizes the return of repressed colonial violence. His participation in imperial brutality a distorted repetition of his own trauma mirrors Freud's (1920) "compulsion to repeat" (22). Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) reframes this compulsion as a colonial pathology: "The colonized man will first manifest this aggressiveness against his own people" (52). Khalil's complicity in Yusuf's abuse "He beat[s] Yusuf over minor infractions" (47) exemplifies this internalized violence. Khalil's brutality, like Yusuf's repression, is a survival strategy under colonialism's dehumanizing logic. V. Conclusion: Resistance as Survival In Paradise, repression and resistance are not pathologies but strategies of survival under colonial dehumanization. Yusuf's psyche, shaped by familial betrayal and cultural erasure, mirrors Freud's *A Difficulty in the Path of Psychoanalysis,* (1917) observation that "the ego is not master in its own house" (143). Yet Gurnah subverts Freud's individualistic framework, revealing how colonial systems weaponize these

defenses.

The novel's fragmented narrative, like Yusuf's repressed memories, resists closure, challenging readers to confront the unresolved traumas of empire. this is the first portion of the analysis, now I am adding the second portion of the analysis as: Yusuf's journey in *Paradise* is marked by a psychological landscape shaped by repression, a defense mechanism Freud (1915) describes as the unconscious exclusion of distressing memories or desires to avoid anxiety (146). This is evident in *Paradise* when Yusuf's father casually informs him, "You'll be going with Uncle Aziz" (16), framing Yusuf's displacement as an adventure. Yusuf's inability to process the betrayal "He could not remember what his mother did or said" (16) reflects primal repression, where Freud (1895) says traumatic experiences are "split off" from consciousness (7). His fragmented memory, fixated on the "shimmering road" and the porter's burden (16), mirrors Freud's (1901) claim that repression manifests through gaps in recollection (43). Yusuf's psyche shields itself by burying the emotional weight of abandonment, a survival strategy Freud *The Ego and the Id*, (1923) links to the ego's need to maintain stability (29). This repression extends to Yusuf's compliance with Aziz's authority, internalizing colonial hierarchies as a form of Freud's *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego,* (1921) "ego ideal" (80), where oppressive power structures are introjected to mitigate helplessness.

Resistance emerges as Yusuf navigates his traumatic reality through intellectualization and transference. When Khalil mocks Yusuf's naivety "He ain't your uncle, you stupid Mswahili boy" (32), Yusuf clings to the fantasy of Aziz's benevolence, a defense Freud (1917) terms "rationalization" (324). By reframing Aziz as a protector, Yusuf avoids confronting his commodification. Similarly, his romanticization of the journey, "He imagined himself a traveler, not a pawn" (67), exemplifies intellectualization, substituting abstract ideals for emotional pain. Freud (1917) argues such defenses allow

the ego to "disguise repressed material" (301), yet Yusuf's nightmares "He dreamt that his mother was a one-eyed dog crushed under the wheels of a train" (18), reveal the instability of repression. The dream's grotesque imagery aligns with Freud's (1899) theory of "dream-work" (373), where latent trauma resurfaces symbolically. Yusuf's terror of dogs, which "prowled the lanes of his nightmares" (84), reflects Freud's *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety,* (1926) assertion that repressed fears return as somatic symptoms or phobias (71), destabilizing the psyche's defenses. Khalil's role as both tormentor and surrogate brother underscores the duality of resistance in colonial contexts. His violence "He stepped forward and slapped him precisely on the meat of his left cheek" (22) mirrors A. Freud's *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense (1936)*, concept of "identification with the aggressor" (109), a survival tactic where victims internalize their oppressors' power. Khalil's complicity in Yusuf's abuse reflects Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, (1961) observation that colonialism fracture's identity, forcing the colonized to replicate violence (52). Yusuf's transference of filial longing onto Khalil calling him "uncle" despite his cruelty (34) reveals Freud's (1912) theory of displacement, where unresolved conflicts are projected onto safer figures (108). This transference, however, becomes a resistance to confronting paternal betrayal, as Yusuf's psyche clings to illusions to avoid Freudian (199) "return of the repressed" (127).

The novel's fragmented structure mirrors Yusuf's psychological resistance. Gurnah's nonlinear narrative jumping between Yusuf's fragmented memories of home and his enslavement, echoes Freud's *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* concept of "screen memories" (43), where chronology is rearranged to obscure trauma. Yusuf's repression of his mother's fate "He could not remember what his mother did or said" exemplifies this narrative evasion, creating gaps that Homi Bhabha in *The Location of Culture*, (1994), interprets as postcolonial resistance to dominant historiography (143). The colonial setting

exacerbates Yusuf's repression, as seen in his adoption of European clothing (201), which Fanon *Black Skin, White Masks,* (1952), links to the "epidermalization" of inferiority (112). Yusuf's participation in Aziz's expeditions "To trade with the savages" (34) reflects Freud's (1920) "compulsion to repeat" (22), a subconscious re-enactment of trauma masked as agency.

Gurnah's portrayal of Ma Ajuza's obsessive desire for Yusuf "She smelt of tobacco and her embraces were embarrassing" (30) reveals another layer of repression. Yusuf's disgust at her advances "Her teeth are red with tobacco", masks his fear of vulnerability, a repression of burgeoning sexuality Freud in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) associates with pubertal anxiety (197). Ma Ajuza's grotesque embodiment of desire becomes a projection of Yusuf's unconscious fears, her "ululations of triumph" (30) mirroring Freud's theory of the uncanny *The Uncanny* (1919) where repressed material resurfaces in distorted forms (220). Similarly, the Mistress's spectral presence in the garden "She watches you in her mirrors" (43) symbolizes the return of repressed colonial violence, her madness a metaphor for the psyche's fragmentation under oppression.

In *Paradise*, resistance and repression are not merely individual pathologies but collective survival strategies under colonialism as well. Yusuf's repression of familial betrayal and his resistance to confronting Aziz's cruelty reflect *Freud's A Difficulty in the Path of Psychoanalysis* (1917) assertion that "the ego is not master in its own house" (143). Yet Gurnah transcends Freud's Eurocentric framework, aligning with Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks,* critique that colonialism pervert's psychic health into a "psycho-existential complex" (14). Yusuf's eventual enlistment with German troops a distorted repetition of his trauma echoes Freud's *Moses and Monotheism* "archaic heritage" (127), where collective trauma resurfaces across generations. This duality aligns with Homi Bhabha's (1994) concept of mimicry as "resemblance and menace" (122), where colonial subjects

destabilize power through partial compliance. The novel's unresolved ending, like Yusuf's fragmented psyche, resists closure, embodying Écrits, (1966) Lacan's réel, the unsymbolizable trauma haunting postcolonial subjectivity (428). Through Yusuf, Gurnah reveals repression and resistance as intertwined strategies of survival, where silence and storytelling alike become acts of defiance against erasure.

In *Paradise*, repression and resistance are neither pathologies nor failures but strategies of survival under colonial dehumanization. Yusuf's psyche, shaped by familial betrayal and cultural erasure, mirrors Freud's *A Difficulty in the Path of Psychoanalysis*, (1917) observation that "the ego is not master in its own house" (143). Yet Gurnah subverts Freud's individualistic framework, revealing how colonial systems weaponize these defenses. The novel's fragmented narrative, like Yusuf's repressed memories, resists closure, challenging readers to confront the unresolved traumas of empire. *Paradise* reconfigures Freud's clinical concepts as tools for postcolonial critique. Yusuf's repression and resistance are not pathologies but strategies of survival under empire. As Freud *Three Essays*, (1905) noted, "Neurosis is the negative of perversion" (197), Gurnah shows how colonial violence perverts psychic health, forcing resistance into creative forms. As Yusuf matures, he becomes more attuned to the decay around him, but his instinct is to repress these unsettling realities. Even when Yusuf senses uncomfortable truths, he clings to his fantasies: that Aziz is his uncle, that his father did not sell him, that he will soon return home, and that his mother would never conceal important matters from him. Khalil, however, shatters these illusions, bluntly revealing the painful truths Yusuf refuses to acknowledge. Despite Khalil's attempts to dismantle Yusuf's misconceptions, Yusuf resists, dismissing them as mere 'claims.' This resistance aligns with Freud's (1915) concept of repression, where "the essence of repression lies simply in turning something away, and keeping it at a distance, from the conscious" (147). The "something" Freud refers

to those unsettling thoughts, fears, and guilt that threatens to destabilize Yusuf's psyche. Khalil, though harsh, acts like a psychoanalyst, forcing Yusuf to confront these buried truths. Yusuf's resistance mirrors Freud's (1977) assertion that "We are to believe that this same patient puts up a struggle in the interest of his illness against the person who is helping him. How improbable such an assertion must sound!" (322). Further adding that:

> Thus, it is because instincts are continuous in their nature that the ego has to make its defensive action secure by a permanent expenditure [of energy]. This action undertaken to protect repression is observable in analytic treatment as resistance. (157)

This concept from psychoanalytic theory illustrates that since our fundamental drives are continuously active, the ego must exert constant effort to mediate between these instincts and external reality. To do so, it maintains defenses that suppress unsettling or socially unacceptable thoughts and emotions through "repression."" This defensive mechanism ensures that repressed material remains outside conscious awareness. In therapeutic settings, this process manifests as "resistance," where individuals unconsciously evade discussing specific topics or experiences that may provoke distress.

By The Sea (2001): Abdulrazak Gurnah is a prominent figure in contemporary literature, renowned for his literary contributions. His sixth book, titled *By the Sea*, delves into the far-reaching consequences of subjecting individuals to the whims of fate, amidst the backdrop of colonial powers exerting control. Imperialism's historical trajectory has been marred by deplorable issues, wherein it erodes the cultural and societal identity of indigenous communities. Gurnah's book centers around the British acquisition of the island of Zanzibar, highlighting its profound impact on the local population. Postcolonialism emerges as a consequential aftermath, further exacerbating the turbulent lives led by characters such as Omer and Latif. Both Omer and Latif offer individual first-

person narratives, allowing readers to intimately engage with their experiences. The central character, Saleh Omer, undergoes displacement from his homeland and subsequently seeks asylum in the United Kingdom. Gurnah (2001) writes "Though I have lived, I have lived. It is so different here that it seems as if one life has ended, and I am now living another one. So perhaps I should say of myself that once I lived another life elsewhere, but now it is over" (8). Saleh surmises, "for some, as for me, it was the first journey by air, and the first arrival in a place so monumental as an airport, though I have travelled by sea and by land, and in my imagination" (10). Upon his arrival at the airport, he faces interrogation by a security officer, which sets the stage for the narrative. The remainder of the plot revolves around Omer's experiences in his new environment and his complex emotions of acceptance and rejection. The novel primarily focuses on the life of Latif Mahmud, a professor who arrived in the UK prior to Omer. Eventually, the paths of Omer and Latif intersect, leading to the formation of a new bond as they both seek solace and companionship. Throughout the narrative, the author offers glimpses into their past lives in Zanzibar. Gurnah, according to critic Felicity Hand (2015) "unfolds tales of cruelty and betrayal, failed hopes, and disappointments" and "calls for a new space in multi-ethnic and multicultural societies such as both his native East Africa and contemporary Britain," (4). Both of them were in difficult situations that led to problems like identity crises, existential crises, and a lack of both physical and psychological safety. They experienced existentialism as soon as they began to stray from their own group of people. The work is significant because of how the characters dealt with their shattered identities and persistent attempts to fit into the surrounding matrix. In regard to Sigmund Freud's theories on repression and resistance, the book *By the Sea* is in fact well suited for psychoanalytic analysis.

The story starts in 1960 when Hussein, an unscrupulous Persian merchant,

befriends Omar, a thirty-one-year-old owner of a lucrative furniture firm. The deeds of Rajab Shaaban Mahmud's home, Hussein's landlord, are provided to Omar as collateral for a sizeable loan that Hussein asks for. The merchant had given his landlord a loan of a comparable amount the year before in exchange for the landlord's house serving as collateral. Omar is right to suspect that Hussein never makes it back, and in due order, he must demand repayment of the debt. Rajab Shaaban is enraged by what he sees as Omar's double dealing because he believes that Omar has also tricked his (Rajab Shaaban's) aunt into leaving him her house in her will. Omar's father had married Rajab Shaaban's widowed aunt, who favoured her stepson, Saleh, rather than her nephew, a drunkard, and a wastrel. However, public opinion seems to gradually favor Rajab Shaaban, especially since he turns to religion and becomes an example of pious humility. Although his wife openly carries on affairs with other men, she still resents Omar's demeanour toward her spouse, and through the help of one of her lovers, the Minister of Development and Resources, she orchestrates a campaign to discredit Omar and have him put into prison. After being detained in many camps for eleven years, he is ultimately freed in 1979 as a result of an amnesty. He discovers upon his release from prison that his wife and little daughter passed away. The defense mechanism is active in the subtle ways, here Omar in the jail frequents the prayers and keeps himself busy reading scriptures is what Sigmund Freud in *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* calls 'disavowal', which occurs when the individual is aware of an unacceptable thought or emotion but refuses to acknowledge it as their own (226). Disavowal is a form of psychological defense mechanism that allows the individual to distance themselves from their own thoughts and emotions in order to avoid discomfort or anxiety. Gurnah employed it in his works as *By the Sea* (2001) goes:

> The prayers filled out the days, as did recitations of the Koran from memory, which we retrieved according to our degrees. They brought order

> and purpose to our chores, and a stoicism that would otherwise have been inconceivable. (232)

Until Rajab Shaaban's oldest son, Hassan, who had fled with Hussein the merchant thirty years earlier, arrives determined to reclaim his father's home from Omar, he manages to scratch out a livelihood in relative quiet. The latter finds that the prospect of, yet another prison term is too onerous and that his only chance of survival is to flee Zanzibar. He uses Rajab Shaaban's birth certificate because his own was seized in order to get a passport. "My name is Rajab Shabaan, it is not my real name, but a name I borrowed for the occasion of this life saving trip" (39). This quote can be analyzed through Freud's (1926) framework of repression and resistance as dual forces shaping subjectivity under oppression. Freud defines repression as the ego's defense mechanism to exclude distressing desires or realities from consciousness (87), which here manifests as the state's erasure of the protagonist's legal identity, forcing him into a psychic "split." By adopting Rajab Shaaban's name, he enacts a resistance not just against bureaucratic violence but against the internalized trauma of non-existence. Freudian (1923) resistance, typically a barrier to uncovering repressed memories, is inverted here: the protagonist resists the state's attempt to render him invisible by performing a sanctioned identity, a survival tactic that externalizes the ego's struggle to mediate between the oppressive "reality principle" (state power) and the id's drive to exist (55). This duality mirrors what Freud later in *Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defence* (1938) termed the "splitting of the ego" (275), where the self simultaneously acknowledges the state's authority (using the borrowed name) and disavows it (retaining his true identity internally), a psychic compromise that sustains agency amid repression. This psychoanalytic reading intersects with the earlier analysis of state biopower through Foucault (1976) *History of Sexuality* (143) and Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, (1990) infrapolitical resistance

(19). The state's seizure of the birth certificate exemplifies Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, (1995) Freudian repression externalized as biopolitical control, reducing the protagonist to a "bare life" (8) stripped of symbolic identity. Yet his act of mimicry adopting another's name becomes a return of the repressed: the disowned self resurfaces through subterfuge, destabilizing the state's narrative. Freud's *Repression*, (1915) notion that "repression is never complete" (154) aligns with Scott's (1990) theory of hidden resistance, revealing how marginalized subjects weaponize the gaps in oppressive systems. The protagonist's survival hinges on this dialectic: his borrowed identity is both a symptom of state violence and a subversive refusal to surrender to it, embodying the fraught interplay between psychic and political liberation.

Characters face various adversities throughout their lifetimes, necessitating their relentless pursuit of resilience and the mitigation of ensuing repercussions. These arduous circumstances encompass a wide range of challenges, including the ravages of war, the trauma of sexual violence, experiences of abuse, the upheaval caused by epidemics, the displacement from one's home country, the distress of feeling unwelcome, and the sense of alienation in unfamiliar surroundings. The impact of these trials often manifests as internal strife, despair, solitude, detachment, as well as profound emotions of shame and guilt. Consequently, individuals grapple with the complex consequences stemming from these multifaceted causes, which profoundly shape their emotional and psychological experiences. The opening pages of the novel *By the sea* propounds the inklings of how traumatic and repressed the lives of these characters would be when the employee at the Gatwick Airport Kevin Edelman directs towards Shabaan (name that Salah Omar adopts to hide his true identity for safe passage) saying:

> People like you come pouring in here without any thought of the damage they cause. You don't belong here, you don't value any of the things we

> value, you haven't paid for them through generations, and we don't want you here. We'll make life hard for you, make you suffer indignities, perhaps even commit violence on you. Mr. Shaaban, why do you want to do this? (12)

In his work, *The principle of Hospitality*, Derrida opines that, "the first violence which the foreigner undergoes [is perhaps] to have to claim his rights in a language he does not speak" (7). This linguistic barrier prompts Omar, the protagonist, to choose silence as a means of self- protection. Frantz Fanon would interpret this quote from Gurnah's *By the Sea* as a violent articulation of colonial dehumanization and the psychopathology of racism that sustains oppressive hierarchies. For Fanon, the speaker's vitriol ("You don't belong here… we don't want you") reflects the colonizer's need to construct the "native" as an existential threat to justify exclusion and domination. In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Fanon argues that colonialism depends on a "Manichean world" divided into "the settler" and "the native," where the colonizer weaponizes cultural and historical superiority to erase the colonized's humanity (41). The threat to "make life hard for you" and inflict "violence" mirrors Fanon's analysis of colonial rule as a system upheld by brute force, where the colonized are reduced to "animals" in the eyes of the oppressor (42). The accusation that migrants "haven't paid for [what 'we' value] through generations" echoes Fanon's critique of colonial narratives that frame the colonized as interlopers in their own lands, denying their right to belonging or inheritance. For Fanon, such rhetoric is a tool of repression, designed to naturalize the colonizer's theft of land and history: "The colonial world is a world divided into compartments… a world of statues" (40).

However, Fanon would also locate resistance in Mr. Shaaban's refusal to accept this erasure. The question "why do you want to do this?" betrays the colonizer's fear of

the oppressed's agency. Fanon (1952) insists that resistance arises from the colonized's rejection of their imposed "thinghood" (xiv). By persisting in seeking entry into a space that denies his humanity, Mr. Shaaban embodies what Fanon calls the "irrepressible" drive to "shake off the colonial darkness" (51). The violence threatened here is not just physical but epistemic, an attempt to erase his subjectivity. Yet, as Fanon writes, "the colonized man finds his freedom in and through violence" (44), meaning that even nonviolent acts of insistence (like migration) destabilize colonial power. Gurnah's scene thus mirrors Fanon's dialectic: repression begets resistance, and the colonized's survival itself becomes a revolutionary act. In an interview with Abdulrazak Gurnah, Nisha Jones asks about his character choosing silence, Gurnah says:

> Well, Saleh keeps quiet because he's told not to speak English [...] they're diffident about their own language if they're on their own and they're also diffident about English, say, because they're not sure if they can speak it properly. So, remaining silent is a way of preserving dignity and at the same time not putting yourself into harm's way. Silence is ambivalent. It is also powerful and can be far more eloquent. (39)

By refraining from engaging with the language of foreigners (English), Omar not only recalls past traumas and painful memories but also finds himself trapped in a state of ambivalence, unable to escape its lingering effects. As Leonard C. Feldman (2019) points out, the airport functions as a "relay point" where various technologies of surveillance and control, are deployed to separate travellers into "citizen," "foreigner," a cataloguing process that performs the state's sovereign power (333). Consequently, the characters in the novel *By the Sea* can be seen as experiencing trauma resulting from resistance and repression, which becomes intricately intertwined with their identity and language. Freud (1926) might interpret Saleh's silence as a manifestation of repression, a defense

mechanism where the ego suppresses distressing thoughts or impulses to avoid psychological harm (87). By refusing to speak English, Saleh represses both his desire to communicate and his anxiety over linguistic inadequacy ("diffident about their own language… not sure if they can speak [English] properly"). This resistance is not merely personal but socially enforced, as he is "told not to speak English," reflecting how colonial hierarchies in *Black Skin, White Masks*, (1952) internalize inferiority (2). Freud *Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defence*, (1938) argues that repression creates a "split" in the ego, where the individual disavows part of themselves to conform to external demands (276). Saleh's silence thus becomes a compromise: he avoids the humiliation of miscommunication while preserving dignity, even as his repressed linguistic identity festers beneath consciousness.

Yet this silence also functions as resistance, a refusal to perform compliance with colonial linguistic norms. Freud defines resistance as the psyche's opposition to uncovering repressed material, but here, it is reappropriated as a political act. By withholding speech, Saleh resists the colonizer's demand for assimilation, turning silence into an "eloquent" weapon. Freud *Repression*, (1915) notes that repressed content "returns" in distorted forms (154); Saleh's silence, though outwardly passive, harbors a subversive agency. His ambivalence mirrors Freud's observation that repression is never total, it is "a condition of intermittent failure" (153). In this liminal space, silence becomes both a symptom of colonial violence ("not putting yourself into harm's way") and a quiet rebellion against it, embodying Freud's dialectic of repression and resistance as intertwined survival strategies. Resistance can take multitude of forms, deciding a silence to avoid the conflict within psyche and otherwise traumas is what Sigmund Freud identified as rationalization. Rationalisation is the type of resistance put by the character Omar masked as Rajab to, one distorts the factual identity of his own, and second, to make

an exit that is less threatening to the psyche.

It is the cognitive distortion of "the facts" to make an event or an impulse less threatening. A. Freud writes that "Under the influence of a shock, such as the sudden loss of a love object, it denies the facts and substitutes for the unbearable reality some agreeable delusion" (80). This is when the patient attempts to explain away their behavior or feelings with logical or rational explanations, rather than examining the underlying emotional or unconscious factors. Latif Mahmud, on the other hand, is mastered the English language and a poet at the same time. In Abdulrazak Gurnah's narrative, Latif's decision to shed his familial identity discarding his father's and grandfather's names (Rajab and Shaaban) to adopt the new name "Latif Mahmud" can be analyzed through Sigmund Freud's theories of rationalization and loss of object.

Freudian psychoanalysis illuminates how Latif's act of self-reinvention functions as both a defense mechanism and a psychological response to trauma. Freud *The Ego and the Id*, (1923) defines rationalization as a process where individuals construct socially acceptable justifications to mask unconscious motives or emotions (25). Latif's rejection of his familial names ("Ismail Rajab Shaaban Mahmud") exemplifies this mechanism. By framing his father and grandfather as "drunkard failures," he rationalizes his disavowal of their legacy, converting shame into a logical narrative of self-preservation. A. Freud *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence* (1936) notes that rationalization allows the ego to "avoid feelings of guilt" and "maintain self-respect" (113), which aligns with Latif's desire to distance himself from a tainted familial identity. His new name, "Latif Mahmud," becomes a symbolic purge of inherited failure, a calculated effort to shield himself from societal criticism and internalized inadequacy. However, this act of self-reinvention is not merely practical; it reflects a deeper psychological fracture. As Freud argues, rationalization often conceals unresolved conflicts, here, Latif's repressed guilt over

abandoning his lineage and homeland. Latif's self-imposed exile physically and emotionally severing ties to his homeland parallels Freud's concept of loss of object, where the psyche reacts to the absence of a deeply cathected person, place, or identity. In *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (1926), Freud distinguishes between the pain of loss and the anxiety of anticipated danger, Pain is thus the actual reaction to loss of object, while anxiety is the reaction to the danger which that loss entails" (170). For Latif, the "loss of object" is twofold: he mourns the severed connection to his homeland and the erasure of his familial identity. His exile is not just geographic but existential; by rejecting his names, he enacts a symbolic death of his former self. Yet this severance generates profound ambivalence. The pain Freud describes manifests in Latif's inability to reconcile his new identity with his repressed ties to the past. His silence about his origins (akin to Saleh's linguistic repression in Gurnah's earlier narrative) becomes a symptom of this unresolved trauma. While rationalization allows Latif to construct a coherent narrative of self-reinvention, the "loss of object" lingers as a psychic wound, revealing the limits of his defense mechanisms. Latif's transformation encapsulates Freud's dialectic of defense and trauma. His rationalization shields him from immediate shame, yet his exile and disconnection underscore the unresolved "loss of object." Freudian (1915) theory posits that repressed emotions resurface in distorted forms (154); Latif's new identity, while empowering, cannot fully erase the cultural and emotional void left by his rejection of heritage. His act of self-exile mirrors the colonized subject's 'fractured psyche' by Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, (1952), where survival necessitates self-fragmentation. Ultimately, Gurnah portrays Latif's renaming as both a defiant act of self-creation and a testament to the enduring pain of displacement a Freudian paradox where defense mechanisms coexist with unhealed trauma.

The narrative of *By the Sea* explores themes of exile, post-trauma, alienation,

language, and identity, highlighting the endurance of the Zanzibari nation beyond the era of European colonization. The novel incorporates flashbacks and memories to depict the stories and cultures of the East African region from which the two narrators originate. Through the sharing of their past experiences in the present tense of the novel, the characters come to discover their true identities. The narrative unfolds in medias res, with the novel's conclusion revealing the family histories of these individuals, particularly emphasizing Omar's exile in Britain, by the sea. Freud's concept of isolation, a defense mechanism where traumatic memories are stripped of their emotional affect to avoid psychological distress is central to Latif and Omar's experiences. In *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* Lecture 19 (1916), Freud explains, "Isolation consists in the interposition of an interval between the unpleasant experience and other experiences… so that it remains excluded from the normal associative connections" (273). This aligns with Gurnah uses Latif's "wilful forgetting" of familial trauma (165). By isolating himself from his past distancing himself from scandals and familial conflicts, Latif attempts to dissociate from the bickering and pettiness of his upbringing. Similarly, Omar's silence about his history reflects Freudian *The Unconscious*, (1915) suppression, a conscious form of repression where traumatic memories are deliberately avoided (147). Both characters engage in what Freud *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, (1895) terms "afterwardness" (Nachträglichkeit), where trauma is not processed at the time of the event but resurfaces belatedly in fragments (356). Their repressed memories, however, leak through their strained interactions, revealing the fragility of their psychological defenses.

While Freud in *Introductory Lectures*, Lecture 19, frames resistance as the psyche's opposition to uncovering repressed material (287), Cathy Caruth's trauma theory reimagines resistance as a relational act of survival. In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), Caruth argues:

> Trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature the way it was precisely not known in the first instance, returns to haunt the survivor later on. (4)

Omar and Latif's fraught bond in exile exemplifies this, as their initial animosity gives way to a connection forged through mutual recognition of shared displacement. When Latif admits, "I was looking forward to coming here, to hear you talk, for both of us to find relief" (207), he enacts Caruth's claim as quoted in Marder that trauma necessitates "the listening of another" (2). Their dialogue resists the "living ghost" (2) existence that Elissa Marder describes a state of erasure under Western marginalization. Freud's theory of the uncanny (*Das Unheimliche*, 1919) further resonates here, as repressed traumas resurface in alienating forms. The uncanny arises when "repressed infantile complexes are revived by some impression" (249), and Omar and Latif, rendered spectral by exile, find their pasts returning despite their efforts to suppress them. Latif's confession of "wilful forgetting" (165) and Omar's near weeping at their "respite" (164-165) reveal the failure of isolation as a lasting defense. Their friendship, marked by "strained smiles," becomes a Freudian compromise formation, a partial acknowledgment of trauma that allows them to survive without fully confronting its roots.

Freud's isolation and Caruth's relational trauma theory intersect in Gurnah's portrayal of exile. The characters' repression functions both as a defense and as a symptom of colonial dislocation. Yet, their resistance lies in the act of voicing fragments of the repressed past, however incompletely. As Caruth (1996) writes, "The traumatized carry an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history they cannot entirely possess" (5). By becoming each other's listeners (talking therapy), Omar and Latif transform Freudian resistance, a barrier to healing into a shared language of

survival, resisting the spectral erasure of their identities in the West. The isolation adopted by Latif as he shifted to Britain and left back is family and native place, and the isolation of Omar, when he fakes the identity and chooses not to speak; is core to what Freud talks in his seminal work *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* as

> Isolation is peculiar to obsessional neurosis. It, too, takes place in a motor-sphere. When something unpleasant has happened to the subject or when he himself has done something which has a significance for his neurosis… it is deprived of its affect, and its associative connections are supressed or isolated and is not reproduced in the ordinary processes of thought. (120)

Freud explains that when something unpleasant occurs to a person like Latif and Omar, or when they themselves have engaged in an action that holds significance for their neurosis, they establish a period of time in which nothing further should happen. During this interval, the individual strives to perceive nothing and engage in no activities. This behavior might appear strange initially, but Freud suggests that it is closely linked to the concept of repression. Instead of forgetting the experience, Freud explains that it is deprived of its affective (emotional) impact. The distressing experience is stripped of its emotional significance and becomes isolated, meaning it is detached from its associated connections and is not readily reproduced in normal thought processes. Essentially, in obsessional neurosis, the individual does not forget the distressing experience but rather separates it from its emotional charge and isolates it from other thoughts and memories. This isolation serves as a way for the person to cope with the distress and prevent it from influencing their daily functioning.

In the novel *By the Sea*, the characters' struggles and oppressions are inextricably entwined with their individual histories, life experiences, and the socio-political environment of Zanzibar at the time of its independence. Gurnah's investigation of the

ways in which memory and history are entangled and affect one another is one of his projects in *By the Sea*. One of Dominick LaCapra's point applies to what I'm talking about here. The scent of Omar's ud-al-qamari, which he refers to in *By the Sea* as "the feel of an experience," (22) serves as what Ato Quayson refers to as a "threshold of an enigma" since it causes Omar to reflect on his life and prompts a series of flashbacks that he characterises as "the feel of an experience" (22). Gurnah's usage of the scent is in line with Lowenthal's description of "the chance reactivation of forgotten sensations, touch, smell, taste, or sound." (203). Likewise, after receiving unexpected slurs of racism from a stranger in post-imperial London, Mahmud is stunned into re-evaluating his own status as a black man. He recalls the incident when, while rushing to his lectures, a passing man screamed at him, "You grinning blackamoor" (72). Even though we are aware that repression and resistance can take many different forms, in this case, we have examples of how Omar subconsciously and timely repressed the specific smell that caused him to overwhelm his conscious present with memories. Although Latif is living a healthier life and in better circumstances than Omar, who is seeking asylum, when a random stranger hurls racial insults at Latif, his unconscious is shattered to the reality of an event, what he had suppressed resurfaces, all those repressed elements of being black in a white society come alive, and a non-existent stranger even has the power to trigger the psyche to uncompromising conflict. Despite, or possibly because of, his social status and regular contributions to the nation's taxes, Mahmud is seen to be what Homi K. Bhabha described as a mimic man in relation to the colonizers/white men, "almost the same but not quite" (89). The protagonist, Saleh, embodies these psychological dynamics as he navigates his relationships and grapples with his own identity and past. Saleh exhibits resistance in his reluctance to confront his mixed heritage and the traumatic events surrounding his parents' relationship. His resistance is partly fuelled by the repressed memories and unresolved

conflicts related to his upbringing. By avoiding these uncomfortable truths, Saleh shields himself from the painful aspects of his own identity, detaches himself from his roots and the historical injustices perpetuated by colonial powers. This crying and detachment are the result of the "loss of object" as Freud writes in his work *Inhibitions Symptoms and Anxiety* that :

> It is to this new aspect of things that the reaction of pain is referable. Pain is thus the actual reaction to loss of object, while anxiety is the reaction to the danger which that loss entails and, by a further displacement, a reaction to the danger of the loss of object itself. (170)

Furthermore, Saleh's resistance is evident in his strained relationship with his mother, Afiya. Despite living in the same household, Saleh keeps an emotional distance from her. Afiya, too, demonstrates resistance by refusing to discuss certain aspects of the past. This lack of open communication reinforces Saleh's inability to confront his own history, perpetuating a cycle of repression and keeping painful memories buried deep within his subconscious. One of the central themes in the novel is Saleh's resistance to confronting his own past and the repressed memories associated with it. Saleh's father, an Arab trader, marries Afiya, a local woman, and their union symbolizes the collision of cultures and the consequences of colonialism. Saleh's resistance to acknowledging his mixed heritage and the traumatic events surrounding his parents' relationship becomes a defense mechanism that shields him from the painful truths about his own identity and the historical injustices perpetrated by colonial powers.

The theme of resistance and repression extends beyond Omar's personal experiences and encompasses the broader social and political context of Zanzibar. Gurnah explores the resistance of the Zanzibari people against oppressive colonial rule and their struggle for independence. This collective resistance serves as a manifestation of the

repressed anger, frustration, and desire for self-determination that had accumulated over years of colonization. By examining the characters' resistance within this socio-political framework, we gain insight into the psychological impact of colonialism on both an individual and collective level. This turmoil is also one of the reasons apart from being chased away by Latif's family on an inheritance of house issues to leave the native land that too with a masked name, is what he calls as on "this life-saving trip" (41). Later in the development of the plot, he himself admits to being "an involuntary instrument of another's design, a figure in a story told by someone else" (68–69).

By the Sea is a tale of two men whose stories are, in a sense, branches of the same tree, a tree that has grown so tall and so wide that the common root is too deeply buried to be perceived. What is this common root? The relative closeness of Zanzibari society? A shared cultural heritage? The metaphor is an apt one, as in the aftermath of the Zanzibar revolution many branches were cut, and a serious and drastic pruning process took place. Whether the present-day Zanzibari tree is an improved version may depend on one's political allegiances. Historian Thomas Burgess (2007) writes:

> Zanzibari society is fractured according to communities of memory, particularly when it comes to the revolution; how Zanzibaris remember the revolution as either the original sin or triumph of the independence era often determines today whom they call their friends… Many Zanzibaris continue to trace their present fortunes or misfortunes to the revolution, which assumes center stage in discussions of how present conditions came to be. (1)

In Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea*, silence emerges as a fraught yet vital strategy for survival, encapsulating the tension between repression and resistance in the lives of displaced individuals. Gurnah himself frames silence as a paradoxical refuge a means of

avoiding incrimination while stifling dangerous truths, noting Allen (2021) that "words are dangerous because they tell the truth" (121). This duality mirrors Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality,*(1978), assertion that silence is not passive but a "strategic" negotiation within power structures (27), where marginalized subjects like Saleh Omar and Latif Mahmud withhold speech to evade the surveillance of oppressive systems. Their silence, however, also reflects what Gayatri Spivak *Can the Subaltern Speak?"*, (1988) terms the subaltern's coerced muteness, as systemic "epistemic violence" erases their voices (104), rendering their histories unspeakable. Freudian psychoanalysis *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, (1916), *The Ego and the Id*, (1923), deepens this tension: their repression of traumatic memories through mechanisms like isolation (stripping emotions from events) and rationalization (discarding familial identities) serves as a defense against psychic fragmentation (273), (25). Yet, as Cathy Caruth argues, trauma's "unassimilated nature" (4) demands relational reckoning *Unclaimed Experience*, (1996), prompting Omar and Latif to tentatively voice fragmented truths in exile, transforming silence into solidarity. Their bond, fraught with "strained smiles" (165), embodies Elissa Marder's (2012) concept of "living ghosts" (2), spectral figures haunted by Freud's, *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, (1926) the "loss of object" (170), yet resisting erasure through shared narrative. Audre Lorde's (1977) insistence that "your silence will not protect you" (41) underscores the peril of their position: while silence shields them from immediate harm, their tentative dialogue in exile becomes an act of resistance, reclaiming agency against the colonial and psychic violence that seeks to render them invisible. In this way, Gurnah's characters navigate silence as both a symptom of repression and a subversive strategy, embodying the precarious balance between survival and self-erasure in the shadow of displacement.

Memory of Departure: The novel *Memory of Departure* authored by Abdulrazak

Gurnah portrays the narrative of Hassan, a young individual of mixed African Arab lineage, residing in an unnamed coastal town in post-independence East Africa. Hassan's family exhibits dysfunctional dynamics, predominantly due to the presence of an abusive and alcoholic father figure. Tragically, Hassan's adventurous older brother, Said, perishes in a fire, prompting his parents to erroneously assign blame to Hassan for the incident, thereby establishing an enduring divide within the family. Fuelled by a yearning for a better life, Hassan openly expresses his desire to depart for England to his father, who subsequently seeks assistance from Hassan's affluent uncle, Bwana Ahmed, located in Nairobi. Oblivious to his uncle's ulterior motives, Hassan embarks on a visit to Nairobi subsequent to the completion of his final examinations. Ahmed showcases his business enterprises to Hassan and extends a job offer. Meanwhile, Hassan develops a romantic inclination towards Salma, Ahmed's daughter, which does not escape Ahmed's attention. When Hassan and Salma arrive home late one evening, Ahmed's anger erupts, and he reveals his disdain for Hassan and his impoverished family. Determined, Hassan pledges to return to Salma in the future. Upon returning home, Hassan discovers that he has successfully passed his examinations; however, due to financial constraints, his family cannot afford to send him to university. Filled with remorse for his desire to leave, Hassan settles for a government-funded teaching position that allows him to remain in his hometown. Yet, it is his younger sister, Zakiya, who encourages him to pursue his aspirations. Ultimately, Hassan resolves his internal conflict by securing employment on a ship that transports him to Asia. In a poignant gesture, he composes a comprehensive letter to Salma, recounting his voyage and reminiscing about their departure. The novel unfolds through six distinct chapters, each encompassing significant developments in Hassan's journey and experiences.

According to H. Porter Abbot's *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (2011)

characters and actions are fundamental components of a narrative. In the context of the novels analysed, the significant presence of child characters implies that the majority, if not all, of the actions portrayed in these narratives are carried out by children. These children are depicted within various family structures, including biological families, surrogate families, and foster families. However, their roles are often limited to being viewed as commodities, slaves, workers, or dependents, rarely as protectors. Childhood itself is portrayed as burdensome in certain instances and a source of shame in others. An illustration of this can be seen in the protagonist's father in the novel *Memory of Departure*, who perceives childhood as a burden. Consequently, this study identifies childhood as a realm were human relationships experience strain due to abuse and violations, primarily at the expense of the child. (124-125)

Abdulrazak Gurnah's novel *Memory of Departure* introduces the characters of Bwana Ahmed, Salma, and Mariam, injecting vitality into the narrative. These characters possess intricate and multifaceted qualities, infusing the storytelling with purpose through engaging dialogue. The exchanges between Mariam, Salma, and Hassan are particularly captivating, offering glimpses of the author's exceptional literary abilities. The novel, when examined from a psychoanalytical perspective, specifically through the lens of resistance and repression, reveals a rich analysis. It delves into the psychological intricacies of the protagonist, Hassan, and his family, illuminating their internal struggles, repressed yearnings, and the various methods by which they resist confronting their true emotions. Hassan while conversating with Salma, says:

> […] Boflo. The word suddenly brought back a memory of home. The fishermen cleaning their dugouts and watering their nets, punching holes in the water which flashed up like fragments of light… A log of sea-salted wood lies rotting, disembowelled, on the beach, laid open like the belly of

bout a dolphin. (99)

The vivid sensory imagery and nostalgic memories in the text evoke a subconscious landscape where Freudian repression and resistance manifest as psychological defenses against unresolved trauma. Freud *Repression*, (1915) defines repression as the ego's effort to exclude distressing thoughts from consciousness (146), a process evident in the narrator's fixation on sensory details sights, smells, sounds that evoke nostalgia but avoid direct emotional confrontation. These memories, though vivid, are "isolated" from their affective weight, a defense mechanism Freud describes in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (1926): "the experience is not forgotten, but… deprived of its affect, and its associative connections are suppressed… so that it remains as though isolated" (120). The narrator's focus on transient, decaying imagery ("decay of past experiences") reflects this isolation: the mind acknowledges the memory but disconnects it from its painful emotional core, rendering it inert. Yet, the recurring themes of longing and uncertainty betray the failure of full repression, as Freud (1915) notes that "repression is not an event that occurs once but… demands a persistent expenditure of energy" (151). The narrator's fixation on decay and transience becomes a symptom of this psychic labor, where repressed desires and fears leak into consciousness through symbolic displacement, such as decaying objects mirroring the erosion of repressed trauma.

In Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis, (1916), resistance emerges as the narrator's psyche battles to maintain this fragile equilibrium. Freud defines resistance as the ego's "struggle against… distressing ideas" (287), which here takes the form of the text's fragmented, non-linear engagement with memory. The narrator's nostalgic sensory triggers like the smell of a childhood home or the sound of a distant melody, act as compromise formations, allowing partial access to repressed material while avoiding its full emotional reckoning. However, the "uncertainty" and "isolation" thematized in the

text signal the return of the repressed, as Freud *The Ego and the Id*, (1923) argues that "what is repressed cannot… be destroyed; it persists… and will sooner or later produce its effects" (36). The narrator's longing for irretrievable pasts ("transience") and fear of decay exposes a subconscious conflict (1926): the desire to reclaim lost objects (170) wars with the terror of confronting their loss. Thus, the text's sensory richness and thematic preoccupations reveal a psyche oscillating between resistance clinging to isolated, affectless memories and the inevitable failure of repression, as the "decay" of suppressed emotions threatens to collapse the narrator's defensive architecture. Sigmund Freud in his work *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* defines isolation as:

> In obsessional neurosis this can often not be achieved: the experience is not forgotten, but, instead, it is deprived of its affect, and its associative connections are suppressed or interrupted so that it remains as though isolated and is not reproduced in the ordinary processes of thought. The effect of this isolation is the same as the effect of repression with amnesia. (120)

Resistance, in the *Interpretation of Dreams* Freud defines capaciously as "Was immer die Fortsetzung der Arbeit stort ist ein Widerstand", translated by Strachey as Rebecca Comay (2015) says "anything that interrupts the progress of analysis" (244). More precisely translated: whatever impedes the work from proceeding from keeping on going is a resistance or "unconscious defense mechanisms individuals employ to protect themselves from anxiety or conflict". In Abdulrazak Gurnah's *In Memory of Departure* (1987), the characters' psychological evasion of trauma reflects Freudian theories of repression, projection, and denial. Freud (1915) defines repression as the unconscious process of excluding distressing memories from consciousness, asserting that it "consists in the turning something away, and keeping it at a distance, from the conscious" (147).

Hassan's parents in *Memory of Departure* exemplify this mechanism by displacing their guilt over their son's death onto their surviving child. When Hassan's mother "points" at me, screaming hysterically" (14), she engages in projection, a defense Freud describes in *The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence*, (1894) as attributing one's own "unacceptable" emotions to others (58). By blaming Hassan, who was only five when the accident occurred, they externalize their repressed guilt, refusing to confront their negligence. Hassan's anguished plea, "Why did they blame me?" (14), underscores the destabilizing effects of their denial, a refusal to acknowledge reality that Freud links to the ego's resistance to painful truths (163) in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, 1926. Gurnah portrays the incident of blaming Hassan as:

> After the funeral, my father said: God will make you pay for the boy's death. My grandmother said I had stood and watched him die a terrible death. What hope is there, she said, when brother murders brother? […] I fought them in the way they had shown me. I paid them back pain for pain, silence for silence. I learnt how to reject them. (24)

The resulting familial rift illustrates how repressed emotions, in *Studies on Hysteria*, (1895) though buried, "do not perish" (9) but manifest as enduring psychological and relational fractures. The parents' sustained deflection of responsibility reflects Freud's assertion that resistance perpetuates neurosis by obstructing the integration of repressed material. Their denial, refusing to "acknowledge their own role in the tragedy" exemplifies what Freud *Repression* terms "primal repression," a fixation on trauma that distorts reality(153). This resistance traps them in a cycle of blame, while Hassan's narration exposes the collateral damage of their psychic defenses. Gurnah's portrayal aligns with Freud's view that repressed guilt "returns" symptomatically (154), as the parents' unresolved trauma corrodes familial bonds. The novel thus becomes a study in Freudian

psychodynamics, revealing how repression and projection, as forms of resistance, fracture both individual psyches and collective histories.

Repression, a key mechanism in psychoanalysis, involves actively pushing thoughts, emotions, or memories into the unconscious. In *Memory of Departure*, there are instances where characters repress painful experiences or emotions as a means of self-protection. Hassan's parents' repression of their guilt over their son's death is a prominent example. By avoiding a confrontation with their true feelings, they preserve their self-image and prevent themselves from experiencing overwhelming guilt. In Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Memory of Departure* (1987), Hassan's psychological trajectory, marked by familial blame, exclusion from his brother's funeral, and the symbolic burial of a crab exemplifies Freudian repression, resistance, and the fracturing effects of unresolved trauma, which align with Cathy Caruth's theorization of PTSD as a collapse of temporal and emotional coherence. Freud *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, (1916-17) defines repression as the psyche's expulsion of unbearable memories into the unconscious, where they "do not perish" but instead "produce effects" (297). Hassan's family enacts this repression by displacing their guilt over his brother's death onto him: his father declares, "God will make you pay for the boy's death" (24), while his grandmother accuses him of passively watching his brother die. This projection externalizes their unresolved grief and culpability, forcing Hassan to internalize a "self-hate and remorse" (24) that Freud (1923) associates with the superego's tyrannical demands (53). Denied participation in his brother's funeral a ritual critical for mourning, Hassan is barred from processing grief, rendering his trauma in Caruthian (1996) notions "unclaimed" (4), a suspended wound that disrupts his connection to the present.

The crab burial scene, "the beach bleached by the sun, bone-white sand. Tiny crabs were digging holes to hide from my feet. I pursued one and killed it, and gave it a solemn

burial before I set off for home" (25) epitomizes Freud's concept of the *return of the repressed* and Caruth's PTSD framework. Hassan's act of killing and solemnly burying the crab mirrors his brother's death and his own exclusion from mourning, reenacting trauma through symbolic displacement. Freud in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901) argues repressed emotions "find substitutive representation" (279) in symptomatic acts, and here, the crab becomes a proxy for Hassan's brother, allowing him to perform a ritual he was denied. However, the violence of the act "I pursued one and killed it" reveals his internalized aggression, a resistance to his family's narrative of guilt that manifests as self-destructive repetition. Caruth's assertion that PTSD entails:

> Characters who suffer from PTSD often experience an awkward breakdown of their emotional responses. Past traumas interrupt their ability to fully experience the present. This fragmentation is seen in their inability to form stable and coherent relationships or sustain meaningful connections to the surrounding world. (6)

It is evident in Hassan's fractured agency; he cannot mourn authentically, so he compulsively re-stages trauma, oscillating between control (burying the crab) and chaos (killing it). His isolation "I learnt how to reject them" (24) reflects Freud's *Mourning and Melancholia*, (1917) theory of melancholia, where the ego "devours itself" in unresolved grief (246), and Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery*, (1992) observation that trauma survivors often withdraw into "silence and secrecy" (2).

Hassan's PTSD is thus a palimpsest of repression, resistance, and symptomatic reenactment. The familial blame and funeral exclusion represent a denial of his subjectivity, forcing him to internalize guilt as in *Repression*, (1915) a form of "primal repression" (153). The crab burial, meanwhile, symbolizes his unconscious attempt to reclaim agency, a resistance to erasure while simultaneously perpetuating cycles of

violence. Gurnah's portrayal underscores Caruth's (1996) argument that trauma is not the "story of a past" but a "crisis of truth" that haunts the present (5). Hassan's fragmented psyche, torn between repressed grief and compulsive repetition, exposes the corrosive legacy of trauma when mourning is denied, and repression becomes the only language of survival.

Said being the first born and beloved to all, Said's death makes his parents rude, and they detach themselves from Hassan, that's because what Freud calls as the 'loss of object'. This crying and detachment are the result of the "loss of object" as Freud writes in his work *Inhibitions Symptoms and Anxiety* that:

> It is to this new aspect of things that the reaction of pain is referable. Pain is thus the actual reaction to loss of object, while anxiety is the reaction to the danger which that loss entails and, by a further displacement, a reaction to the danger of the loss of object itself. (170)

The novel also highlights the repression of desires and aspirations. Hassan's dream of leaving for England represents his repressed longing for a better life. His decision to pursue a teaching position, despite yearning for something more, indicates a repression of his own ambitions and a surrender to familial obligations. Similarly, Hassan's family's inability to afford university for him represses his intellectual potential, leading him to settle for a job that keeps him in his hometown. The statement suggests that the departure described in the novel is not simply an opportunistic escape from everyday experiences but rather a desperate act of leaving. This notion aligns with Freud's idea of resistance, as it implies a psychological struggle or conflict in the decision to depart. Resistance as discussed above, according to Freud involves unconscious defense mechanisms that individuals employ to protect themselves from anxiety or conflict. In this case, the departure represents a departure from the familiar and known, which can evoke resistance

due to the potential anxiety or discomfort associated with such a significant change. This crisis could be seen as the result of repressed emotions or unresolved conflicts surfacing in the act of leaving. Freudian psychoanalysis emphasizes the role of repression, where individuals actively push thoughts, emotions, or memories into the unconscious to protect themselves. In the context of the novel, the departure serves as a catalyst, potentially bringing repressed psychological issues to the forefront, yet there is no denial in understanding the dysfunctional familial structures that create a culture of unhealthy structures. Hassan's father is a drunkard, abuses his wife regularly, Sid, was almost like his father abusing smaller children sexually, he would have grown up like his father, says Gurnah. In Kaigai's (2014) analysis of Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Memory of Departure* (1987), the unnamed wife married off to Omar as a "strategic corrective necessity" to "cure him of his interest in anuses" (21–22), embodies the psychoanalytic consequences of systemic repression and gendered resistance. Freud (1915) defines repression as the unconscious expulsion of distressing desires or memories, which "does not hinder the [repressed] instinctual impulse from persisting in the unconscious" (147). The wife, reduced to a transactional object in a patriarchal scheme, is forced into a marriage that denies her agency, reflecting societal repression of female autonomy. Her trauma is compounded by Omar's immediate unfaithfulness and violence, which she cannot openly confront due to cultural norms that silence women's dissent. Freudian resistance, the ego's refusal to integrate repressed material manifests here as her inability to articulate her suffering, internalizing oppression as normalized. Her silence as Freud opines in *Repression*, becomes a form of "primal repression" (153), burying her anguish beneath compliance, yet it resurfaces symptomatically in her role as a victim of domestic abuse.

The wife's psychological suffering is further shaped by projection and denial. The grandmother and the ivory trader's wife project their anxieties about Omar's sexuality onto

her, as Gurnah (1987) framing her as a "simple country girl" (21) whose beauty will "correct" him, a denial of Omar's agency and her humanity. Freud in *The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence* (1894) notes that projection allows individuals to externalize "unacceptable" impulses (58), and here, the family projects their fears of racial and sexual transgression onto her, weaponizing her as a tool for moral rehabilitation. In Siundu, Godwin (2013), her father's adherence to a racist "code of honour" (108), fearing she might "turn to one of the up-country blacks" (21), underscores a denial of her autonomy, reducing her to a symbol of racial purity. The wife's repression of her trauma mirroring Freud's (1895) claim that repressed emotions "return from the unconscious as symptoms" (6) is evident in her silent endurance of marital violence, a somatic manifestation of her psychological erasure. Gurnah and Kaigai thus expose how patriarchal and colonial structures enforce repression, rendering women's suffering both invisible and inevitable.

The mention of memory in the lines suggests that it plays a significant role in this departure. Memory, in psychoanalysis, can act as a powerful force that connects past experiences with the present. In this case, the memory goes beyond being a mere connector and becomes an experience itself. This implies that the memory holds a strong emotional charge, potentially linked to repressed desires, conflicts, or traumas. Freud believed that memories could be repressed due to their associated emotional intensity and the desire to avoid distress. The fact that the memory becomes an experience suggests that it resurfaces, potentially challenging the individual's defences and leading to a psychological departure from the quotidian experiences. Through a psychoanalytical lens, the novel's exploration of resistance and repression sheds light on the characters' internal conflicts and the consequences of avoiding or suppressing their true emotions. The unresolved tensions within the family and the compromises made by the characters reflect the psychological struggles associated with resistance and repression.

It is worth noting that a comprehensive psychoanalytical analysis would benefit from a closer examination of specific passages and deeper exploration of the characters' internal thoughts, dreams, and fantasies. Such analysis would provide a more nuanced understanding of how resistance and repression operate within the narrative, allowing for a more in-depth exploration of the psychological dimensions of the characters' experiences. For the purpose we will conduct the in-text evaluation of Abdulrazak Gurnah's narrative strategy to find out how his characters bear psychic conflicts more than bodily problems that in turn make it one good study of psychoanalysis and set the mood for further application of Sigmund Freuds theory of resistance and repression in his work *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*. The first page of the novel sets the temperament of the novel when the beginning of the novel Gurnah gives us the description of the narrator's place:

> This was Kenge, where toilers and failures lived, where wizened prostitutes and painted homosexuals traded, where drunks came for cheap tende, where anonymous voices howled with pain in the streets at night. (5)

The quote from Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Memory of Departure* (1987) "This was Kenge, where toilers and failures lived, where wizened prostitutes and painted homosexuals traded, where drunks came for cheap *tende*, where anonymous voices howled with pain in the streets at night" (5) reflects a community steeped in societal repression and psychological resistance. Freudian repression, defined in *Repression*, (1915) as the unconscious exclusion of "unacceptable" desires or memories (146), is evident in the marginalization of Kenge's inhabitants. The "wizened prostitutes" and "painted homosexuals" are forced into the shadows, their existence criminalized or stigmatized by dominant norms. Their survival through "trading" becomes a repressed performance of identity, internalizing societal shame while burying their trauma. The "anonymous voices

howling with pain" (5) symbolize the return of the repressed, as Freud (1895) argues repressed material "manifests itself in symptoms" (6). These howls are the unconscious eruption of collective anguish, a somatic expression of repressed marginalization.

Resistance, for Freud (1926), involves the ego's refusal to confront repressed truths (159). In Kenge, resistance is paradoxically embodied in the community's defiant existence. The "drunks" seeking "cheap *tende*" and the "toilers" persisting in labor despite being labeled "failures" enact a passive resistance to societal erasure. Their very presence in Kenge, a space deemed degenerate defies the normative order that seeks to silence them. However, their resistance is fractured: the anonymity of their pain ("anonymous voices") suggests a repression of individual agency, as collective suffering is rendered faceless. Freud's claim in *Repression*, that "repression does not abolish the instinctual impulse" (151) applies here: Kenge's inhabitants cannot fully suppress their humanity, yet their resistance remains constrained by systemic oppression. Gurnah's portrayal thus mirrors Freud's dialectic of repression and resistance, where marginalized subjects oscillate between survival and psychic fragmentation.

The cruelty of the place is depicted more when the references of sodomy are drawn upon as a game for children, they would just give something to a little child and sodomise him, Hasan while talking about Said being a sodomiser, saying "when he was six, he was already fucking boys" (10). One more reference from his father, Once, in a drunken stupor, he proudly confesses to his son, Hassan, that he had violently raped a fellow drunk: "I fucked his arse many times ... He falls down in the streets and little boys fuck him" (53). In Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Memory of Departure* (1987), the pervasive sexual violence and predation depicted, particularly through the normalization of sodomy as a "game" (10) and the graphic encounter with a predatory figure (22). Freud's *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1916-17) defines repression as the "process of turning something away

from consciousness and keeping it at a distance" (295), a mechanism central to understanding both the abusers' pathology and the victims' psychological entrapment. The casual brutality of child exploitation, where boys are sodomized as part of a transactional "game" (10), reflects a societal repression of trauma, where perpetrators like Said and Hassan's father displace their own repressed desires or shame onto vulnerable victims. Freud (1916-17) argues that repressed impulses "do not perish" but instead "break through into consciousness" through symptoms (297), a process evident in Hassan's father's drunken confession of rape (53), which exposes his unconscious guilt as a distorted, violent compulsion. The predatory man's grooming tactics leering, verbal coercion, and the "parody of sensuality" (22), align with Douglas W. Pryor's (1996) analysis of abusers' "pre-meditated behavior" to manipulate victims into compliance (123), a process Freud might frame as the abuser's resistance to acknowledging their own deviance by externalizing it as power.

The victims' psychological resistance, meanwhile, manifests as a survival mechanism. Freud notes that resistance arises when the ego "refuses to associate itself with an incompatible idea" (286), a defense visible in Hassan's dissociation during the predatory encounter: "I tried not to look nervous" (22). His forced composure a refusal to acknowledge fear mirrors Freud's claim that resistance shields the psyche from traumatic recognition. However, the victim's internalized repression resurfaces somatically: the "howled" pain in Kenge's streets (5) and Hassan's visceral description of the predator's "repulsive face" (22) evoke Freud's (1916-17) assertion that repressed trauma "expresses itself in symptoms" (303). Bennett Natalie's (1990) framing of grooming as "entrapment" (957) further clarifies this dynamic: the abuser weaponizes the victim's vulnerability, exploiting their repressed powerlessness to normalize abuse as "innocent" or transactional. Gurnah's portrayal of cyclical violence from Said's childhood predation to the father's

confession, reflects Freud's theory of repression's generational recurrence, where unprocessed trauma perpetuates "the return of the repressed" (299). The novel thus critiques a society that enacts collective repression, burying its complicity in violence under layers of silence and shame, while resistance both individual and systemic becomes a fractured defense against unbearable truths. Additionally, the collective response of the room filled with people shouting prayers and wailing represents a shared expression of grief and mourning. The communal nature of this response may be seen as a way to cope with the overwhelming emotions through collective repression, as individuals come together to collectively process the traumatic event and repress individual feelings of guilt or anger. Hassan was now the soft target to bully; he is now thrashed quite often, such that sometimes, Hassan would cry out of terror when his father was just present there. One of the studies by Seedat, (2009) mentions that:

> Violence against children is ubiquitous, beating takes place daily or every week, sticks, belts, hands, kicks and other weapons like canes and rods are used to cause injury in children. Generally, such beatings are reported to be common among boys. The results of one of the studies showed that 35-40 percent of children had witnessed their mothers being beaten. (5)

The agony never stops for Hassan account, once ill, Hassan sleeps in his mother's room, she did not let Hassan come near to her. This behaviour takes Hassan back to the death of Said, how her mother pointed finger at him. This is a type of resistance known as transference where actually the patient in a clinic or the character in a novel, divert or just transfer their feelings and emotions of which they are guilty of, to the other person. Same is the case with Hassan's parents, they transfer the emotional guilt onto Hassan only to relieve themselves of the burden of guilt. Hassan was tormented by his family, with his father's saying of God will make Hassan pay for his brother's death, grandmother, mother

all into blaming him, this brought into self- hate, nightmares, delusions about night creatures rising to suck Hassan's blood. Even sometimes when Hassan's mother tries saving him from father's torment, she too is brutally abused and lashed, she is physically assaulted and kicked and one such time.

> He struck her again, and again, grunting heavily. And again. He struggled onto the bed and pulled away the kanga she was wearing around her. My mother did not struggle and did not speak. She groaned, it seemed involuntarily, every now and again. I shut my eyes tightly and I heard his body moving on top of her. I heard him groaning and muttering, his voice coming thick and muffled off the bed. (16)

In Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Memory of Departure* (1987), Hassan's psychological turmoil and eventual exile exemplify Freudian dynamics of repression, disavowal, and the unresolved return of traumatic memories. Freud *The Ego and the Id*, (1923) defines disavowal (*Verleugnung*) as a defense mechanism where "the ego rejects an unbearable reality, replacing it with a more tolerable fiction" (36). This is starkly embodied by Hassan's parents, who disavow their guilt in their son's death, instead blaming Hassan: "God will make you pay for the boy's death" (24). Their refusal to acknowledge culpability forces Hassan to internalize their narrative, transforming grief into "self-hate and remorse" (24), a process Freud links to the superego's internalized cruelty. The nightmares of "creatures rising to suck my blood" (24) symbolize the return of the repressed Freud's *Repression*, (1915) concept that repressed emotions "do not perish but emerge in distorted forms" (153). These grotesque visions externalize Hassan's subconscious guilt and vulnerability, revealing his psyche's struggle to reconcile familial betrayal with self-preservation.

Hassan's exile, ostensibly a liberation from his "psychic chains," instead underscores the futility of repression. Freud (1926) notes that repression "does not resolve conflict but displaces it" (163), a tension evident in Hassan's melancholic homesickness. His letter to Salma confessing he "misses the brothel keeper" and recalls the "color of the streets" (25) reflects a traumatic attachment to the very environment that tormented him. This aligns with Cathy Caruth's (1996) assertion that trauma "defies narrative closure," forcing survivors into cycles of "repetition and unresolved longing" (7). The brothel keeper, a figure of exploitation, becomes a perverse symbol of familiarity, illustrating Freud's (1920) repetition compulsion, wherein individuals re-enact trauma to master it (22). Hassan's exile thus becomes a paradox: a flight from repression that traps him in melancholia, Freud's term for the ego's inability to release lost objects. The crab burial scene (25) further encapsulates this unresolved trauma. Hassan's ritual killing and burying the crab mirrors his disavowed grief for his brother, a futile attempt to "control" guilt through symbolic substitution. Yet this act, like his exile, fails to resolve his inner conflict. Freud in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, (1901) argues that repressed material "returns in symptomatic acts" (279), and here, the crab's burial re-enacts Hassan's exclusion from his brother's funeral, exposing his unresolved need for catharsis. His homesickness, then, is not nostalgia but a melancholic fixation, a testament to repression's failure. As Judith Herman *Trauma and Recovery*, (1992) observes, trauma survivors often remain "bound to the past" through "unprocessed memories" (51), a dynamic Hassan embodies as he clings to fragments of a home that rejected him. Gurnah's narrative thus critiques repression's false promise: Hassan's exile, meant to free him, instead chains him to a past he cannot disavow.

Admiring Silence: This novel tells the story of the life of an unnamed narrator who emigrates from Zanzibar to the UK and lives with Emma, an English woman, with whom

he has a daughter - Amelia. The narrator does not return to his East African home for 17 years and the only way he reconnects with home is through stories which he tells Emma and her father separately and at different times. Most of these stories are fabricated constructions prompted by his yearning to belong to Emma's family and be accepted as one of them. After seventeen years away from Zanzibar, the narrator travels home but the picture of the life there contrasts remarkably from the one his romantic tales of home suggested. Though the former government has been unseated from power, the new regime is still corrupt and burdened by lazy officials. Declining an arranged marriage, he takes a hasty flight back to the UK only to find that Emma has found herself a new lover and does not want to live with him anymore. Amelia leaves the narrator 'six weeks after Emma'(216).

Gurnah's *Admiring Silence* (1996) examines the complex dynamics of identity, particularly in the context of cultural displacement. The unnamed narrator, a migrant living in Britain, grapples with a sense of belonging and seeks validation in his new environment. By fabricating stories about his native land, he attempts to bridge the cultural gap and impress his white family, who eagerly listen to his narratives. Through this act of storytelling, the narrator explores and affirms his cultural heritage, emphasizing the importance of personal narratives in constructing and preserving identity. It's first-person narration, which offers immediacy but can become claustrophobic. Written in a confessional style looking back over a life as in this novel it implies truth, but it's a mistake to assume that the narrator will have adequate self-knowledge to tell the truth about himself. In *Admiring Silence,* the sands are always shifting… *Admiring Silence* consists of three parts. All three parts are narrated in the first person by the protagonist who, in the course of the novel, ends up telling two different versions of his childhood. When the novel opens the narrator-protagonist is 42 years old and lives in London in an increasingly

frustrating relationship with his partner Emma and their teenage daughter Amelia. In this first section of the novel, we get an account of the protagonist's arrival in London from an unnamed African country, his experiences as a student, the early years of his relationship with Emma and her middle-class parents; a central part of this section consists of stories from his childhood that he tells Emma and his father-in-law. Embedded as the stories are within the larger narrative of the protagonist's life in England, their purpose is to reveal the difficulties of representing what the narrator ironically refers to as the postcolonial condition. The impact of these stories depends on what Edward Said (2013) has described as the construction of a monolithic West as well as "an entire ex-colonial world described in one sweeping generalization after another" (24). In satisfying his father-in-law's craving for Empire stories, the narrator in Gurnah's novel creates an entirely fictional world based on these oppositions, echoing Said's description of how 'the leap to essences and generalizations was accompanied by appeals to an imagined history of Western endowments and free hand-outs, followed by a reprehensible sequence of ungrateful bitings of that grandly giving "Western" hand. "Why don't they appreciate us, after what we did for them?" (24).

In Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Admiring Silence*, the homodiegetic narrative structure a forty-year-old narrator reconstructing fragmented memories of trauma, migration, and cultural dislocation, serves as a literary analogue to Freudian mechanisms of repression and resistance, revealing the psychological tensions of a psyche divided between past and present. Freud in *Repression*, (1915) defines repression as the unconscious process by which the ego "excludes distressing impulses, memories, or desires from conscious awareness" (147). The narrator's admission, "I tried to silence [the pain], thinking it would go and leave me to my agitated content" (8), directly mirrors this dynamic: his conscious effort to suppress trauma only amplifies its subconscious

persistence. The "beast" growing stronger within him (8) symbolizes the return of the repressed, a Freudian *The Interpretation of Dreams*, (1900) concept wherein repressed material resurfaces symptomatically, "distorting itself to evade censorship" (308). Here, the narrator's pain rooted in unresolved grief and cultural alienation becomes a somatic manifestation of repressed trauma, a psychic wound that resists erasure.

The narrative's discontinuities, akin to Foucault's *The Order of Things*, (1966) "unexpected mobility of epistemological arrangement" (235), reflect Freud's theory of resistance, the ego's defense against integrating repressed material into consciousness. Freud in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, (1926) notes that resistance operates through "the ego's refusal to associate itself with incompatible ideas" (159), a process evident in the narrator's fragmented storytelling. His oscillation between Britain and his homeland, between "fabricated" stories and raw memory, enacts a psychological resistance to confronting the totality of his trauma. For instance, in *Admiring Silence*, the narrators attempt to "lean heavily on this pain" (8) paradoxically reveals a compulsion to repeat repressed experiences, a mechanism Freud (1920) links to the unconscious desire to "master what was originally unbearable" (22).

Gurnah's use of homodiegetic narration further aligns with Freud's *Mourning and Melancholia*, (1917) concept of melancholia, a state of unresolved grief where the ego "incorporates the lost object into itself" (249). The narrator's exile and homesickness, his longing for the "color of the street, lanes and houses" (25) reflect a melancholic attachment to a homeland that rejected him. Freud (1917) argues that melancholia arises when loss remains "unconscious," leading to self-reproach and psychic fragmentation (245). The narrator's fabricated stories, then, function as screen memories, Freud's *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, (1901) term for narratives that "conceal repressed content under a veneer of triviality" (43). Gurnah's narrative structure enacts what Freud

in *Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through*, (1914) terms working- through (*Durcharbeiten*), a therapeutic process where repressed material is gradually integrated into consciousness (155). The narrator's act of writing reconstructing his past becomes a performative resistance to repression, an effort to "reclaim disquiet" (8) and transform trauma into narrative coherence. Yet, as Freud (1914) cautions, repression is never fully overcome; it persists as a "return in the real" (153). The novel's unresolved conclusion and the narrator's exile as both escape and entrapment, underscores the limits of Freudian resolution, positioning Gurnah's work as a testament to the migrant's perpetual negotiation of repression and resistance, memory and erasure.

In Abdulrazak Gurnah's narrative, the interplay of Freudian defense mechanisms like rationalization, repression, and projection illuminates the psychological tension between the narrator and his wife, Emma, as they grapple with unspoken anxieties. Freud *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1916) posits that rationalization operates as a "secondary process" to disguise unconscious conflicts under socially acceptable explanations (323). Emma's dismissal of the narrator's pain as "indigestion" exemplifies this, as she substitutes a physiological cause for the psychological turmoil both characters intuit but refuse to confront. Mijolla (2005) clarifies that rationalization "is not a symptom but a way of masking and denying it," functioning as a "conscious secondary thought process" to veil neurotic conflicts *International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* (2005):

> Rationalization is not really a symptom. It is more of a way masking and denying the symptom. Nor is it a compromise formation, since within certain limits it satisfies the drive. It is more of a way to keep from recognizing neurotic conflicts. It is the conscious secondary thought process of covering the symptom with a screen. (1448)

By attributing the narrator's distress to a bodily ailment, Emma enacts a collective

denial, repressing the emotional undercurrents that threaten their relational equilibrium. The narrator's physicalized pain a "cockroachy" object emitting "thick, stinking fumes" of "loneliness and terror" embodies Freud's (1895) concept of somatization, where repressed desires or traumas manifest as bodily symptoms (6). This grotesque metaphor aligns with Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*, (1900) assertion that the unconscious "expresses itself symbolically" through dreams and somatic disturbances (277). The "cockroach," a symbol of filth and hidden dread, becomes a return of the repressed, materializing the narrator's unconscious fears of abandonment and existential disintegration. Freud (1915) notes that repressed material "does not perish" but resurfaces in distorted forms (153), and here, the narrator's pain becomes a corporeal cipher for unresolved psychic conflict. His attempt to "silence" this pain mirrors Freud's description of resistance, where the ego "endeavours in every sort of way to extricate itself" from confronting repressed truths (323), yet the persistence of the "beast" within him (Gurnah, 8) underscores the futility of such evasion.

The narrator's perception of "anxiety in Emma's eyes" further reveals projection, a defense mechanism Freud in *The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence*, (1894) defines as attributing one's own unacceptable emotions to others (58). While Emma rationalizes, the narrator projects his own unacknowledged fears onto her, interpreting her gaze as a mirror of his internal crisis. This dynamic illustrates Freud's notion that projection externalizes inner conflict, allowing the ego to disown distressing emotions. However, this mutual avoidance perpetuates a cycle of miscommunication, as both characters resist confronting the "disquiet that lurks and coils below the surface" (8). Their interactions epitomize Freud's (1977) observation that neurosis thrives on "compromise-formations" (299), where repressed desires and defenses coexist in uneasy tension.

Gurnah's portrayal of the couple's psychological stalemate reflects Freud's (1977)

axiom that repressed material "returns in the real" (153). The narrator's physical pain and Emma's rationalizations are symptomatic of a deeper, unprocessed trauma, a shared unconscious conflict neither can articulate. Their inability to confront this "beast" leaves them trapped in a liminal space between denial and recognition, underscoring Freud's (1926) assertion that "repression demands a persistent expenditure of energy" (163). The narrative thus becomes a Freudian case study in the corrosive effects of unacknowledged repression, where silence and projection fracture intimacy, and the psyche's buried truths demand recognition through somatic and symbolic revolt.

The narrator's partner, Emma, rationalizes the pain as indigestion or a similar physical ailment. However, the narrator perceives anxiety in Emma's eyes, suggesting a discrepancy between her words and her true beliefs. This can be analysed also as projection, a defense mechanism in which one attributes their own unconscious desires or conflicts onto others. The narrator projects their own awareness of the seriousness of the pain onto Emma, sensing that she holds similar concerns. A visit to his native land after two decades leaves him unable to fit either into his own society or, on his return to Britain, into the life he has established for himself. The narrator's fabrication of stories about his native land can be seen as a form of resistance. By inventing tales to impress or conform to the expectations of his white family, he is attempting to maintain a positive self-image and avoid potential conflicts or feelings of inadequacy. In the *Introductory lectures on psychoanalysis*, Freud talks about the association of symptoms:

> Symptoms - and of course, we are dealing now with psychical (or psychogenic) symptoms and psychical illness - are acts detrimental, or at least useless, to the subject's life, often complained of by him as unwelcome and bringing unpleasure or suffering to him. (408)

The repressed truth about the island proves detrimental to the narrator, when the

white family, his wife, daughter, and the grandfather come to know about the truth of the island. This resistance can be understood as a defense mechanism to protect himself from potential rejection or judgment. The narrator's inability to fit into his own society suggests a sense of repression. The narrator has repressed or suppressed certain aspects of his identity or cultural background while living in Britain. This repression may have been a result of adapting to a new environment and conforming to the dominant culture, which can lead to internal conflicts and a sense of alienation when confronted with one's original culture. This type of repression is isolation, which occurs when the individual separates a thought or emotion from its associated feelings or affects. Freud writes isolation in *Inhibition, Symptoms and Anxiety* as:

> When something unpleasant has happened to the subject or when he himself has done something which has a significance for his neurosis, he interpolates an interval during which nothing further must happen-during which he must perceive nothing and do nothing. (120)

The trajectory of the refugees begins when their respective families decide that they would be safe if they leave the country, since the brewing political situation pointed to chaos and bloodshed. E.G. Ravenstein (1889) in his pioneering work *The laws of migration* states that the young and able-bodied male member of the family is the one most likely to succeed in escaping to, and charting a path in, a new land, writing that "Among migrants however who have gone longer distances the men are, as a rule, in the majority" (261). The protagonist in *Admiring Silence* is offered scholarships to study in countries claiming kinship through communism, such as Czechoslovakia, East Germany, China, or Cuba. Preferring to continue the kind of education that he has thus far received; the narrator chooses England as his destination to pursue higher studies. With the fortuitous award of a scholarship and some financial arrangement with a compatriot Ahmed Hussein who

functions as a patron-cum-guardian, the trip to England is arranged. The protagonist in *Admiring Silence* then sets off to "Blighty" with "a travel permit to Mombasa, a fake Kenyan passport, a tourist visa to England, and then secretly lives in Ahmed Hussein's college room for a year" (80). He covers the period of flight and extra danger without any complication and reaches safety. This type of resistance that Freud identified is rationalization. It is the cognitive distortion of 'the facts to make an event or an impulse less threatening. A. Freud thoughts on suddenness aligns here as "Under the influence of a shock, such as the sudden loss of a love object, it denies the facts and substitutes for the unbearable reality some agreeable delusion" (A. Freud, 80). Rationalization is not really a symptom. It is more of a way of masking and denying the symptoms.

Since the tourist visa did not allow one to live in a 'college house' shared by students, the protagonist of the novel *Admiring Silence* remains a non-existent being living there. The line, "We lived in a college house with twelve postgraduate students, all of them foreigners, and nobody betrayed me, not even the cleaning ladies" (80), shows the extent of trust and solidarity engendered by the desperation to acquire education coupled with the conviction that it can be gained only in England. The students who live with them are all from India or Pakistan and they do not go out for amusement. They buy meat from the butcher who prepares it as prescribed by the Islamic law and they cook at home. Their interaction with the outside world is minimal, therefore, the outside world remains outside, leaving them in a vacuum. In Freudian terms, this can be understood as a form of withdrawal or isolation, where the individuals intentionally or unconsciously avoid engaging with the external world. This withdrawal may stem from various psychological factors, such as fear, anxiety, or a desire to protect oneself from potential conflicts or threats. Freud writes in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* about this "sharp isolation" as:

We have all found by experience that it is especially difficult for an obsessional neurotic

to carry out the fundamental rule of psychoanalysis. His ego is more watchful and makes sharper isolations, probably because of the high degree of tension due to conflict that exists between his super- ego and his id" or in general psyche. (121)

This brings to mind the life of Anne Frank, the young girl of Jewish origin who wrote in her diary of the life that she and her family were forced to lead, hiding in the house, fearing for their lives during World War II. Meals were delivered to them by trusted people, and they were to remain invisible throughout the day, and allowed light at night, only in the room where there were no windows. Whereas, the nameless narrator of *Admiring Silence*, who is just one more in the house filled with foreigners, is allowed to remain invisible and complete that part of his stay without incident.

The protagonist of *Admiring Silence* continues to stay after the expiry of that visa that had been for only six weeks and proceeds with his course at the technical college. His resident guardian Ahmed Hussein who also fulfils the role of purser, frames a strict regimen and makes him work hard. When the teachers encourage the protagonist to attempt the pre-university examination, Ahmed is excited on behalf of the protagonist and sets about finding means to establish him as a student with a legal visa. He learns that the "Authority may, in some circumstances, award discretionary grants" (81), which convinces Ahmed that an application must be made to ensure that the young scholar would be able to continue his education. The protagonist is presented to the panel and the chairman of the panel "had been the education officer in Zanzibar until before the uprising" (82). A kind of proprietorial interest in the erstwhile colony of Zanzibar prompts the chairman to condole with the protagonist on the state of affairs in his native country. So, the protagonist of *Admiring Silence* is awarded a discretionary grant. But without a residence permit, the grant is not of much use. Therefore, a second campaign is launched by Ahmed for a residence permit, with some theatrical display scripted by Ahmed and rehearsed prior to

the personal interview. The protagonist reveals the 'plan' to secure the permit which was that "I was to be calm for the first few minutes of the interview, and then as soon as was decent, I was to break down in a flood of tears and Ahmed would do the talking". After listening to the "diligence and utter brilliance" of the applicant, the "innate sense of justice" (82) of the home Office official ensures a resident permit being awarded to the protagonist which shifts him to the 'Compliant' migrant category.

In Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Admiring Silence* (1996), the protagonist's psychological journey through exile and racial marginalization exemplifies Freudian *Repression*, (1915) dynamics of repression, resistance, and the somatic manifestation of unresolved trauma. Freud defines repression as "the ego's unconscious exclusion of distressing thoughts or emotions" (147), a process evident in the protagonist's initial adaptation to exile. While sheltered in the student hostel, he suppresses the existential anxieties of displacement, embracing his exile as a pragmatic necessity. However, upon moving into society, the repressed trauma resurfaces as an overwhelming sense of abandonment: *Admiring Silence* mentions it as "I was overcome by the enormity of my abandonment, like someone weeping in a crowd" (83-84). Freud's (1895) assertion that repressed material "does not perish" but instead "returns in symptoms" (6) is embodied here in the protagonist's somatic and emotional collapse, as the "sudden surge of loneliness and terror" (84) signals the failure of repression to contain his dislocated identity. The protagonist's resistance to confronting racial microaggressions further illustrates Freud's concept of defense mechanisms. When the doctor reductively diagnoses him under the umbrella term "Afro- Caribbean" (10), the narrator's silence his refusal to correct the mislabeling, reflects Freud's *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, (1926) theory of resistance as the ego's "refusal to associate itself with an incompatible idea" (159). By internalizing the racial stereotype rather than contesting it, the protagonist enacts a form of reaction formation, masking his anger with

passivity. Freud notes that such defenses "suppress the instinctual process and deflect it from its aims" (146), a dynamic mirrored in the protagonist's withdrawal from confrontation. This aligns with Frantz Fanon's critique of colonial infantilization in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), where the white gaze reduces the racialized subject to a passive recipient of condescension:

> I know black people; you have to talk to them kindly, talk to them about their country, knowing how to talk to them, that's the key. Now here's what you have to do…This is no exaggeration. A white man talking to a person of color behaves exactly like a grown-up with a kid, simpering, murmuring, fussing, and coddling. (25)

The protagonist's silence, while superficially compliant, becomes a site of repressed rage, a Freudian compromise between self-preservation and psychic fragmentation. The novel's opening frame, the narrator's heart condition serves as a somatic metaphor for repressed trauma. Freud (1900) argues that unprocessed emotions "express themselves symbolically through bodily symptoms" (277), and the protagonist's cardiac ailment literalizes his fractured identity. His inability to articulate his cultural specificity ("strictly an Indian Ocean lad, Muslim, orthodox Sunni…") (10) under the doctor's homogenizing label reflects a disavowal of selfhood (36), a defense Freud links to the ego's refusal to integrate destabilizing truths in *The Ego and the Id*, (1923). The heart, a symbol of vitality, becomes a site of repressed displacement, its "dickey" state mirroring the protagonist's psychological dissonance. Gurnah's narrative structure, oscillating between past and present, enacts Freud's *Mourning and Melancholia*, (1917) concept of melancholia, where the ego remains tethered to lost objects (245). The protagonist's exile, initially embraced as liberation becomes a melancholic attachment to a homeland rendered inaccessible. His legal visa, while granting physical security,

exacerbates his psychic estrangement, as Freud observes that "flight from external danger" often intensifies internal conflict (146). The protagonist's journey thus epitomizes the migrant's paradox: legal belonging coexists with existential alienation, repression masks unresolved grief, and resistance to racial erasure manifests as somatic revolt. Gurnah's work, through a Freudian lens, becomes a searing exploration of how colonial legacies and displacement fracture the psyche, rendering exile a perpetual state of unresolved return.

Conclusion: Abdulrazak Gurnah's selected literary works feature protagonists who undergo significant developments in terms of resistance and repression as they navigate intricate social, cultural, and historical landscapes. A psychoanalytical perspective allows us to discern the psychological mechanisms that underlie these characters' behaviors and comprehend the implications of their resistance and repression on their personal growth and the broader narrative. Gurnah's novels delve into the multifaceted layers of the human psyche, portraying characters grappling with the burdens of their past, societal expectations, and personal aspirations. Analysing the protagonists' resistance and repression enables us to explore the intricacies of their psychological makeup, highlighting the internal conflicts and external tensions they encounter within themselves and their surroundings. A prominent theme observed throughout Gurnah's works involves the protagonists' resistance against oppressive structures and societal norms. Frequently, the characters find themselves in situations where their individual aspirations clash with the expectations imposed upon them by their communities. This resistance signifies their pursuit of autonomy and individuality, as they challenge the confining boundaries dictated by cultural traditions and power dynamics. From a psychoanalytic standpoint, this resistance can be viewed as an expression of the characters' ego, which encompasses their conscious and rational faculties. By defying societal norms, the characters strive to safeguard their sense of self and assert their independence. Nevertheless, this resistance is

seldom straightforward and often gives rise to internal conflicts, as the characters grapple with their own fears, doubts, and insecurities. Furthermore, repression emerges as a coping mechanism employed by Gurnah's protagonists to confront traumatic experiences, painful memories, or unacceptable desires. Repression enables the characters to bury these distressing elements deep within their unconscious, shielding themselves from the emotional impact they would otherwise bear. However, the process of repression frequently comes at a cost, as the repressed thoughts and emotions continue to exert influence on the characters' thoughts, behaviors, and relationships. The application of psychoanalytic analysis allows us to unveil the hidden motivations behind the characters' resistance and repression. For instance, resistance against oppressive systems may stem from unresolved conflicts rooted in the characters' early experiences or the dynamics of their unconscious desires. Likewise, repression can be understood as a defense mechanism aimed at shielding the characters from the anxiety and guilt associated with their forbidden or traumatic encounters. Gurnah's works present a dynamic interplay between resistance and repression, with the characters oscillating between these psychological states. The characters embark on journeys marked by moments of self-discovery, wherein they confront their repressed emotions and challenge the oppressive structures that stifle their individuality. These pivotal instances of resistance often foster personal growth, as the characters strive to reconcile their inner conflicts and rediscover their authentic selves.

Chapter 4

Symptom Formation through Familial, Social, and Colonial Forces

In the previous chapter, having examined the interplay of resistance and repression in Abdulrazak Gurnah's narratives, where characters navigate the psychological battlegrounds, we now turn to the lingering aftershocks of these struggles. If repression, as Freud posited, buries unresolved traumas into the unconscious, and resistance marks the fraught attempts to reclaim agency, then symptom formation emerges as the corporeal and psychic residue of these suppressed conflicts. Gurnah's protagonists often bear these symptoms not merely as individual pathologies, but as collective wounds etched by dysfunctional institutions: fractured families, sexual abuses, misogyny, ossified cultural norms, rigid religious frameworks and hegemonic colonial systems,. These structures, far from being passive backdrops, actively mold the characters psyche, identity, desires, and traumas, rendering the personal inseparable from the collective. In African relational philosophy, most clearly articulated in the Southern and Eastern African concept of Ubuntu personhood is constituted through community, expressed in the maxim *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* "a person is a person through other persons". As John Mbiti *African Religions and Philosophy*, (1969) observes, "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am" (108), underscoring that identity in African worldviews is not atomistic but embedded within a network of reciprocal relations. Desmond Tutu *No Future Without Forgiveness*, (1999) reinforces this ethic of interdependence "My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours" (31), insisting that "no one can be human alone." Within this framework, trauma is not an exclusively private psychic wound but a disruption of the communal web itself (see Mkhize, 2004, who argues that in African thought "personhood… is defined relationally,"

and links *ubuntu/botho* to concrete responsibilities within community). Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Paradise* (1994) renders such a rupture through Yusuf's alienation after being removed from his home and placed in Aziz's household under debt bondage "As for Uncle Aziz, for a start he ain't your uncle", so that over time the ties of memory and belonging thin and fray. Reading through Ubuntu, this erosion of relational memory signifies not merely repressed longing but the attrition of the relational self, where harm to one is harm to the collective; critics likewise read *Paradise* as staging alienation and identity through memory's fragility under colonial economies of servitude.

Abdulrazak Gurnah's fiction meticulously traces how systemic dysfunctions rooted in familial estrangement, cultural dislocation, and religious dogma manifest as psychological and somatic symptoms in his characters. This chapter argues that Gurnah frames these symptoms not only as individual failures but as diagnostic markers of institutional rot. In *Paradise* (1994), Yusuf's fragmented sense of self mirrors the destabilizing forces of familial betrayal, and cultural dysfunction that pre-existed the colonial invasion, while in *By the Sea* (2001), Latif's compulsive silence and Saleh Omar's performative storytelling emerge as survival tactics against erasure both by familial and imperial hierarchies. Similarly, *Afterlives* (2020) interrogates how religious and cultural institutions, when weaponized, fracture communities and internalize self-alienation, not forgetting the triggering impact of colonial violence. While the study draws upon Freud's theory of collective neurosis to trace the transformation of repressed individual instincts into psychological symptoms, it consciously situates this psychoanalytic insight within a broader postcolonial framework. This, a methodological choice grounded in the conviction that trauma in postcolonial contexts often manifests at the intersection of personal psychic conflict and collective historical experience. The approach seeks to bridge the specificity of psychoanalytic depth, typically reserved for individual case studies with the expansive

socio-historical lens of postcolonial critique. Such an interdisciplinary strategy allows for a layered reading: one that neither isolates psychic life from its cultural and political matrix nor dilutes theoretical precision into abstract generalities. Instead, it acknowledges that in literature emerging from histories of colonization, displacement, and cultural upheaval, the private symptom is often a crystallization of collective memory, making the integration of both frameworks not only viable but necessary for nuanced interpretation.

Drawing on Freudian and Fanonian theories of symptom formation, this chapter analyzes how Gurnah's characters embody the "return of the repressed" their neuroses, bodily ailments, and relational ruptures acting as legible texts of institutional violence. *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) states:

> The repressed material does not lose its activity in the unconscious. […] The repressed material finds methods of its own of getting into consciousness. One of these methods is the formation of compromises, of symptoms, and of dreams, before the decision is finally made to admit the repressed material into consciousness. (567-568)

By situating these symptoms within the interstices of the family, society, culture and colony, Gurnah exposes the dialectical relationship between psychic suffering and systemic dysfunction, urging readers to interrogate not just the wounded individual but the structures that inflict the wound in psyche and the body. Abdulrazak Gurnah has garnered recognition for his profound exploration of complex human relationships, identity struggles, and the enduring legacies of colonialism in his literary works. At the heart of his narratives lies a deeply intricate web of familial, social, and colonial powers, which, when examined through Freudian lens, unveils a compelling tapestry of human psychology and societal dynamics. This chapter endeavours to dissect this interplay within Gurnah's literary canvas and elucidate how Freudian psychoanalytic concepts illuminate the subtle

manifestations of power and trauma within the characters and narratives of his novels. Prior to understanding and analysing the lecture *Path to the Formation of Symptoms*, it is necessary to dwell into the basic understanding of what symptom is, and for that matter there is one more lecture of Freud named *The Sense of Symptom*. In this lecture, Freud delivers the initial inferences to Clinical psychiatry and psychoanalysis, references the Symptom analysis and Psychoanalysis, Symptom meaning and its discovery, and the significance of Hysteria to understand the importance of symptoms. In this lecture, Freud gives reference to his afore-delivered lecture *General Theory of Neurosis- Psychoanalysis and psychiatry* to deduce the inferences. At the outset of the lecture Freud delivers that:

> In the last lecture I explained to you that clinical psychiatry takes little notice of the outward form or content […] but that psychoanalysis takes matters up at precisely that point and has established in the first place the fact that symptoms have a sense and are related to the patient's experience… (285)

Freud underscores the central tenet of psychoanalysis: that symptoms, even those that appear irrational or bizarre, can be interpreted as meaningful expressions of the patient's inner conflicts, desires, and past experiences. Freud in *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1916-17) state that:

> Symptoms are formed in order to prevent the emergence of otherwise inescapable psychical distress. [...] They [symptoms] have a sense, are related to the patient's experiences, and have replaced the real satisfactions he has forgone. (257)

By exploring the sense or meaning behind symptoms, psychoanalysis seeks to uncover the underlying psychological dynamics and provide therapeutic insight and relief. Freud's statement in the quote above underscores the distinctive approach of psychoanalysis in

contrast to clinical psychiatry. It emphasizes the importance of understanding the meaning and significance of symptoms as a pathway to uncovering the patient's inner world and experiences. Freud's reference to Josef Breuer highlights the historical development of this perspective within the field of psychoanalysis. These symptoms, irrational or bizarre, internal conflicts, desires, past unhealthy experiences etc are the agents that Abdulrazak Gurnah's works carry all through his narrative and by the help of psychoanalysis and Freuds lecture *Path to the formation of Symptoms*, this chapter seeks to unveil all such traumas of conflict that the characters of Gurnah dwell on.

To better understand the subtleties of human behaviours, psychoanalytic readings strive to elucidate meaning from mundane human experiences such as memories, fears, trauma, anxiety, sexuality, suppression of the unconscious, and dream meanings, as well as the meaning of death. In *Paradise* (1994), Yusuf and Khalil analyse these commonplace conflicts in these psychic developmental processes. Unconscious motivations, the central tenet of psychoanalysis, and the subject of the psychoanalytic study explain how neurosis and anxiety may manifest and recur in covert, subtle ways throughout daily life. There is a far greater dimension of the psyche than what is apparent and palpable. We use fundamental psychoanalytical methodologies, such as symptom formation, on particular characters, the emergence of defence mechanisms, and the play of unconscious desires and traumas to do this. This proper sequence is followed through the analysis of the works of Gurnah. Below is the quote suggesting the derivation and source of repression and formation of symptoms and its meaning from Freuds *Introductory lectures on psychoanalysis*:

> I will therefore point out to you that all I have said here about repression and the formation and meaning of symptoms was derived from three forms of neurosis -anxiety hysteria, conversion hysteria and obsessional neurosis

> and that in the first instance it is also valid only for these forms. These three disorders, which we are accustomed to group together as 'transference neuroses', also circumscribe the region in which psycho-analytic therapy can function. (336)

Sigmund Freud's statement underscores the foundational role of specific neurotic disorders in shaping the psychoanalytic framework. He argues that concepts such as repression and symptom formation were initially developed based on observations and analyses of individuals suffering from anxiety hysteria, conversion hysteria, and obsessional neurosis. This implies that the theoretical constructions within psychoanalysis have their roots in these particular clinical cases and their associated symptoms. Freud's emphasis on these 'transference neuroses' serves to delineate the limits of psychoanalytic therapy. It suggests that the techniques and insights developed within psychoanalysis are most relevant and effective in addressing the issues that manifest in these specific neurotic conditions. This does not imply that psychoanalysis cannot be applied to other psychological or psychiatric conditions, but rather that its foundations are most firmly grounded in the understanding of these particular disorders. Sigmund Freud in his seminal work *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, defines Symptom as: "A symptom is a sign of, and a substitute for, an instinctual satisfaction which has remained in abeyance; it is a consequence of the process of repression" (91). During this period, the field of psychiatry regarded symptoms as obscure and incongruous manifestations within the realm of psychic life. In contrast, Freud directed his attention towards the distinctive and remarkable aspects of these symptoms, employing them as windows into the workings of the unconscious mind and the evolution of inner conflicts. It is essential to distinguish the symptoms from other psychological phenomena. Unlike defense mechanisms, which operate on a broader scale and often remain less conspicuous, symptoms hold a specific and more overt role.

Defences tend to function effectively when repression is successful, projection is evident, and the consequences of projection appear natural.

Conversely, neurotic behaviors and parapraxes, while rooted in unconscious causes, may go unnoticed if they prove advantageous to the individual. Furthermore, it is vital to clarify that a symptom should not be equated with anxiety. Anxiety, by nature, is a more pronounced and disruptive emotional state compared to the subtler presence of symptoms. Nevertheless, these two phenomena are intimately intertwined. Anxiety serves as an alarm, signalling the path from a sense of urgency towards the emergence of symptoms. The symptom, in effect, seems to quell the tumultuous waters of anxiety, albeit lacking the means to completely extinguish it. Rather, the symptom accomplishes this by creating a new psychological scenario, distinct from the initial trigger of anxiety. This newly constructed situation serves to mitigate anxiety by offering alternative avenues for psychological connection and representation. Eventually, the nature and extent of a symptom are defined by the specific context it engenders. It is imperative to recognize that the driving force behind the symptom lies in the human psyche's innate impulses and desires. Freud's distinction between symptoms and inhibitions, as articulated in his work, underscores the fundamental role of underlying drives in shaping the manifestation of symptoms in individuals.

It is crucial to note the substantial difference between a 'sign' (indicating an intentional designation) and a mere 'indication (hinting at a correlation without intentionality). According to Freud's psychoanalytic theory of personality, the emergence of symptoms represents an initial defensive strategy employed by individuals. This strategy arises from the inherent conflict between their conscious desires and the suppressed unconscious urges. Consequently, the ego initiates a multifaceted array of defense mechanisms to mitigate the discomfort and psychological distress stemming from

this internal conflict. These defense mechanisms serve the crucial role of safeguarding the ego from mental anguish, achieved through various means, such as blocking, suppressing, or redirecting conflicting desires in socially acceptable ways. However, these defense mechanisms often give rise to inherent challenges for the individual, as the psyche grapples with the reluctance to reconcile conflicting desires. In his lecture, *The Path to the Formation of Symptoms*, Freud delineates the primary factors contributing to the development of neurotic conditions within the human psyche.

In literary narratives of Gurnah, characters frequently confront a myriad of predicaments somehow mostly connected to some past life of the character or the familial past orientations, memory, and remembrance, that exert profound psychological influences, inevitably leaving lasting imprints on their mental landscapes. Mijolla in *The International dictionary of Psychoanalysis* defines remembrance as:

> The term remembering designates the specific psychic action of producing a memory and is to be distinguished from reminiscences, flashbacks, and all other elements of the past that might be seen to constitute other types of representation…Remembering that is efficacious, and therefore of interest to psychoanalysis, involves the subject's reliving traumatic events with all their original affective intensity. (1467)

These characters in turn transmute the consequences of these alterations and difficulties into their overall physical existence, as well as into the realms of their unconscious and subconscious minds. Notably, relational difficulties, particularly when experienced by child characters (which constitutes the most vulnerable phase of the children) wield significant influence over their psyches. Such challenges can evoke emotions of fear, anxiety, alienation, and even manifest as distressing nightmares (nightmares and other agencies of turmoil stem usually from the past experiences and the

memories that overshadow the characters, like in Gurnah). Freud's pioneering work in psychoanalysis involved ascribing motives to these symptoms, thereby deepening our understanding of the intricate interplay between the conscious and unconscious realms of the human psyche. To such horrible past experiences and haunting memories, *In Literature and Psychoanalysis: Intertextual Readings* (2001), Ruth Parkin-Gounelas (2001) discusses the significance Freud accorded to memories, the past, and the retrieval of thoughts from past with regard to literature, saying: "Psychoanalysis discovered early on that it could explain nothing in the present without referring back to the past. The past is not over and done with; it is not even past. The repressed, Freud insisted, is timeless"(11).

This reminiscence of the events is accurate in terms of fixations, symptoms, and trauma. Parkin discusses the importance of memories in a literary context. She maintains that the influence of memory and the past on our present and future is a concern that intrigues both literature and psychoanalysis. By analysing the intertextual linkages between literature and psychoanalysis, she confers that prior conflict culminates in the development of neurosis, which subsequently manifests as a variety of symptoms, amounts to fixations, and ultimately supersedes into trauma.

For Freud, a symptom, much like a dream, represented a compromise-formation in which a desire struggled to find fulfillment, albeit only partially. From the outset of his work in psychoanalysis, Freud advocated for the former interpretation, asserting that producing a symptom was akin to creating a sign, and that every symptom possessed a meaning, even if this meaning eluded the patient. In his collaborative work *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), Freud's contribution primarily illustrates this viewpoint. He wrote, "I have examples at my disposal which seem to demonstrate that hysterical symptoms originate solely through symbolization" (179). Freud in his lecture '*The Sense of Symptoms*' explains it as "Thus neurotic symptoms have a sense, like parapraxes and dreams, and, like them, have a

connection with the life of those who produce them" (286). He wrote to Wilhelm Fliess on February 19, 1899, that "a symptom arises where the repressed thought and the repressing thought can come together in wish-fulfillment" (278). Like dream images, symptoms were overdetermined and shaped by processes such as condensation and displacement. However, unlike dream-work, which resulted in the creation of mental images, symptom-formation manifested as bodily expressions, as seen in hysterical conversions, the emergence of obsessive ideas (which could give rise to secondary symptoms as defences against primary ones), phobic avoidance, and so forth.

An important correction he made in this regard can be found in a letter to Carl Jung, dated June 15, 1911. In this correspondence, Freud (1970) distanced himself from his initial theory of trauma, emphasizing a fundamental point: symptoms do not directly stem from memories but rather from the fantasies constructed around these memories (260). He revisited this issue later in the context of his second topography (structural theory) and his second theory of instincts, as elucidated in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (1926). Symptoms, in Freud's framework, represented a compromise between instinctual gratification and defense mechanisms. This compromise sought to restore equilibrium and also determined the specific nature of individual symptoms within distinct clinical entities.

Central to the process of symptom formation was the experience of unpleasure, stemming from pleasure, and rooted in the conflict between the internal pressure exerted by fantasies and the idea of external danger closely tied to them. Until then, repression had been responsible for managing this calculus of pleasure, along with other defense mechanisms that either cooperated with repression or exerted control over instincts through their own means. The emergence of a symptom was consistently precipitated by the intensification of instinctual pressures, whether due to biological factors, fantasies, real-life events, or external circumstances. In cases where defense mechanisms failed,

anxiety emerged as a primary response. In the context of actual neuroses, anxiety largely represented a reflexive return to the pathways of discharge stemming from initial traumas. However, in other scenarios, anxiety served as a signal of danger and a catalyst for symptom development. The dynamic interaction between emotions and ideas, constituting the components of instinct, was the crucible in which symptoms were formed. Repression functioned by separating these components, acting upon the idea to contain the associated affect and its anticipated actions. In contrast, symptoms operated effectively by operating in the space between, reestablishing the primacy of instincts by forging new, more acceptable connections between affect and idea. Introductory lectures on psychoanalysis "For that reason, we will for the moment adopt the layman's position and assume that to unravel the symptoms means the same thing as to understand the disease" (406).

It is also in the introductory portion of the lecture that Freud discusses psychical (or psychogenic) symptoms and psychical illnesses, which refer to psychological or mental manifestations of distress. These symptoms are characterized by their detrimental impact on an individual's overall quality of life and are typically experienced as unwelcome, causing feelings of displeasure or suffering. The main detriment or "Acts detrimental" associated with these symptoms is twofold: firstly, the mental effort required to cope with these symptoms themselves, and secondly, the additional cognitive resources needed to actively counteract them. In cases where a multitude of symptoms are present, these dual expenditures can lead to a significant depletion of an individual's mental energy reserves, thereby incapacitating them with regard to essential life responsibilities and tasks. This state of mental exhaustion can result in an individual's "paralysing" or inability to effectively engage in crucial aspects of their daily life (406-7). In contrast, in the case of phobia, Freud describes in *The unconscious (1915)* the three distinct phases of symptom formation: preconscious decathexis, anticathexis of the substitutive idea, and an expansion

of the idea's associations along with increased vigilance it demands (181). Gurnah has explored themes of displacement, memory, trauma, and identity in several of his novels, including *Paradise, Afterlives, Memory of Departure, and By the Sea.* In this analysis, we delve into these works and examine how Freud's psychoanalytic theories can shed light on the formation of symptoms in Gurnah's characters.

Paradise: In Abdulrazak Gurnah's novel *Paradise*, the protagonist, Yusuf, undergoes a series of traumatic experiences and psychological challenges that are analysed through the lens of Sigmund Freud's lecture *The Paths to the Formation of Symptoms*. Freud's psychoanalytic theories provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how Yusuf's experiences shape his psyche and lead to the development of symptoms. This chapter delves into the various elements of Freud's lecture *Path to The Formation of Symptoms* and examines how they apply to Yusuf's Journey in *Paradise.* Yusuf, a 12-year-old child, experiences severe brutality that profoundly affects his physical and psychological development. In this context, Sigmund Freud's insights into the significance of these formative experiences, which are, in Yusuf's case, largely ignored, are pertinent. Freud underscores that such traumatic experiences during an infant's crucial developmental stages typically result in lasting trauma. Yusuf's traumatic separation from his parents and the sudden revelation that he will never see them again represent significant psychological distress. His inability to fully process these emotions and events leads to their repression into his unconscious mind, where they linger, exerting a powerful influence on his psyche. When the dust of thoughts in his psyche settles down "and the novelty of it began to wear off for Yusuf', Yusuf realises he has left his home, "and then the thought that he had left home became irresistible and began to cry" (18). Yusuf frequently finds himself consumed by his past; a condition exacerbated by recurrent nightmares, the abuse inflicted upon him by family and society, the betrayal he has suffered at the hands of his

family, as well as feelings of humiliation, guilt, anxiety, and uncertainty. These factors collectively contribute to Yusuf's traumatized state. In the realm of psychoanalysis and literature, it is widely posited that numerous models of personality development assert a significant impact of early life encounters on subsequent character formation. To elucidate further, this means that both within the field of psychoanalysis and in literary works, it is commonly understood that the formative experiences an individual undergoes during their early years have a profound and enduring influence on the development and depiction of their personality traits and characteristics. This concept is further justified by Mark H. Bickhard and John Chambers Christopher in *The Influence of Early Experience on Personality*, as they suggest that various models of personality development propose that there is a strong influence of "early experiences on later personality" (3).

In psychoanalysis, this perspective aligns with the foundational concepts introduced by Sigmund Freud and his followers. Freudian psychoanalysis emphasizes the critical role of childhood experiences, particularly those occurring in the first few years of life, in shaping an individual's psyche. According to this framework, unresolved conflicts and repressed emotions from early experiences can manifest in later life as neuroses or personality traits. For instance, a traumatic event in childhood might lead to the development of defense mechanisms or complexes that persist into adulthood and are reflected in a character's behavior in literary works. The narrative arc of Yusuf hinges around these aspects, and it is only within this framework that Yusuf's behaviour would be examined using psychoanalytical paradigms and applications as he commences to exhibit symptoms from the very onset of the novel. In the *Introductory lectures on psychoanalysis*, Freud talks about the association of symptoms, "Symptoms - and of course, we are dealing now with psychical (or psychogenic) symptoms and psychical illness - are acts detrimental, or at least useless, to the subject's life, often complained of

by him as unwelcome and bringing unpleasure or suffering to him" (408). The decision taken by Yusuf's parents would prove detrimental, which already makes them uncomfortable and irritated like on the day of Yusufs departure:

> His mother did not hug and kiss him or shed tears over him. He had been afraid she would. Later, Yusuf could not remember what his mother did or said, but he remembered that she looked ill or dazed, leaning exhaustedly against the doorpost. (17)

The protagonist doesn't appear to be grumbling about the situation because it seems to be happening without his knowledge. When Yusuf leaves home, the unfavourable working of the psyche begins without any questions being asked or resistance being felt. He didn't say goodbye or ask how long he would be gone or why he was going with Uncle Aziz or if he would ever be able to come home since his mind was so distracted. P. Barry in *Beginning Theory* mentions such instances as:

> The underlying assumption is that when some wish, fear, memory, or desire is difficult to face we may try to cope with it by repressing it, that is, eliminating it from the conscious mind. But this doesn't make it go away: it remains alive in the unconscious, like radioactive matter buried beneath the ocean, and constantly seeks a way back into the conscious mind, always succeeding eventually. As Freud famously said, 'There is always a return of the repressed'. (100)

All he remembers is his mother's glum demeanour as she leaned against the doorpost. Yusuf tries to drive away the unconventional thoughts that are hazardous to his psyche into denial like "after a few moments, Yusuf knew that the tears were no longer coming, but he was reluctant to lose the feeling of sadness. He wiped his tears away and

began to study his uncle" (18). This lack of resistance on the part of the protagonist illustrates how repression works. This could be understood through 'Abandonment Neurosis'. Germaine Geux introduced the concept of "Abandonment Neurosis" and authored a book with the same title in 1950, aiming to elucidate the link between childhood abandonment experiences and certain behaviors observed in adult patients. In this groundbreaking research, Geux contends that individuals with abandonment neurosis exhibit various symptoms, including feelings of inadequacy, insecurity, a lack of self-worth, self-doubt, and an array of fears. These fears encompass the dread of disappointing others, causing boredom or weariness, and numerous other anxieties. Sigmund Freud in his work *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* corelates a symptom and repression as: "A symptom arises from an instinctual impulse which has been detrimentally affected by repression" (94). And, about the return of the repressed, Freud In *Studies on Hysteria*, points out that:

> There is in principle no difference between the symptom's appearing in a temporary way after its first provoking cause and its being latent from the first…and yet the latter could not come into existence without the co-operation of the earlier provoking cause; nor can it be cleared up without taking all the provoking causes into account. (3)

The loss of a loved one might be traumatic and perhaps not fully recognized, yet the subsequent loss of a trivial possession might provoke the severest grief, perhaps re-activating the original provocation under the sign of a lesser tragedy. This applies to Yusuf's loss of the brownstone rosary in the train. This although is the provoking cause of symptom but what it refers in Freuds context is the deferred action of the unconscious, he is haunted by nightmares as dogs pouncing on him, he feels coward, and all such elements trigger the first trauma of being away from home. Sigmund Freud in his lecture *The Paths*

to the Formation of Symptoms talks about the paralysing effects of being surrounded by a charge of symptoms such as:

> Where there is an extensive formation of symptoms, these two sorts of expenditure can result in an extraordinary improvement of the subject in regard to the mental energy available to him and so in paralysing him for all the important tasks of life. (406-7)

In Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Paradise*, Freud's concept of symptom formation, where repressed traumas resurface as psychological or somatic expressions manifests through characters burdened by familial betrayal, colonial exploitation, and cultural dislocation. Yusuf's recurring nightmares, described as "whimpering in the dark like a sick child" (186), exemplify Freud's assertion that symptoms are "compromise-formations" between repressed conflicts and conscious defenses. These nightmares are not random but symbolic residues of his unprocessed trauma: being sold by his parents to Aziz, a betrayal that fractures his sense of identity. As Laub notes, "The traumatic event, although real, took place outside the parameters of normal reality, such as causality, sequence, place and time. The trauma is thus an event that has no beginning, no ending, no before, no during and no after" (69). Yusuf's unconscious persistence in reliving nightmares, therefore, reflects a rupture in temporality and self-coherence that Khalil fails to apprehend. While Khalil frames trauma within a hierarchy of external sufferings, Yusuf's nightmares register the internalized and ineffable dimension of trauma, its refusal of linear comparison or external quantification. His "whimpering like a sick child"(186) metaphorically evokes psychic regression, where the self-collapses into a condition of helplessness, unable to assimilate or narrativize the horror. This exemplifies Laub's assertion that trauma is endured as a "mute wound" (57) rather than transformed into an articulated memory. Freud *Introductory Lectures* argues that symptoms "replace the real satisfactions [the patient] has

forgone" (257), and Yusuf's dreams function as failed attempts to reconcile his abandonment. His unconscious mind compulsively replays the "evil we passed through" (186), a veiled reference to the violence of colonial trade networks that Aziz perpetuates. The nightmares, however, are not mere reflections of personal grief; they encode the collective trauma of a society destabilized by colonial greed. Gurnah frames Yusuf's psyche as a battleground where repressed familial and colonial violences collide, rendering him emotionally paralyzed.

Freud's *Introductory Lectures* notion of the "paralysing effects" of symptom formation (406–7) materializes in Yusuf's inability to act decisively. His declaration "He would feel no remorse about his parents… now he would abandon them" (234) is less an assertion of agency than a reactive defense mechanism, a symptom of his internalized betrayal. His "decision" to leave mirrors his parents' act of selling him, revealing a psyche trapped in repetition compulsion, where repressed traumas resurface as cyclical behaviors. Freud *Repression*, (1915) posits that the repressed exercises a continuous upward pressure toward the conscious and Yusuf's paralysis his inability to reconcile past and present reflects the mental exhaustion of suppressing truths he cannot yet confront: Aziz's exploitation "he ain't your uncle" (189) and his own commodification.

Gurnah extends this dynamic of symptom formation to critique the institutions that produce such psychological fractures. Yusuf's symptoms, his nightmares, emotional detachment, and reactive decisions are not individual pathologies but diagnostic markers of systemic rot. The dysfunctional family, here a microcosm of colonial exploitation, forces Yusuf to internalize his trauma as personal failure. Similarly, in *By the Sea* (2001), Latif's silence about his past and Saleh Omar's fabricated stories ("I learned to tell stories to survive") function as symptoms of displacement and state violence, much like Yusuf's dreams. In *Afterlives* (2020), Hamza's chronic pain and fatigue literalize Freud's idea of

somatic symptoms as expressions of repressed trauma: "The body remembers what the mind tries to forget" (142). Gurnah's characters, across his works, embody Freud's *Introductory Lectures* (1916-17), claim that "the task of psychoanalysis is to make conscious everything that is pathogenically unconscious" (316). Yusuf's nightmares and paralysis are the "return of the repressed", the psyche's rebellion against erasure by familial and colonial institutions. Even his fleeting moments of agency, like his decision to flee Aziz's compound, are undercut by their symptomatic nature. His final act "he walked away and did not look back" (248) echoes his parents' abandonment, revealing how colonial and familial betrayals distort agency into repetition. Gurnah, like Freud, insists that symptoms are never merely personal; they are legible texts of institutional violence. Yusuf's psyche becomes a palimpsest of repressed histories, where nightmares of "evil" and performative declarations of freedom expose the brutal interplay of colonial greed and familial collapse. Through this lens, Gurnah's fiction transcends individual psychology, framing symptom formation as a collective resistance against systems that demand silence and forgetting, more importantly dream formation.

In Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Paradise* (1994), dreams and nightmares function as Freudian "symptoms" compromise-formations that expose repressed traumas, desires, and anxieties rooted in familial betrayal, colonial violence, and cultural dislocation. Freud *The Interpretation of Dreams*, (1900) posits that dreams are "the royal road to the unconscious" (608), offering coded access to repressed material that the conscious mind cannot process. For Yusuf, whose psyche is fractured by abandonment (sold by his parents to Aziz) and exploitation (ensnared in colonial trade networks), dreams become the unconscious's attempt to articulate what he cannot confront directly. His nightmares of "huge dogs" with "yellow teeth" digging into his belly (124) mirror Freud's (1916-1917) assertion that "dreams are the guardians of sleep, not its disturbers" (135) they protect Yusuf from fully

confronting the horror of his commodification while simultaneously betraying his repressed rage and fear. The dog, a recurring symbol of predatory violence in his dreams, embodies the unresolved trauma of familial betrayal ("he ain't your uncle,"189) and the latent threat of colonial exploitation. Freud (1900) argues that "the interpretation of dreams is the *via regia* to a knowledge of the unconscious" (608), and Yusuf's nightmares reveal a psyche struggling to reconcile his displacement: the dogs' "search for his deepest secrets" (124) reflects his unconscious urge to unearth the truth of his abandonment, even as his waking self remains paralyzed by denial.

Gurnah employs these dream sequences not merely as narrative flourishes but as structural symptoms of systemic violence. Yusuf's dream of his mother as a "one-eyed dog crushed under the wheels of a train" (19) condenses multiple layers of repressed trauma into a single grotesque image. The train, a symbol of colonial modernity and destruction, literalizes the crushing weight of imperial violence on familial bonds. His mother's transformation into a maimed animal reflects Freud's (1900) concept of "dream-work" (277), where latent content (grief, betrayal) is distorted into manifest imagery (grotesque animals) to evade censorship by the conscious mind. Similarly, the pomegranate dream a rare moment of "fertility" and "hope" (19), reveals Yusuf's unconscious yearning for rebirth, a fleeting resistance to the psychic atrophy imposed by his circumstances. Yet even this hopeful symbol is undercut by its context: pomegranates, associated with both fertility and bloodshed, mirror the duality of Yusuf's existence, where moments of potential growth are haunted by violence. Freud (1900) notes that "the dream is the liberation of the spirit from the pressure of external nature" (579), but in Yusuf's case, dreams only partially liberate; they expose his repressed desires while reinforcing his entrapment. His nightmare of a crocodile attack and the sultan's demand for compensation (124) encodes his guilt as a bystander to colonial exploitation, reflecting Freud's (1926)

theory that "anxiety dreams" arise when the ego fails to repress unconscious conflicts (93). Yusuf's participation in Aziz's caravan implicates him in the very systems that commodify him, and his dreams externalize this moral paralysis.

Gurnah's broader oeuvre reinforces this interplay of dreams and symptoms as markers of systemic dysfunction. In *By the Sea* (2001), Latif's muteness and Saleh Omar's fabricated stories "I learned to tell stories to survive," (23) function as waking counterparts to Yusuf's nightmares symptoms of displacement and cultural erasure. Like Yusuf, these characters' psyches are palimpsests of repressed histories, their symptoms (silence, lies) emerging as Freudian (1916-17) "compromise-formations" (358) between memory and survival. In *Afterlives* (2020), Hamza's somatic pain "the body remembers what the mind tries to forget" (142) literalizes Freud's *Studies on Hysteria*, (1895) claim that "hysterical symptoms are the effects of [repressed] memories" (16). Yusuf's nightmares operate similarly: they are somatic-psychic eruptions of colonial and familial trauma, their visceral imagery (slime, teeth, blood) mirroring the corporeal violence of imperialism. His dream of "cowardice glimmering in moonlight, covered in the slime of its afterbirth" (19) is particularly revelatory. The "afterbirth" symbolizes the shame of his passivity a Freudian "return of the repressed" that confronts him with his own complicity. Yet this very confrontation signals a potential for growth. As Freud *New Introductory Lectures*, (1933) argues, "where id was, there ego shall be" (80), and Yusuf's gradual recognition of his dreams' symbolism (however fragmentary) mirrors his halting journey toward self-awareness. His final act of fleeing Aziz's compound "he walked away and did not look back" (248) echoes the ambivalence of his dreams: it is both a symptom of his internalized trauma (repeating his parents' abandonment) and a tentative assertion of agency.

Gurnah's use of dreams, then, is deeply psychoanalytic. They are not mere plot devices but diagnostic tools that unveil the psychic toll of colonialism and familial rupture.

Yusuf's nightmares like Latif's silence or Hamza's pain are symptoms of a "diseased" social order, where repression is both personal and collective. Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* assertion that "the interpretation of dreams is in fact the *via regia* to the unconscious" (608) finds its literary counterpart in Gurnah's fiction, where dreams become the unconscious's rebellion against systems that demand forgetting. Through Yusuf's nightmares, Gurnah insists that the personal is inextricable from the political that the psyche, like the novel itself, is a contested terrain where history's repressed violences ceaselessly return.

In Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Paradise* (1994), the interplay of patriarchal hierarchies, colonial exploitation, and familial betrayal creates a matrix of dysfunction that fractures the psyches of its characters, manifesting in symptoms of trauma, complicity, and internalized violence. The ritual described early in the novel where warriors gain social power by hunting lions and consuming their penises (60), symbolizes a hypermasculine economy of dominance rooted in violence. This act, framed as a cultural tradition, reduces masculinity to a performative spectacle of conquest, reinforcing what R.W. Connell *Gender and Power*, (1987) terms "hegemonic masculinity," a social construct where power is "moulded by the intricate fabric of social structures" (107). The lion's penis, a fetishized emblem of potency, becomes a literal and metaphorical currency in a system where power is accrued through the subjugation of others. For characters like Mnyapara and Abdalla, whose authority hinges on brute force and sexual aggression, this ritual mirrors their daily enactments of dominance. Mnyapara's "pitiless light in his eyes" (46) and Abdalla's predatory leering at Yusuf smiling "in small delight" while muttering "lines of a song about the nature of beauty" (47) exemplify how toxic masculinity is weaponized to terrorize and control. These behaviors are not individual pathologies but symptoms of a diseased social order, where power is synonymous with the capacity to inflict harm.

The novel's familial structures further entrench this dysfunction. Yusuf's sale to Aziz as *Rehani* a debt pawn by his parents (25) underscores how economic precarity under colonialism distorts kinship into a transactional relationship. His father's decision, framed as a "necessity," exposes the moral collapse of familial duty under systemic exploitation. Yusuf's subsequent trauma his nightmares of abandonment, his paralysis in the face of Aziz's exploitation reflects Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*, (1900) concept of repression, where "the repressed material finds methods of its own of getting into consciousness" (567). Yet Gurnah situates this repression within the colonial condition: Yusuf's psyche becomes a battleground for the unresolved tensions between filial loyalty and betrayal, agency and subjugation. Khalil's violent enforcement of Aziz's authority "He ain't your uncle… you call him Seyyid!" (25) literalizes the internalization of colonial hierarchies. Each blow Yusuf endures is not just physical violence but a ritual of psychic colonization, conditioning him to accept his commodification.

Gurnah extends this critique to gender dynamics, where patriarchal norms compound colonial violence. Women like Yusuf's mother are confined to domestic roles, their labor and suffering rendered invisible yet indispensable to maintaining cultural continuity. Their resilience cooking feasts amidst hardship, absorbing abuse, becomes a silent counterpoint to male aggression, yet their oppression is symptomatic of the same system. Abdalla's sexual predation, including his threats to sodomize Yusuf (47), reveals how powerlessness is eroticized and weaponized in a hypermasculine economy. These acts of violence are not aberrations but systemic features, what Frantz Fanon *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) describes as the "psycho-affective" scars of colonialism (14), where the colonized internalize dehumanization. Yusuf's nightmares of "cowardice glimmering in moonlight" (19) and his eventual flight from Aziz's compound "he walked away and did not look back" (248) are not liberations but repetitions of trauma a Freudian "return of the

repressed" that underscores the cyclical nature of violence. Gurnah's work ultimately transcends Freud's individual-focused framework, positioning symptoms as collective responses to systemic rot. The caravan's brutal hierarchy, Aziz's exploitation, and the warriors' ritualized violence are not backdrops but active agents in psychic disintegration. Yusuf's symptoms his passivity, nightmares, fractured identity are legible as the "aftershocks" (to borrow from Saidiya Hartman) of a world where power is enacted through domination. In *Paradise*, Gurnah insists that to diagnose the psyche, one must first indict the structures that fracture it.

In Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Paradise* (1994), familial dysfunction operates as a crucible for psychological symptom formation, where rigid patriarchal structures and colonial commodification fracture the psyches of characters, forcing repressed traumas to resurface as destabilizing compulsions. Yusuf's father, who slaps him for playing *Kipande* in the streets (8), exemplifies a familial dynamic where discipline masquerades as protection. This act, framed as resistance to societal "iniquities" like racial violence or sexual predation, instead entrenches repression. Freud (1916–1917) argues that symptoms arise from "the mutual interference between two opposing currents" the repressed desire and the repressive force (338). Yusuf's later compulsion to join the *Kipande* game while enslaved "chasing after the Kipande like a madman" (8) embodies this duality. His frenzied participation, under Khalil's approval, is both a re- enactment of his childhood repression (the game he was punished for) and a desperate assertion of agency, a Freudian "return of the repressed" where forbidden desires erupt as chaotic behavior. Gurnah reveals how familial control, even when motivated by protective intent, distorts into violence that seeds lifelong psychic fractures. Yusuf's oscillation between submission and rebellion mirrors the "compromise" Freud describes: his symptoms (reckless play, emotional detachment) are negotiations between the trauma of paternal betrayal and the impossibility

of articulating it.

Gurnah extends this analysis to colonial contexts, where familial and systemic dysfunctions intertwine. Yusuf's sale into *Rehani* a system where children are pawned to settle debts exposes how economic precarity under colonialism perverts' kinship into transactional cruelty. His father's decision, "driven by necessity", is not merely pragmatic but a capitulation to a system that reduces human bonds to collateral. This betrayal manifests in Yusuf's nightmares of abandonment, where his mother appears as a "one-eyed dog crushed under the wheels of a train" (19), a visceral symbol of familial rupture compounded by colonial modernity's violence. Frantz Fanon, in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), observes that colonialism "turns the colonized into a neurotic locked in a compulsive dialogue with the dominant culture" (102). Yusuf's symptoms his nightmares, his dissociation during Aziz's exploitative demands reflect this neurosis, his psyche bifurcated between filial loyalty and the reality of his commodification. Similarly, in *By the Sea* (2001), Latif's muteness about his father's betrayal "I learned to tell stories to survive" (23) reveals how silence becomes a symptom of repressed familial trauma, a "compromise" between memory and survival.

Gurnah's critique, however, transcends Freud's individualistic framework by situating symptoms within collective cultural pathologies. The hypermasculine rituals of lion hunting and penis consumption (60), which conflate power with sexual dominance, expose how patriarchal norms amplify colonial violence. Characters like Mnyapara, whose "pitiless light in his eyes promised nothing but pain" (46), embody what R.W. Connell *Gender and Power*, (1987) terms "hegemonic masculinity" a performance of dominance that "moulds power through social structures" (107). This performance demands the suppression of vulnerability, forcing men like Khalil to replicate violence, "He ain't your uncle… you call him Seyyid!" (25) as a means of asserting control in a system that

dehumanizes them. Yusuf's internalization of this violence his acceptance of blows and slurs reflects what Saidiya Hartman *Lose Your Mother*, (2007), calls the "afterlife of slavery," where subjugation is metabolized into psychic fragmentation (6). His participation in the caravan, a microcosm of colonial exploitation, becomes a symptom of this fragmentation: a compulsive re-enactment of powerlessness masked as agency.

Ultimately, Gurnah's work reveals symptoms not as individual failures but as diagnostic traces of systemic rot. Yusuf's flight from Aziz's compound "he walked away and did not look back" (248) is less liberation than a repetition of his parents' abandonment a Freudian (1920) "repetition compulsion" (18) that underscores the cyclical nature of trauma. In *Afterlives* (2020), Hamza's chronic pain "the body remembers what the mind tries to forget" (142) mirrors Yusuf's nightmares, somatic proof of intergenerational trauma. Gurnah's genius lies in framing these symptoms as collective: they are the psyche's rebellion against systems that demand complicity, a testament to the indelible scars of familial and colonial betrayal. Where Freud locates repression in the unconscious, Gurnah locates it in history a history that haunts, erupts, and demands witness.

To further understand the social constructs of power, the Arab elite's dominance and the marginalization of other ethnicities underscore the deep-seated power imbalances. Class-based power structures are evident in the interactions between characters like Uncle Aziz, a wealthy merchant, and Yusuf, a Rehani. Uncle Aziz's economic power gives him the authority to buy individuals like Yusuf to serve as unpaid workers. This economic disparity creates a hierarchical system where the wealthy exercise control over those in dire financial straits. Religious power and belief systems also shape social dynamics in the novel. Yusuf's immersion in Islamic teachings through the Koran school underlines the influence of religious leaders in shaping the values and conduct of the community. The imam, as a religious figure, wields authority over the students, highlighting the power of

religion in guiding social behavior.

In Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Paradise* (1994), colonial violence is not merely a backdrop but an invasive force that fractures the psyches of its characters, manifesting in symptoms of trauma that blur the boundaries between psychological and somatic suffering. The German colonial presence, embodied by officers whose "involuntary snarls" (2) evoke primal fear, instills a dehumanizing dread that permeates the novel. Yusuf's encounter with a colonial officer a moment where he "mutters the words he had been taught to say when he required sudden and unexpected help from God" (2) exemplifies Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, (1961) assertion that colonialism reduces the colonized to a "state of rage and shame" (42), their bodies and minds hijacked by the trauma of subjugation. This trauma, as Bessel van der Kolk *The Body Keeps the Score*, (2014) notes, becomes "stuck" in the nervous system, manifesting as hypervigilance or dissociation (21). Yusuf's flight is not just a physical reaction but a somatic symptom of colonial terror, his body enacting what his mind cannot articulate.

The novel's portrayal of colonial power as an omnipresent, destabilizing force aligns with Cathy Caruth's (1996) theory of trauma as an "unclaimed experience" that haunts through repetition (4). The prophecy in *Paradise* that Europeans will "fuck us beyond recognition" (186) reflects a collective anticipation of erasure, a Freudian (1920) "compulsion to repeat", (19) where trauma is rehearsed before it fully arrives. This anticipatory dread distorts cultural identity, as characters internalize the colonizer's contempt. Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, (1952) observation that "the colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards" (9) resonates in the disintegration of Swahili trade networks under German rule. The outlawing of tribute, a practice central to local autonomy, forces characters like Aziz into complicity with colonial economies, their agency corroded by

what Kali Tal *Worlds of Hurt*, (1996) terms "systems of power that script trauma into the body politic" (121). Yusuf's eventual conscription into German forces a decision framed as survival mirrors this complicity, his participation a symptom of the Hartman's *Scenes of Subjection*, (1997) "social death" inflicted by colonialism (6).

Gurnah situates these psychological ruptures within the body itself. Yusuf's nightmares of "huge dogs" (124) and his visceral recoil from colonial brutality illustrate van der Kolk's (2014) argument that trauma "is not just an event that took place sometime in the past; it is… an imprint left by that experience on mind, brain, and body" (21). The German officer's snarling visage becomes a recurring psychic intrusion, a Freudian "return of the repressed" that Yusuf cannot integrate into conscious memory. Similarly, the plucking of native boys for war a practice alluded to in the novel echoes Caruth's (1996) notion of trauma as a "double wound", the initial violence and the later, incomprehensible repetition (58). These boys, like Yusuf, are conscripted into systems that exploit their labor and erase their histories, their conscription is a metaphor for the colonized psyche's fragmentation.

Gurnah's critique transcends individual pathology, framing symptoms as collective responses to systemic violence. The "disorientation and loss of control" (186) experienced by Swahili communities under German rule mirrors Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, analysis of colonialism as a "machine of war" that "manufactures the colonized as a social fact" (15). Yusuf's muttering of prayers, his nightmares, and his eventual flight are not personal failures but diagnostic traces of a world where, as Tal (1996) argues, "trauma is not an individual affliction but a cultural byproduct" (121). In *Paradise*, the colonized body becomes a palimpsest of violence, its symptoms tremors, compulsions, silences bearing witness to a history that refuses burial. Gurnah's genius lies in rendering these symptoms not as aberrations but as the logical outcomes of a world where power is wielded

as annihilation.

In Abdulrazak Gurnah's novel *Admiring Silence*, the complex dynamics of identity and cultural displacement are explored through the lens of psychoanalysis. The story revolves around an unnamed narrator who emigrates from Zanzibar to the UK, where he lives with his English partner, Emma, and their daughter, Amelia. The narrator's experiences in these various settings highlight the dysfunctional nature of family, society, and the colonial legacy and their profound impacts on the psyche of the characters. This analysis delves into how these units of dysfunction shape the characters' psyches and lead to the formation of symptoms, using psychoanalytic principles as a framework.

Abdulrazak Gurnah's novel *Admiring Silence* excels in its unwavering commitment to portraying the psychological truth of a narrator who is habitually deceitful. It delves into his realization that his abandonment of his original family and his detachment from the family he built are intertwined with his emotional isolation. Gurnah takes us on a complex journey, presenting a multitude of moral dilemmas that ultimately expose a pervasive problem in society. This problem taints all aspects of life, including ethnicity, identity, politics, and the oppressive colonial authority, revealing them to be interconnected within the broader framework of power dynamics. These dynamics are observed and endured by the young main character throughout the novel. This chapter deals with the disorientation of the institutes like Family, society and colony and the hazardous power distribution within these institutes that guide the narrative structure of the novel and its impact on the psyche of the characters developing certain psychoanalytical elements like formation of symptoms and other major and minor agents that interplays with the psyche of the characters to deal certain circumstances. The literary and psychoanalytical exploration will be structured as:

Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Admiring Silence* (1996) delves into the psychological and

sociocultural consequences of colonialism and fractured family ties, articulated through the unnamed narrator's fragmented selfhood and strategic silence. By applying Freudian frameworks of symptom formation particularly the interplay of repression, trauma, and the uncanny, the novel reveals how the protagonist's internalized conflicts materialize as silence, a dual manifestation of colonial oppression and familial disintegration. Freud (1915) argues that symptoms emerge from unresolved psychic tensions, where buried traumas resurface as distorted expressions of the unconscious (153). In the novel, the protagonist's silence functions as both a neurotic symptom of colonial displacement and a contradictory tactic of defiance, complicating Spivak's assertion of the subaltern's voicelessness. His alienation in England and detachment from Zanzibar mirror Freud's concept of the *unheimlich* (uncanny), where the once familiar becomes disturbingly alien, echoing Bhabha's (1994) notion of the "unhomely" as a state of colonial disorientation (9). The narrator's confession, "I can't get over the feeling of being alien in England, of being a foreigner" (166), epitomizes this Freudian uncanny, as his fractured identity caught between two worlds, renders silence a symptomatic conduit for unarticulated trauma.

The psychological violence of colonialism manifests in the protagonist's suppression of cultural memory and coerced assimilation. Freud's theory of repression where unbearable memories are buried yet persist as symptoms parallels the narrator's stifled Zanzibari identity, suffocated under British hegemony. Portraying Zanzibar as a "nightmare" (148) reflects a melancholic attachment to a homeland irreversibly scarred by postcolonial decay, a Freudian melancholia where loss is internalized without resolution. The ruined streets of Zanzibar, "gloomy, shut-up streets which had once been clamorous bazaars" (92), symbolize this unresolved grief, a physical metaphor for psychic disintegration. Kaigani (2013) observes that silence in Gurnah's work "highlights the limitedness of both language and story" (133), a Freudian negation where the protagonist's

omissions "I can't describe that," (71) signal traumas too fraught for direct expression. His silence thus becomes a symptom of colonial erasure, a psychic wound of cultural dislocation.

Dysfunctional family dynamics compound this colonial trauma, as Freudian tensions between ego, superego, and id surface in the narrator's strained relationships. His estrangement from his stepbrother Akbar, who implores, "Come home" (76), reflects pressure from the superego to adhere to familial and cultural norms, clashing with his ego's adaptation to exile. The protagonist's refusal to reveal his life with Emma and Amelia to his family exemplifies Freudian negation, where denial ("more lies, Boom boom" (176) conceals repressed guilt and alienation. Arslan (2014) notes that "silence expresses more about Gurnah's characters than their utterances" (2), a dynamic Freud links to symptom formation as a compromise between repression and expression. The narrator's retreat into silence in both England and Zanzibar signals a splintered ego incapable of mediating colonial reality and familial duty, culminating in a fractured self- image: "I was a pitiful vagrant, living a life of bondage and unfulfillment, a stranger, an alien" (148). Freud's concept of the divided self under duress is starkly embodied here, as silence externalizes an inner rupture between colonial present and irretrievable past.

However, Gurnah reframes Freud's passive symptom by presenting silence as an act of agency, aligning with Parry's (1987) challenge to Spivak's subaltern theory. The protagonist's deliberate silences refusing to narrate his trauma through colonial or familial frameworks subvert dominant discourses. His muteness during Emma's confession "Emma confesses that there is someone else," (176) and evasion of his demands exemplify Freudian negation as active resistance, where unspoken critiques undermine oppressive structures demanding speech. Helff (2015) contends that silence "should be confused neither with absence nor with powerlessness" (162), a stance resonant with Freud's view

of symptoms as meaningful expressions. By withholding his narrative, the protagonist resists reduction to colonial or familial stereotypes, asserting agency through what Kaigani (2013) calls "multiple focalizations" (130), a narrative technique mirroring Freud's overdetermination, where symptoms encapsulate layered meanings. The protagonist's silence thus becomes a multifaceted act: a symptom of colonial melancholia, a rejection of oppressive narratives, and a subversive reclaiming of voice.

In *Admiring Silence*, Gurnah merges Freudian symptomology with postcolonial critique, presenting silence as an interplay between trauma and resistance. The protagonist's psyche, fractured by colonialism and familial dysfunction, channels repression into symptomatic silence, yet this silence disrupts hegemonic discourse. Freud's theories illuminate the text's psychological complexity, while Gurnah's narrative transcends Eurocentric models, proposing a decolonial redefinition of agency. The novel enacts a Freudian "return of the repressed," where silence articulates the unspeakable, contesting colonial historiography and the pathologies of displacement. In accordance with Porter Abbott's (2008) perspectives, the unfolding of the narrative plots is intricately tied to the actions of the central characters. Abjection, in this context, is essentially the manner in which "the characters reveal who they are in terms of their motives, their strength, weakness, trustworthiness, capacity to love, hate and cherish, adore, deplore and so on. By their actions we do know them" (124). *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines abjection as something bad experienced or present to the maximum degree, a situation or condition extremely unpleasant and degrading or a person or their behaviour completely without pride or dignity. Abjection is therefore about an unpleasant human condition. Gurnah primarily shapes his characters by exploring their interactions within the family context. He places a central emphasis on the internal familial disputes and strains, as well as the endeavors made to address and alleviate these tensions. These conflicts often stem from

misinterpretations that originate not only within the family itself but also from external sources. Within this familial context, inquiries emerge about the roles and obligations of different individuals, as well as the significance of intentional omissions, repressions, and silences by certain characters in *Admiring Silence*.

Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Admiring Silence* (1996) offers a searing exploration of the interplay between colonial displacement, familial dysfunction, and psychological fragmentation, articulated through the unnamed narrator's symptomatic silence and repressed trauma. Freud's theories of symptom formation particularly the mechanisms of repression, the return of the repressed, and neurotic conflict, provide a critical framework to dissect the protagonist's psychic disintegration. The novel's opening lines establish a visceral metaphor for the protagonist's internalized trauma where "It became more clear, more precisely located, concrete, an object that occupied space within me, cockroachy dark and intimate, emitting thick stinking fumes / that reeked of loneliness and terror" (1). This "cockroachy dark" presence, likened to a physical infestation, embodies Freud's (1982) concept of repressed psychic material that "does not have access to consciousness but effect[s] within the subject modifications either of speech... or body symptoms" (7). The narrator's inability to articulate his trauma manifests as a stifling silence, a symptom of the unconscious conflict between his fractured identity as a colonial migrant and the oppressive demands of assimilation. His daily ritual of "groping for it" (1) underscores Freud's assertion that repressed content persists as a tangible force, distorting speech and selfhood. This silence, however, is not merely passive; it becomes a paradoxical site of resistance against colonial and familial erasure, complicating Spivak's (1988) notion of the subaltern's muteness by imbuing it with agential ambiguity (283).

The narrator's familial relationships further exemplify Freudian symptom formation, as his dislocation from both his Zanzibari and British families generates

neurotic conflicts rooted in repressed libidinal desires. Kristeva's (1982) theory of abjection, which defines the abject as that which "disturbs identity, system, and order" (9), illuminates the narrator's liminal position within these fractured familial structures. His migration to the UK and marriage to Emma, described by Drake (1995) as a "paperless marriage" (1), situates him in a liminal space where he is neither fully integrated into British society nor connected to his Zanzibari roots. His stepfather's condemnation "You're lost now... not only to us but to yourself. Just like your father" (189), reflects the abject rejection of his hybrid identity, positioning him as a destabilizing force within both familial systems. This rejection exacerbates his neurotic symptoms, as Freud (1917) posits that neurosis arises when the libido, "repulsed by reality, must now seek other paths to its satisfaction" (407). The narrator's compulsive fabrication of stories about Zanzibar, a performative attempt to satisfy his in-laws' Orientalist fantasies exemplify this neurotic displacement. His stammering and "tongue-tied" speech (28) during interactions with Emma's family signify the return of the repressed, as his unconscious trauma disrupts his conscious attempts at assimilation. The "thick stinking fumes" of loneliness (1) thus symbolize the libidinal energy thwarted by colonial and familial rejection, festering as a symptomatic silence.

Gurnah further complicates Freud's symptomology by framing silence as a subversive strategy, challenging the Eurocentric binaries of speech/silence and agency/passivity. The narrator's refusal to conform to either his Zanzibari family's expectations or British societal norms aligns with Parry's (1987) critique of Spivak, which emphasizes the subaltern's capacity for "articulation" through indirect resistance (39). His silence becomes a form of negation, a Freudian *Verneinung* that simultaneously acknowledges and disavows his trauma. For instance, his evasion of Akbar's demand to "Come home" (176) and his withholding of truth from Emma "more lies. Boom boom,"

(176) reflect a conscious rejection of the oppressive narratives imposed upon him. Helff (2015) argues that silence in Gurnah's work "should be confused neither with absence nor with powerlessness" (162), a stance that reconfigures Freud's symptom as a site of agency. Kaigani, (2013) states that the narrator's fragmented storytelling marked by "multiple focalizations" (130), mirrors Freud's concept of overdetermination, where silence condenses multiple traumas: colonial displacement, familial abandonment, and cultural erasure. His admission, "I was a pitiful vagrant, living a life of bondage and unfulfillment, a stranger, an alien" (148), encapsulates the Freudian split self, yet his silence also destabilizes the colonial discourse that reduces him to a stereotype.

Admiring Silence synthesizes Freudian psychoanalysis with postcolonial critique to expose the dialectics of trauma and resistance. The narrator's psyche, fractured by the "unhomely" (9) realities of migration, manifests repression through symptomatic silence, yet this silence becomes a decolonial act of refusal. Freud's 'return of the repressed' is reimagined through Gurnah's narrative, as the unspeakable traumas of colonialism and familial rupture surface through gaps, omissions, and polyphonic storytelling. The novel thus transcends Eurocentric psychoanalytic models, positing silence not as a pathological symptom but as a radical reclamation of voice in the face of systemic erasure. As Arslan (2014) observes, "silence expresses more about Gurnah's characters than their utterances" (2), a testament to the novel's subversive reworking of Freudian symptomology into a tool of postcolonial resistance.

These elements are enough of the evidence to understand its impact on the psyche of the character. The libido here is to be understood as a life instinct. Here the narrator tries to satisfy the life instinct of survival by narrating the stories of umpire to Emma's father, The unsatisfied life instinct is denied of the gratification by the reality, hence the narrator develops the new method to satisfy it. All these stories of umpire are the symptoms or the

neurotic symptoms as Freud mentions it in *The Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis.* When the narrator narrates the story about his family back in Zanzibar, it is dysfunctional to its core. Talking about his immediate family, about his parents as:

> A new silence descended on my parents' lives. By this time my father was teaching in a school in the country. My mother was a soft-spoken woman, and her exasperation often took the form of silence and withdrawal. For my father, his misery had hardened and transformed itself into something which no longer resembled its sources. (44)

When he became a parent, his family-in-laws detested him, although they did not say it to his face but from the text it's evident how the narrator feels with the look of Emma's mother upon hearing her daughter being pregnant. With the birth of Amelia, the narrator is not happy being her father as he says:

> It was not that I did not feel affection for Amelia or disliked being left with her or resented caring dutifully for her, but she was a stranger who had taken my love away and brought Mrs. Willoughby to mind and menace my life. And Emma's thesis was not going well, she could not concentrate on it, was not convinced there was any value in it, could not imagine herself finishing it. (70)

This underlying trauma contributes to a pervasive sense of insecurity and self-doubt. This sense of insecurity becomes particularly evident in his interactions with his daughter, who views him as unsuccessful. As he says, "It's not that she is a disappointment to me, it is just that from the time she reached fourteen, I have been a disappointment to her" (12). As she matures, the young girl becomes increasingly aware of her father's shortcomings, perceiving him as feeble and ill- equipped to manage challenges as they arise. This he readily acknowledges, "I am not a failure, I shouted at the closed door, 'I'm

a tragedy. This dead pan world is full of chaos, and I am one of the lost" (12). Shouting at the closed door is again a way of keeping silence as no one to hear the shouts, or silence in a normal consideration. The Abandonment, silence, and abjection are intricately linked, each feeding into the other. Coping with abandonment often involves adopting a strategy of silence. Within this process of addressing abandonment, abjection finds various means of expression or experience. The family serves as the stage where all three, abandonment, silence, and abjection manifest in distinct ways. Despair, self-revulsion, pain, and isolation represent distinct outcomes stemming from abandonment and that gives rise to symptom formation.

While the narrator goes back to home and waits in a departure longue "he calls it as a moment before a persecution" (81), he is hopeful to return back to his family after twenty years, he although is engulfed in the self-doubt, but sooner after reaching home back, he realizes that his romanticized tales of home do not align with the actual situation. The collapse of the former government and the corruption in the new regime mirror the disillusionment and disintegration of his idealized family structure. This experience of family dysfunction leads the narrator to decline an arranged marriage and hastily return to the UK. *By the Sea* by Abdulrazak Gurnah is a complex narrative that delves into the lives of its characters, exploring themes such as identity, colonialism, trauma, and resistance. The novel presents a rich tapestry of stories, characters, and psychological complexities, set against the backdrop of postcolonial Zanzibar and the United Kingdom. Abdulrazak Gurnah's novel *By the Sea* delves into the complex interplay between dysfunctional family structures and the underlying social institutes. This chapter critically analyses how these institutes impact the psyche of the characters, propounding the upsurge in psychoanalytical elements like formation of symptoms. By examining the character- dynamics, power struggles, and societal norms presented in the narrative, the psychological challenges faced

by the individuals involved are better understood. Below is the structural analysis of the novel as how defuncting the family is, how inefficient society is, and how power constructs of colonial impulses impact the psyche of the characters. This novel stands as a case study of the two prominent institutes of African society as depicted by Gurnah in his work as family and society. A few of the important agencies employed by Gurnah in this text are, memory, history, family feuds, social setups, psychic turbulences, its symptoms, and the colonial constructs and its impact on the psyche of the characters.

Gurnah's portrayal of the family as a power structure is marked by dysfunction and complexity. The central figures, Saleh Omer and Latif Mahmud, grapple with the legacy of a tumultuous family history. Omar born of the mixed heritage, born to an Arab father and a local woman, Afiya. This cultural collision reflects the power dynamics at play in the family, where colonial legacies and patriarchal norms influence individual identities and relationships. The family becomes a microcosm of the broader sociopolitical context of Zanzibar, with Saleh's father representing the dominant colonial influence and Afiya embodying the oppressed indigenous population and both studied together as a familial disorientation. Saleh's resistance to acknowledging his mixed heritage and the traumatic events of his parents' relationship illustrates the elements of repression embodied in the psyche of the family structure. His reluctance to confront these uncomfortable truths in psychoanalysis is understood as a defense mechanism that shields him from the painful aspects of his own identity, which later on haunts him in some revealing aspects, which is understood in this chapter as Sigmund Freud calls it return of the repressed. Mahmud has taken a radical step by completely severing ties with his family in Zanzibar and now enjoys a comfortable life in London, shielded from potential social backlash. His newfound peace and tranquillity, however, unexpectedly shatter when he crosses paths with Saleh Omar, the man whom Mahmud holds responsible for destroying his family and depriving them

of their property in the years leading up to Zanzibar's independence. Gurnah's two central characters, Mahmud, and Omar, each provide their own narrative of these historical events. Through their accounts, they shed light on the ways in which history and memory are constructed and reconstructed. The opening lines of the novel set the narrative arc of the novel, implying to what and how a family, which is a basic unit of safety and composure turns out to be haunting the psyche of the characters. Gurnah set it like:

> I marvel how the hours of darkness have come to be so precious to me, how night silences have turned out so full of mumbles and whispers when before they had been so terrifyingly still, so tense with the uncanny noiselessness that hovered above words…Sometimes I think it is my fate to live in the wreckage and confusion of crumbling houses. (7)

The novel is set thirty years after what had happened in the narrator's past, in his previous homes and families, in the society he grew up in. The quote above gives a stark reality of his present and past life, the condition of his present family and the family he had in past, in his native land. There is an inkling of how in his previous family and house the nights were silent, tense and haunting which in the present condition is not the case. The quote ends with a reflection on fate, with the narrator feeling that they are destined to live in a state of "wreckage and confusion" among "crumbling houses" (7). This imagery suggests a sense of disarray and instability in his life. Blaming one's fate is what psychoanalysis calls a defense mechanism to not let the traumatic elements enter one's psyche. This defense mechanism is understood as denial but as Freud says this repressed content comes back as the concept of the "return of the repressed" which the narrator admits in the languages of a layman: "Even as I recount them to myself, I can hear echoes of what I am suppressing, of something I've forgotten to remember, which then makes the telling so difficult when I don't wish it to be" (7). This is crucial in Freudian

psychoanalysis:

> Let us now go back to the symptoms. They create a substitute, then, for the frustrated satisfaction by means of a regression of the libido to earlier times, with which a return to earlier stages of object-choice or of the organization is inseparably bound up…The kind of satisfaction which the symptom brings has much that is strange about it. (414-415).

It refers to the idea that memories, desires, or emotions that have been repressed or pushed into the unconscious mind can resurface in various ways. "The streets make me tense and nervous, and sometimes even in my locked-in flat I find myself unable to sleep or sit at ease because of the rustlings and whisperings that agitate the lower air" (8). In this context, the symptoms are seen as a return of these repressed desires or memories. The mind tries to find a way to express what has been pushed out of consciousness, but it does so in a distorted or symbolic form through symptoms. Freud suggests that symptoms in neurotic individuals serve as substitutes for frustrated desires or unfulfilled wishes. When an individual cannot satisfy their desires or experiences frustration in some way, the mind finds an alternative means of achieving satisfaction through the formation of symptoms, such as:

> We may disregard the fact that it is unrecognizable to the subject, who, on the contrary, feels the alleged satisfaction as suffering and complains of it. This transformation is a function of the psychical conflict under pressure of which the symptom had to be formed. (415)

Sigmund Freud is discussing the idea that the satisfaction provided by a symptom, which arises as a substitute for unfulfilled desires or repressed memories, is often not consciously recognized by the individual experiencing the symptom. Instead, the person typically perceives this satisfaction as suffering and expresses their discomfort or distress.

Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea* opens with the narrator's haunting reflection on displacement and the psychic wreckage of unresolved trauma: Sometimes I think it is my fate to live in the wreckage and confusion of crumbling houses. This metaphor of "crumbling houses" evokes Freud's theory of symptom formation as the psyche's fragmented response to repressed memories and unmet desires. Freud argues in *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1916–17) that symptoms emerge when the ego fails to reconcile the id's instinctual demands with the superego's moral strictures, creating "compromise formations" (358). The narrator's fixation on his "fate" to inhabit ruin mirrors this Freudian dynamic: his flight to London, ostensibly to escape Zanzibar's "filthy circumstances," becomes a symptom of his unconscious attempt to flee the unresolved traumas of familial and colonial rupture. Yet, as Freud *Introductory Lectures*, (1916–17) warns, "what was once a satisfaction to the subject is bound to arouse his resistance or disgust to-day" (415), a truth the narrator confronts when his idealized vision of London collides with the harsh reality of exile. His admission "I too was in fear of my life, had been for years" reveals how displacement exacerbates rather than alleviates psychic distress, as the repressed past resurfaces in the form of paralyzing anxiety.

The narrator's disorientation stems from what Freud (1926) terms the "loss of object" (170), where the ego mourns not only physical separation from homeland and family but the collapse of idealized self-narratives. Freud posits that "pain is the actual reaction to loss of object, while anxiety is the reaction to the danger which that loss entails" (170), a duality embodied in the narrator's dual exile, geographic and psychic. His yearning for a "dignified life" in London, a fantasy of postcolonial self-reinvention, masks a deeper unconscious conflict: the internalization of Zanzibar's "crumbling" social order, where familial and cultural silences perpetuate cycles of repression. Afiya's refusal to discuss the past exemplifies this collective repression, her resistance a defense mechanism

that, as Freud *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense*, (1936) notes, "keeps painful memories buried" (45). Her silence mirrors Zanzibar's broader cultural amnesia, where the trauma of colonial and familial violence is "silenced and repressed," festering into symptoms of alienation and dissociation.

The narrator's psychic fragmentation is further compounded by his unstable identity as a colonial subject in London. Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) observes that the colonized psyche, severed from its cultural roots, internalizes a "crushing objecthood" (109), a dynamic reflected in the narrator's fear of erasure. His initial vision of London as a site of "satisfaction", dissolves into the realization that exile cannot heal the wounds of a fractured self. Freud's *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* analysis of anxiety as a "signal of danger" (75) clarifies this shift: the narrator's escalating fear is not merely situational but a symptom of the ego's terror at confronting the repressed, the unresolved guilt of abandoning his homeland and the spectral presence of familial trauma. The "crumbling houses" he inhabits are thus both literal and psychic, symbols of a superego that condemns him for surviving while others, like Afiya, remain trapped in silence.

Gurnah's portrayal of Zanzibar's societal dynamics aligns with Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection in *Powers of Horror* (1980), where repressed cultural traumas resurface as "sites of contamination" (4). The narrator's family, unable to articulate their history, becomes a microcosm of this abjection, their silence a collective symptom of colonial and postcolonial dislocations. Afiya's resistance to dialogue, though a form of self-preservation, perpetuates what Freud calls the "return of the repressed" (241), ensuring that unspoken traumas manifest as somatic or psychic disturbances. The narrator's fixation on London as a sanctuary mirrors Freud's (1916) theory of the "flight into illness" (358), where the ego retreats into fantasy to evade unbearable realities. Yet,

as his fear escalates into "crisis" (15), the fantasy collapses, revealing the symptom's futility: exile cannot absolve him of the past.

The novel's exploration of intergenerational trauma resonates with Cathy Caruth's analysis in *Unclaimed Experience* (1996), where she argues that trauma is "not locatable in the simple violent or original event but in the way it is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known" (4). The narrator's fragmented recollections of Zanzibar its familial betrayals and cultural clashes reflect this belatedness, his psyche trapped in a loop of unresolved mourning. Freud's notion of "melancholia" (244) in *Mourning and Melancholia*, 1917, further elucidates this state: the narrator's inability to fully grieve his lost homeland results in an internalization of its "crumbling" structures, his identity defined by absence rather than presence. His compulsive retelling of the past becomes a symptom of this melancholia, an attempt to master trauma through narration that only deepens its hold.

In *By the Sea*, Gurnah thus constructs a Freudian landscape where symptoms displacement, anxiety, silence are not individual pathologies but the embodied residue of collective trauma. The narrator's journey mirrors Freud's (1923) assertion that "neurosis is the result of a conflict between the ego and the id" (56), a conflict exacerbated by the colonial condition. His flight to London, like his fixation on "crumbling houses," is a symptom of a psyche fractured by the impossibility of return and the weight of unspoken histories. In this light, the novel becomes a testament to Freud's enduring insight: that the past, however repressed, always returns, and the psyche's wreckage is the price of survival.

Abdulrazak Gurnah's narrative in *By the Sea* delves into the corrosive dynamics of familial shame and repressed desire, as seen through Latif's account of his parents' transgressions and the intrusion of Uncle Hussein. Freud's theory of symptom formation, which posits that neurotic symptoms emerge as compromise formations between repressed

instincts and societal prohibitions (358), illuminates the psychic disintegration of Latif's family. Latif's mother, whose affairs evoke a "ripe kind of shame" (71), embodies Freud's concept of repressed libidinal energy displacing itself into socially transgressive acts. Her clandestine relationships marked by the scent of "bedrooms and intrigue" (71) signal a rebellion against the suffocating moral codes of her milieu, yet this rebellion only deepens the family's collective neurosis. Freud (1915) argues that when the ego cannot reconcile instinctual desires with external reality, "the repressed returns in the form of symptoms" (154), and here, the mother's infidelities become symptomatic of a psyche fractured by unmet needs and societal condemnation.

Latif's father, a "shameful failure" due to his alcoholism (72), further destabilizes the familial superego, leaving the children without a coherent moral framework. Freud's analysis of the superego in *The Ego and the Id* (1923) clarifies this dynamic: the father's inability to embody societal ideals of piety and restraint creates a vacuum where guilt and shame fester unchecked (56). Latif's description of waking to the "smell of alcohol" (72) haunting the house metaphorizes this psychic decay, the father's vice seeps into the familial unconscious, breeding resentment and dislocation. The arrival of Uncle Hussein, ostensibly a benign guest, exacerbates these tensions. Hussein's role as an English tutor to Hassan, Latif's brother, masks a predatory undercurrent. Hassan's drained appearance "eyes large and round with misery" (80) suggests Freud's (1920) concept of traumatic repetition, where the abused reenacts their victimization unconsciously (19). The hinted sodomy aligns with Freud's assertion that childhood sexual trauma, when repressed, resurfaces as somatic or emotional symptoms such as Hassan's guilt-ridden dissociation. Latif's witnessing of his mother's affair with Hussein, her whispered "Do you want me to come in?" (83) echoes Freud's *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis*, (1918) primal scene theory, where a child's observation of parental sexuality becomes a source of

unconscious fixation (45). Latif's "unease" and "relief" at not being discovered reveal a psyche torn between Oedipal curiosity and superego-driven shame. Freud's notion of the family romance is subverted here: rather than idealizing his parents, Latif confronts their moral collapse, internalizing their failures as his own. This internalization mirrors Frantz Fanon's 1952) analysis of colonial alienation, where the subject's identity fractures under the weight of cultural and familial degradation (109). Latif's fragmented narration oscillating between disgust and reluctant empathy reflects this psychic splitting.

The mother's perfume, a symbol of "shame," (71) and Hussein's predatory presence collectively evoke Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection (*Powers of Horror*, 1980), where societal taboos are displaced onto the vulnerable, rendering them carriers of communal disgust (4). The family's dysfunction, in Gurnah's rendering, becomes a microcosm of postcolonial Zanzibar's broader moral decay, where traditional structures crumble under the weight of repressed traumas. Freud's *The Ego and the Id*, observation that "neurosis is the result of a conflict between the ego and the id" (56) finds resonance in Latif's narrative: his mother's affairs and Hussein's predation expose the id's anarchic impulses, while the superego's impotence embodied by the father's drunkenness, leaves the ego defenseless.

Gurnah's portrayal of familial shame as a generational inheritance aligns with Cathy Caruth's analysis of trauma in *Unclaimed Experience* (1996), where unresolved histories "possess the survivor without their conscious knowledge" (4). Latif's compulsion to narrate his family's disintegration, an act of both confession and self- punishment mirrors Freud's concept of the repetition compulsion, where trauma is endlessly relived in a futile bid for mastery. The novel thus becomes a Freudian case study in symptom formation, where repressed desires, societal shame, and colonial dislocation coalesce into a collective neurosis. As Latif's family collapses, too does the illusion of cultural

coherence, leaving only the wreckage of crumbling houses and psyches, in its wake. The dysfunctionality of familial and social structures is visible enough as:

> The rumours started very quickly, and I was taunted about them by the boys at school. They said our guest had eaten Hassan, had eaten honey there. It was a way of saying something cruder, and they said it crudely too. One of Hassan's secondary school mates, who had been a former friend, chased after me in the street as I was walking to Koran school to ask me if it was true that I had a new father. (83)

These lines illustrate how the protagonist Latif, and his brother Hassan are subjected to the shame and emotional pain caused by the spread of false and malicious rumours within their society. In *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), Sigmund Freud linked shame to the action of the forces of repression (what was initially an object of pleasure becomes an object of modesty, disgust, or shame). By contrast, in ''La honte comme angoisse sociale'' (Shame as a Social Anxiety; 1929), Imre Hermann described shame as a ''social anxiety'' linked to attachment. Shame always has two aspects: one relating to individual mental functioning (anxiety about mental disintegration), and the other relating to relations with the group (anxiety about being excluded), (Mijolla, 1599). Several elements in the quote contribute to the sense of pain and shame inflicted on the characters, and as Freud in *Introductory lectures on Psychoanalysis* says it is the 'quantity of the energy' that has the negative implications on the psyche of the characters:

> Since this outcome depends mainly on the quantity of the energy which is thus absorbed, you will easily see that 'being ill' is in its essence a practical concept. But if you take up a theoretical point of view and disregard this matter of quantity, you may quite well say that we are all ill - that is, neurotic – since the preconditions for the formation of symptoms can also

be observed in normal people. (407)

The rumours about the guest having eaten Hassan, 'honey' are spread quickly, leading to taunts and mockery from the boys at school. This form of bullying is a common occurrence in dysfunctional societal units and can have a profound impact on an individual's self-esteem and mental well-being. The protagonist and Hassan are both victims of this taunting, which can be emotionally scarring. The boys use crude and derogatory language to describe the situation, which not only devalues the individuals involved but also demonstrates the insensitivity and cruelty of their peers.

> They never left Hassan alone after that, the plunderers of flesh. There was nothing gay in what they did or sought to do. They coveted his grace and his effortless, supple beauty, and muttered to him as he strolled by, offering him money and gifts and transparent predatory smiles…Hassan read it and then tore into tiny shreds. (83)

These lines mention that adults seem to smirk behind the characters. This complicity in perpetuating the rumours and not intervening to protect the victims reflects the dysfunction of the larger societal unit. The lack of support from adults can deepen the pain and shame experienced by the protagonist and Hassan. The "plunderers of flesh" who covet Hassan's beauty not only objectify him but also threaten him with predatory behavior. This not only adds to the psychological distress experienced by Hassan but also highlights how dysfunctional societies can fail to protect vulnerable individuals from harassment and exploitation. This further contributes to the sense of shame and humiliation experienced by the protagonist. The protagonist's experience of being chased by a former friend who wants to confirm the rumour about his new father highlights the pressure to conform to societal norms and expectations. It also shows how the spread of rumours can isolate and ostracize individuals, intensifying their feelings of shame and formation of symptoms:

> A symptom is a sign of, and a substitute for, an instinctual satisfaction which has remained in abeyance; it is a consequence of the process of repression. Repression proceeds from the ego when the latter—it may be at the behest of the super-ego refuses to associate itself with an instinctual cathexis which has been aroused in the id…Analysis shows that the idea often persists as an unconscious formation. (91)

Freud here clarifies that symptoms arise as compromise formations when the ego, pressured by the super-ego, represses an id-driven impulse. The repressed instinctual demand does not disappear but instead manifests symbolically as a symptom (e.g., anxiety, compulsions, somatic disturbances). The "unconscious formation" refers to the lingering presence of the repressed idea, which continues to exert influence without conscious acknowledgment. This aligns with Gurnah's portrayal of familial dysfunction in *By the Sea*, where repressed traumas (e.g., parental infidelity, alcoholism, sexual abuse) resurface as psychological or behavioral symptoms in characters like Latif, his mother, and Hassan. Freud's framework helps decode how societal and familial repression in postcolonial Zanzibar generates cycles of guilt, shame, and neurosis in Gurnah's characters.

Certainly, the theme of a dysfunctional society and its implications on the psyche of the characters is a significant aspect of Abdulrazak Gurnah's novel *By the Sea*. The dysfunctional society in the novel is primarily represented by the backdrop of Zanzibar, especially during a time of political upheaval, which includes the aftermath of the Zanzibar Revolution and its impact on the characters' lives and identities. This dysfunctional society plays a crucial role in shaping the characters' psychological experiences and contributes to the formation of various symptoms and defense mechanisms. The following lines draw the portrait of general African society, which is predatory and sexually abusive, particularly towards the children, like:

> I knew, everyone knew, that he was wooing the beautiful son of Rajab Shaaban Mahmud, the Public Works Department clerk, at whose house he had lodged on an earlier trip, and where he was still a visitor…It was more likely that the rumored gifts of money and silk cloth would be appropriate to the seduction of the vanity of such a youth. (31)

The dysfunctional society in Zanzibar is marked by the trauma of historical events. The characters in the novel, particularly Saleh and Latif, carry the collective trauma of their society's past. This trauma is repressed and shapes their psychological experiences. The dysfunctional society leads to fragmented identities among the characters. Saleh, for example, grapples with his mixed heritage as the child of an Arab trader and a local woman. This cultural and racial divide contributes to his inner conflict and identity crisis, resulting in symptoms of distress. The clash of cultures, languages, and traditions in the dysfunctional society of post-colonial Zanzibar creates a sense of alienation and estrangement for the characters. Saleh and Latif both experience alienation when they arrive in the United Kingdom, where they are perceived as outsiders. This cultural dislocation can lead to feelings of displacement and anxiety. The dysfunctional society encourages repression and silence as defense mechanisms. The characters, especially Saleh, withhold their true identities and experiences to protect themselves. This silence is a way of preserving dignity and avoiding harm, but it also leads to internal conflicts and a lack of self-expression. The dysfunctional society is marked by loss, grief, and broken family relationships. Saleh loses his wife and daughter while he is imprisoned, and Latif distances himself from his family's troubled history. These losses contribute to their psychological struggles and symptoms of grief and mourning.

Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea* illustrates Freud's theory of symptom formation through its portrayal of characters grappling with the psychological fallout of colonialism,

racism, and cultural dislocation. Freud (1926) defines a symptom as "a sign of, and a substitute for, an instinctual satisfaction which has remained in abeyance; it is a consequence of the process of repression" (91). In Saleh and Latif's experiences, symptoms emerge as repressed traumas colonial violence, familial betrayal, and racial humiliation resurface as fragmented identities, compulsive behaviors, and emotional dissociation.

Saleh's suppression of his irritation at the dismissal of Kiswahili reflects Freud's notion of repression as a defense mechanism. Here, the ego's refusal to engage with the instinctual demand for cultural validation generates a symptom: the internalized shame of colonial erasure. Saleh's adoption of a false identity to navigate asylum processes in the UK further embodies Freud's *The Uncanny*, (1919) concept of the "return of the repressed" (241). His displacement, losing his home, name, and family leaves him psychically fragmented, his survival contingent on a "fake name" that masks unresolved grief. Freud in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* argues that such repression ensures the "idea persists as an unconscious formation" (91), manifesting in Saleh's compulsive retelling of his past, a futile attempt to master trauma through narration.

Latif's rejection of his familial identity, renouncing his father and grandfather's names exemplifies Freud's theory of identification with the aggressor. By internalizing colonial narratives that frame his forebears as "drunkard failures," Latif disowns his heritage to evade the superego's condemnation. Yet, as Freud notes, repressed desires resurface symptomatically. Latif's fixation on the racial slur "grinning blackamoor" (68) reveals this dynamic: the term becomes a Freudian (1901) "screen memory" (143), condensing his humiliation into a compulsive repetition. The characters' encounters with systemic racism in the UK such as the airport official's "smiling" condescension (he should take pleasure at the discomfort of those who came before him), reflect Fanon's

analysis of colonial alienation in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), where "the slightest contact with the white world" fractures the colonized psyche (109). Freud's *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* concept of anxiety as a "reaction to the danger of loss of object" (170) clarifies Saleh's "nervousness" during this interaction: the threat of dehumanization triggers a regression to childhood trauma, where authority figures "toyed with you and humiliated you" (10). This anxiety, Freud argues, stems from the ego's inability to reconcile external danger with internalized helplessness, leaving characters like Saleh and Latif trapped in states of hypervigilance.

Gurnah's depiction of Zanzibar's post-revolutionary society, where collective memory of colonial and political violence continues to influence power structures parallels Freud's theory of collective neurosis. The revolution's trauma, repressed yet unresolved, resurfaces in present-day alliances and voting patterns, much like Freud's return of the repressed on a societal scale. Latif's academic persona in the UK, a performance of assimilation, becomes a symptom of this collective repression: his dissociation from Zanzibari identity enacts what Freud *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, (1916–17) terms a "flight into illness" (358), a retreat from cultural alienation into intellectual detachment. Ultimately, Gurnah's characters embody Freud's assertion that symptoms are "compromise formations" between instinctual needs and societal prohibitions. Saleh's suppressed rage, Latif's fractured identity, and the collective amnesia of Zanzibar's history all testify to the psychic toll of colonialism, a toll marked not by resolution, but by the relentless return of what cannot be forgotten.

One of the fundamental aspects of Gurnah's narratives is the exploration of familial powers and their influence on his characters. Family serves as both a source of support and a well-spring of conflict in Gurnah's novels. Through the Freudian lens, we can discern how family dynamics shape the characters' psyches. In *Paradise*, Gurnah delves into

the lives of Yusuf and Khalil, who grapple with their family histories and the weight of their ancestorial choices. Freudian psychoanalysis emphasizes the role of childhood experiences and family relationships in the formation of one's psyche. Memories, fears, and traumas from childhood can have a profound impact on an individual's psychological well-being. This is evident in the characters' struggles to come to terms with their family legacies and the trauma passed down through generations. Gurnah's exploration of unconscious motivations, a central aspect of psychoanalysis, is reflected in his characters' inner conflicts and desires. The characters' neuroses and anxieties manifest in covert and subtle ways throughout their daily lives. As Freud postulated, there is a far greater dimension of the psyche than what is apparent and palpable. Gurnah's characters grapple with repressed memories, unresolved conflicts, and the interplay of unconscious desires, all of which contribute to the complexity of their psychological makeup.

Beyond familial powers, Gurnah's novels also shed light on the impact of social powers on his characters' identities and senses of belonging. The characters in *By the Sea* and *Admiring Silence* face the challenges of displacement and the loss of cultural and social roots due to colonialism. Freud's psychoanalytic concepts, such as defense mechanisms, are aptly applied to Gurnah's characters as they navigate the complexities of identity in a foreign and often hostile social environment. Defense mechanisms like denial, displacement, and repression are mechanisms by which individuals cope with distressing emotions and protect their self- identities. In Gurnah's narratives, these mechanisms serve as essential tools for the characters in preserving their sanity in the face of cultural displacement. The characters' experiences in a post-colonial world are fraught with anxieties and conflicts related to their identities and sense of belonging. The struggle to reconcile their cultural heritage with the expectations of the dominant society is a recurrent theme. Freud's insights into anxiety, stemming from the conflict between instinctual

desires and societal norms, provide a lens through which we can understand the characters' inner turmoil.

The enduring legacies of colonialism in Gurnah's works give rise to deep-seated traumas that shape the characters' psyches. Colonialism is a pervasive presence in Gurnah's narratives, with its impact reverberating through generations. Freud's theory of symptom formation and repression is particularly illuminating when applied to the characters' experiences. Gurnah's characters exhibit symptoms of trauma, repression, and unresolved conflicts. These symptoms are not mere expressions of individual distress but also manifestations of broader societal traumas caused by the colonial history. The characters' symptoms are symbolic expressions of their suffering and their attempts to cope with the overwhelming weight of history. Freud's assertion that symptoms have a sense and are related to the patient's experiences is strikingly relevant in Gurnah's narratives. The characters' symptoms serve as a window into their psyches, allowing us to understand the underlying conflicts and anxieties that have been repressed. The interplay between the conscious and the unconscious mind is evident in the characters' struggles, as they grapple with the legacies of colonialism that continue to haunt them.

Memory of Departure: Abdulrazak Gurnah's literary work *Memory of Departure* delves into the tumultuous life of the central character, Hassan, who traverses a treacherous terrain of psychological challenges and traumatic encounters. Through the prism of Sigmund Freud's discourse on *The Paths to the Formation of Symptoms*, we embark on a profound exploration of how Hassan's tumultuous journey shapes the contours of his psyche and ultimately gives rise to the emergence of symptomatic manifestations. In this academic excerpt, we embark on dissecting the intricacies of Freud's psychoanalytic theories, and their application in deciphering the complexities of Hassan's odyssey within the memory and departure realms of the novel. *Memory of Departure* by Abdulrazak

Gurnah is a compelling novel that explores into the life of Hassan, a young man of mixed African Arab origins growing up in an unnamed coastal town in post-independence East Africa.

Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Memory of Departure* opens with a visceral depiction of Kenge, a place steeped in decay and despair, where "toilers and failures," "wizened prostitutes," and "painted homosexuals" (1) exist on the margins of a society fractured by colonial legacies and post-independence disillusionment. This setting, as Freud's psychoanalytic framework suggests, becomes a crucible for the formation of psychological symptoms rooted in repressed traumas and unresolved conflicts. Freud's *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1916–1917) posits that symptoms emerge as "compromise formations" between repressed desires and the ego's defenses, serving as distorted expressions of unconscious material that cannot be consciously acknowledged (358). In Kenge, the collective suffering of its inhabitants marked by addiction, prostitution, and nocturnal "howls of pain" reflects a societal neurosis where individual symptoms mirror broader structural failures. The "cheap tende" sought by drunks, for instance, functions as both a literal and symbolic escape, a Freudian "flight into illness" that temporarily numbs the psyche's anguish but perpetuates cycles of dysfunction. Freud *The Unconscious*, (1915) argues that symptoms are "the return of the repressed" (166), and in Kenge, the repressed is the trauma of colonial rupture, familial abandonment, and social ostracization.

Hassan's alienation within his family and community exemplifies Freud's *The Ego and the Id*, (1923) assertion that neurosis arises when the ego is "overwhelmed by demands from the id, the superego, and external reality" (56). The "wizened prostitutes" and "painted homosexuals" Gurnah describe are not merely social outcasts but embodiments of symptom formation: their marginalized identities and survival strategies forced into the open by societal rejection, reflect the ego's attempt to negotiate unbearable

realities. Their existence as "alternative family structures" underscores Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents*, (1930) observation that neurotic symptoms often emerge when traditional support systems collapse, leaving individuals to "create substitutive satisfactions" (42). These substitutive communities, however, are fraught with instability, as seen in the "anonymous voices howled with pain" that haunt Kenge's nights. This collective howling, a chorus of unarticulated trauma, mirrors Freud's (1920) concept of the "compulsion to repeat" (22), where repressed experiences resurface as involuntary reenactments. The streets of Kenge become a psychic landscape where individual and communal traumas merge, each voice a fragment of a larger, unprocessed history.

Gurnah's portrayal of Kenge's social decay aligns with Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) analysis of colonial alienation in, where he argues that the "colonized psyche" internalizes violence and inferiority, manifesting as "psychic disorders" (249). While Fanon critiques Freud's Eurocentric limitations, his emphasis on the structural origins of trauma complements a psychoanalytic reading of Kenge. The "toilers and failures" trapped in cycles of poverty and degradation exemplify what Fanon terms the "nervous condition" of the colonized, where systemic oppression generates symptoms like dissociation and self-destruction. Hassan's personal struggles, his familial estrangement and search for identity are thus inextricable from the broader "nervous condition" of Kenge. His psyche becomes a battleground for competing forces: the superego's internalized societal condemnation, the id's raw desperation, and the ego's faltering attempts to mediate. Freud's *Introductory Lectures*, contention that "being ill is a practical concept" (407) finds resonance here, as Hassan's symptoms, guilt, despair, compulsive self-sabotage are pragmatic responses to an environment that offers no healthy outlets for psychic tension.

The novel's depiction of Kenge's "drunks" and "prostitutes" further illustrates

Freud's theory of symptom substitution, where unresolved conflicts are displaced into socially stigmatized behaviors. The drunks' pursuit of "cheap tende" parallels Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, (1905) analysis of addiction as a "substitute for lost sexual satisfaction" (108), though in Kenge, the loss is not merely sexual but existential, a collapse of hope under the weight of systemic neglect. Similarly, the prostitutes "wizened" bodies signify a literal and metaphorical erosion of vitality, their labor a symptom of economic and psychic exploitation. Gurnah's imagery here evokes Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection in *Powers of Horror* (1980), where marginalized figures embody society's repressed fears and desires, becoming "sites of contamination" (4). These characters, rejected by family and society, internalize their abjection, their symptoms, addiction, prostitution, nocturnal anguish acting as both protest and capitulation to a world that denies them dignity.

In Hassan's narrative, the intersection of familial and societal dysfunction amplifies his psychic fragmentation. His alienation mirrors Freud's (1899) case studies of patients whose symptoms stem from childhood trauma, particularly the "family romance" (238), where idealized parental figures are revealed as flawed. Hassan's disillusionment with his family, a microcosm of Kenge's broken social order fuels his neurotic restlessness, a symptom of his unconscious struggle to reconcile his need for belonging with the reality of betrayal. Freud's *A Difficulty in the Path of Psychoanalysis*, (1917) assertion that "the ego is not master in its own house" (143) encapsulates Hassan's plight: his psyche is colonized by external forces, familial neglect, societal stigma, colonial legacies that dictate his symptoms. The "howls of pain" in Kenge's streets thus become a collective primal scream, a Freudian return of the repressed on a societal scale, where trauma denied expression erupts as cacophony.

Gurnah's novel, through its unflinching portrayal of Kenge, reveals how symptom

formation is not merely an individual pathology but a societal one. The characters' neuroses, addiction, prostitution, despair are not aberrations but logical responses to a world structured by violence and exclusion. Freud's theories, though rooted in early 20th-century European contexts, provide a framework for understanding the universal mechanisms of psychic defense, even as Gurnah's text demands a reckoning with the specific historical and cultural traumas of post-colonial East Africa. In Kenge, the line between "normal" and "neurotic" dissolves, as Freud predicts, for in a society where "anonymous voices howl with pain," every inhabitant bears the psychic scars of a collective illness.

Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Memory of Departure* paints a harrowing portrait of familial dysfunction through the relationship between Hassan and his elder brother Said, whose abuse is framed as a perverse pedagogy of hypermasculinity. Freud's *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1916–1917) posits that symptoms arise from the psyche's inability to reconcile repressed desires with external reality, forming "compromise formations that express both the repressed impulse and the defense against it" (358). Said's relentless physical and psychological torment, beating Hassan "to make him tough," forcing him into fights, and coercing him into acts of cruelty exemplifies how familial power structures become laboratories for symptom formation. The violence here is not merely disciplinary but a ritual of indoctrination into a toxic masculinity that mirrors the broader societal ethos of post-colonial East Africa. Freud's (1905) assertion that "the child's earliest years are of central importance for the development of neuroses" (40) is borne out in Hassan's case: Said's abuse awakens instincts of aggression and survival while distorting his capacity for empathy, planting seeds of psychological conflict that bloom into symptoms of guilt, self-loathing, and compulsive reenactments of violence.

Said's rationalization of his brutality as a means to "toughen" Hassan aligns with

what Alain de Mijolla describes in the *International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* (2005) as a defense mechanism that "provides logical justification for actions whose unconscious motives remain unacknowledged" (1448). This rationalization masks the sadistic pleasure Said derives from dominating Hassan, a dynamic Freud (1930) links to the "narcissism of minor differences" (61), where familial hierarchies replicate societal power imbalances. The abuse is not merely interpersonal but systemic, reflecting a culture where hypermasculinity is enforced through violence. Hassan's forced participation in sodomy and animal torture acts Said frames as rites of passage, reveals how trauma becomes internalized as symptomatic behavior. Freud's (1920) concept of "repetition compulsion" (19) clarifies this: Hassan, unable to process the trauma of his victimization, may later reenact these patterns of domination, perpetuating a cycle of abuse. The "twisted metal cables" used to beat stray cats symbolize the contorted logic of this pedagogy, violence as a tool of "strength," cruelty as a marker of masculinity inflicting psychic wounds that manifest as emotional numbness or outbursts of rage.

The family unit here functions as a micro-fascist state, as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari argue in *Anti-Oedipus* (1972), where desire is channelled into oppressive hierarchies (114). Said's abuse is a performance of power that mirrors the colonial legacy of violence, reducing Hassan's body to a site of subjugation. Freud's (1899) analysis of the Oedipus complex (262) takes on a grotesque twist: Said, as a paternal proxy, becomes both rival and role model, forcing Hassan to internalize a distorted superego that equates masculinity with brutality. This internalization generates symptoms of split identity, Hassan's simultaneous revulsion toward and compliance with Said's demands. The beatings that leave him soiled and humiliated ("his bowels opened") evoke Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection (*Powers of Horror*, 1980), where the violated body becomes a symbol of societal disgust, reinforcing Hassan's sense of worthlessness (3).

The trauma of familial abuse is compounded by the absence of maternal protection. Hassan's mother, though pleading "Leave him be!" (13), is herself a victim of patriarchal violence, knocked down by the father's "arms shooting out, smashing the air with fury." Her powerlessness mirrors the societal failure to protect marginalized individuals, leaving Hassan doubly abandoned betrayed by both parents. Freud's (1899) concept of the "family romance" (238) underscores this disillusionment: Hassan's idealized image of family shatters, replaced by a reality where love and violence are entwined. This betrayal fosters symptoms of chronic mistrust and emotional withdrawal, as Frantz Fanon observes in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), where colonial subjects internalize their degradation, leading to "psychic alienation" (109). Hassan's desire to escape Kenge can thus be read as a symptom of this alienation, a flight from the external and internal prisons of familial and societal trauma.

The hypermasculine ethos enforced by Said reflects what R.W. Connell *Masculinities*, (1995) terms "hegemonic masculinity" (77), a social construct that legitimizes male dominance through violence. Hassan's coerced participation in sodomy and fighting rituals meant to "prove" his masculinity, illustrates how this hegemony is reproduced intergenerationally. Freud's theory of identification explains Hassan's conflicted psyche: to survive, he must identify with the aggressor (Said), internalizing his abuser's values even as they erode his sense of self. This split generates symptoms of dissociation, where Hassan's actions (beating cats, fighting boys) become mechanized performances of masculinity, devoid of authentic desire. Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery* (1992) links such dissociation to the "adaptation of the victim to prolonged, repeated trauma" (96), a survival mechanism that nonetheless fractures the psyche. In Hassan's narrative, the convergence of familial abuse, societal hypermasculinity, and colonial residue creates a psychic landscape where symptom formation is inevitable. His

flight from Kenge, the "desire to escape" is both a symptom of despair and a fragile act of resistance, a bid to reclaim agency in a world that has reduced him to a vessel of inherited trauma. Freud's *The Ego and the Id*, (1923) dictum that "neurosis is the result of a conflict between the ego and the id" (56) finds stark resonance here: Hassan's ego, besieged by the id's rage and the superego's internalized brutality, seeks refuge in flight, a symptom that embodies both the pathology of his environment and the flicker of hope for liberation.

This dynamic reflects how power can be perpetuated within a family structure, with the older sibling exerting control over the younger one. Additionally, Said's sexual exploitation of other boys and his attempt to involve Hassan in these activities demonstrate a disturbing power dynamic where Said manipulates and coerces younger and more vulnerable individuals. This exploitation, rooted in the power Said holds as the elder brother, has the potential to cause deep psychological harm to Hassan. The physical violence, psychological manipulation, and exploitation endured by Hassan within the family context can lead to a complex range of psychological impacts on his psyche. These may include feelings of powerlessness, self-doubt, and low self-esteem. The constant exposure to violence and abuse may normalize such behaviors for Hassan, leading to potential long-term trauma and emotional scars. This charged up psyche of Hassan witnesses the epitome of harassment and cruelty, when Said dies in a fire accident at home:

> Someone came running in with a bucket of water. My mother was weeping hysterically in somebody's arms. She turned round and pointed at me, screaming hysterically. I didn't hear what she said…They all beat him. I was five. He was my friend; he was my brother. He was my only friend and my only brother. Why did they blame me? (14)

The death of Hassan's brother, Said, in a fire accident is a pivotal moment that further disrupts the family's harmony. His parents' unjust blame on Hassan for Said's death

creates an invisible rift that persists for years, illustrating the family's inability to provide emotional support and love. Hassan turned up more vulnerable and weaker after this incident, his father loathed him. Hassan narrates that "I lived in terror of him. Sometimes I cried as soon as I was in his presence" (15). One of the harrowing incidents about the power dynamics that this novel portrays is the aftermaths of Saids death:

> I saw him holding my mother's wrist and whispering. It was the first time I had seen him touch her like that. I shut my eyes tightly and I heard his body moving on top of her. I heard him groaning and muttering, his voice coming thick and muffled off the bed…I started to crawl towards her, feeling weak and feeble from the fever… I could only feel terror and loathing for the world they had brought me into. (16)

The quote depicts a highly dysfunctional family characterized by abusive power dynamics and the profound psychological impact on the characters. The father's alcoholism, violence, and sexual assault on the mother exemplify a deeply disturbed family structure. The mother's apparent submission and inability to protect herself or her child reflect a complex interplay of fear, powerlessness, and perhaps a history of abuse. The grandmother's passive response, locking herself away, suggests a disconnection from the family's suffering or an unwillingness to intervene. From a psychoanalytical perspective, these lines showcase how traumatic experiences within the family can shape the psyche of its members. The child who witnesses this horrific incident is likely to suffer from severe emotional trauma, which could manifest as symptoms like anxiety, depression, or even post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Memory of Departure* delves into the generational transmission of trauma through the figure of Hassan's father, whose violent outbursts

rooted in his own unresolved guilt and societal shame, exemplify Freud's (1916-17) theory of symptom formation as the "return of the repressed" (274). The father's history of alleged pedophilia and exploitation "Is it true that he used to kidnap little black children and sell them to the Arabs of Sur?" (15) marks him as a man haunted by his own transgressions, his violence toward Hassan and his wife a distorted reenactment of his repressed self-loathing. Freud (1915) argues that when the ego fails to reconcile forbidden desires with societal morality, "the repressed finds a way back in the form of symptoms" (154). The father's brutality, kicking Hassan until "his bowels opened" is not merely physical abuse but a symptom of his own psychic disintegration, a violent discharge of shame that mirrors the patriarchal violence.

Seedat Hassan in *Contextualizing Gender-Based Violence in Africa*, (2019), critiques in African societies, where "40% of men admit to physical violence against partners" and "68% of women report psychological abuse" (45). This cyclical trauma, normalized under patriarchal norms, transforms the family into a theater of repressed rage, where the father's unresolved past metastasises into familial dysfunction. Hassan's mother, though ostensibly a victim, perpetuates this cycle through psychological projection, blaming Hassan for familial disgrace you had failed them and shamed them, why doesn't he leave. Peter Barry in *Beginning Theory* (2002) defines projection as a defense mechanism where "negative aspects of the self are disowned and attributed to others" (98), a dynamic Freud links to the superego's tyranny. By scapegoating Hassan, the mother externalizes her own helplessness and complicity, weaponizing guilt to evade accountability. Freud (1936) notes that such projections arise when "the ego's defenses against instinctual demands become entangled with reality-testing" (120), forcing Hassan to internalize a "self-hate and remorse" that crystallizes into psychic symptoms. Hassan's haunting confession "They made me live years of guilt for a wrong I had not done" (24)

reflects the internalization of familial and societal condemnation, a process Frantz Fanon observes in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), where colonial subjects absorb degradation until "the psyche becomes alienated from itself" (109). Hassan's guilt, weaponized by his family, morphs into a compulsive reenactment of violence, as seen in his ritualistic killing and burial of a crab, an act Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, (1920) might interpret as a "repetition compulsion" (19), where trauma is relived symbolically to assert control.

The grandmother's silent complicity "silently witnessing all and even adding fuel to such fire underscores the collective failure of familial structures to protect Hassan. Julia Kristeva in *Powers of Horror* (1980) theorizes such complicity as a form of abjection, where society's "unspoken horrors are displaced onto the vulnerable" (4), rendering them carriers of communal shame. The father's violence, the mother's blame, and the grandmother's passivity collectively construct a "traumatized body" (24) for Hassan, whose psyche fractures under the weight of inherited sin. Freud (1916–17) emphasizes that "infantile experiences, though often neglected, are foundational to neurosis" (407), and Hassan's childhood marked by beatings, scapegoating, and emotional abandonment, creates a psychic blueprint where love and violence are inextricable. His mother's finger of blame (17) becomes a Freudian *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901) "screen memory" (43), a condensed symbol of familial betrayal that haunts his adult relationships.

The novel's depiction of intimate partner violence and patriarchal control aligns with R.W. Connell's analysis of "hegemonic masculinity" (*Masculinities*, 1995), where violence is legitimized as a tool of domination (77). The father's abuse, framed as discipline, reflects a societal ethos where masculinity is performatively enforced through brutality, a dynamic Judith Herman in *Trauma and Recovery* (1992) links to the "adaptation to captivity" (86), wherein victims internalize their oppressors' logic. Hassan's coerced participation in acts of cruelty, such as sodomizing boys or beating cats, mirrors

this internalization, his actions becoming symptomatic of a psyche colonized by violence. Freud's *The Ego and the Id*, (1923) concept of identification with the aggressor (60) clarifies this: to survive, Hassan adopts the very behaviors that traumatize him, his psyche splitting into victim and perpetrator.

Hassan's eventual flight from Kenge embodies what Freud (1916–17) terms a "flight into illness" (358), a desperate bid to escape the psychic prison of familial and societal trauma. Yet this flight is itself a symptom, a manifestation of despair and a fragile assertion of agency. As Fanon argues, the colonized subject's desire to escape is both a rejection of degradation and a "neurotic solution" (203), a paradox embodied in Hassan's ambivalent departure. His journey, like his burial of the crab, is a ritual of mourning and defiance, a somatic attempt to bury the "waste and sin" (24) forced upon him. In Freudian terms, Hassan's symptoms, guilt, dissociation, compulsive violence are not individual pathologies but the embodied residue of a collective illness, where familial and societal structures collude to reproduce trauma across generations.

Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Memory of Departure* situates its unnamed coastal town as a microcosm of post-independence East Africa's moral and psychic decay, where power imbalances manifest as normalized sexual violence and predation. Freud's (1916–17) theory of symptom formation, particularly his assertion that repressed traumas resurface as "compromise formations" (358), illuminates the cyclical abuse depicted in the novel. The town's "gritty and unflinching" reality marked by poverty and the casual brutality of men like Hassan's father and brother reflects a societal superego that sanctions violence as a tool of domination. Freud (1915) argues that symptoms arise when "the repressed instinctual impulse finds a substitute satisfaction" (153), and in Gurnah's town, this substitution takes the form of sodomy as a perverse assertion of power. The predatory man on the bridge, with his "fleshy grin" and tobacco-stained teeth (22) embodies Freud's *The*

Uncanny (1919) concept of the "return of the repressed" (241): his leering presence is not an aberration but a symptom of a society where hypermasculinity is synonymous with cruelty.

The intergenerational transmission of trauma is starkly evident in Hassan's father, who boasts of raping a drunk "I fucked his arse many times" (53) and frames this violence as a source of pride. Freud's analysis of repressed guilt in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930) clarifies this dynamic: the father's brutality is a "displacement of aggression" (81), redirecting his self-loathing onto vulnerable others. Judith Butler's *Bodies That Matter* (1993) extends this analysis, arguing that sodomy operates as a "mechanism of power" (15) that reinforces hierarchical dominance. The father's confession, delivered in a drunken stupor, reveals how his violence is both a reenactment of his own degradation and a performance of masculinity sanctioned by a society that equates strength with predation. Seedat's *Gender-Based Violence in Post-Colonial Contexts*, (2018) research on violence in African societies, which notes that "boys abused in childhood are at increased risk of becoming abusers" (1015), underscores the cyclical nature of this trauma. Hassan's brother Said, who begins sodomizing boys at six, exemplifies this cycle: his abuse is a Freudian repetition compulsion an unconscious attempt to master his own victimization by becoming the aggressor.

The normalization of grooming and entrapment in the town reflects what Douglas W. Pryor terms "pre-meditated manipulation" in *Unspeakable Acts* (1996), where abusers deploy "seduction, misrepresentation, or enticements" (123) to exploit children. Said's coercion of Hassan into acts of cruelty, forcing him to chase stray cats and beat them with twisted metal cables mirrors this predatory logic. Freud's (1936) concept of "identification with the aggressor" (113) explains Hassan's internalization of this violence: to survive, he adopts the behaviors of his abusers, his psyche fragmenting into victim and perpetrator.

Natalie Bennett's (2005) analysis of grooming as "entrapment" (957) further contextualizes this dynamic, revealing how abuse is systematized into a "game" (10) that entrenches power imbalances. The town's adults, lounging at street corners and mocking victims, embody a collective superego that legitimizes this predation, their indifference a form of societal symptom formation.

Hassan's traumatic exposure to this environment generates symptoms of hypervigilance and dissociation. His description of the predatory man on the bridge as "my nightmare of a sadistic bugger, a rapist" (22) evokes Freud's (1926) theory of anxiety as "a signal of danger" (75), where the psyche remains trapped in a state of anticipatory terror. This anxiety is compounded by the absence of protective figures his father's complicity, his mother's helplessness leaving Hassan to internalize what Frantz Fanon (1952) calls "psychic alienation" (109), a splitting of the self under sustained degradation. The novel's surreal depiction of the town, "bordering on the surreal," mirrors this fractured psyche, where reality itself becomes a nightmare.

Gurnah's critique of societal complicity culminates in the victim-blaming Hassan endures, a dynamic Peter Barry links to projection in *Beginning Theory* (2002), where communities "disown negative aspects of themselves by attributing them to others" (98). The town's ridicule of Hassan rather than condemning his abusers, reflects a collective defense mechanism that preserves the status quo. Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents* assertion that "society's prohibitions generate neurosis" (97) resonates here: the town's moral decay is not an exception but a symptom of a broader societal failure to reconcile its repressed violence. In this light, Hassan's trauma is both personal and collective, a manifestation of a world where power is wielded as predation, and survival demands complicity in one's own degradation.

The impact of gaze and societal pressures that too perpetuated onto child characters

is what makes them more vulnerable. Gurnah most importantly portrays the sexually corrupt society and draws on how these children, if guarded by the family, even suffer psychological distraught and those children who suffer abuses in the family are more prone to abuses in the society. Presenting two examples here one of Hassan; a boy, and Zakiya; a girl, we see how Hassan, who is abused by family, is also abused in the society as well, on the bridge, by a schoolmate named Sud, and the brothel keeper, these all try to sexually humiliate Hassan. Later on, Hassan "would dream of that Oldman's loathing eyes, fierce" (34). Zakiya on the other hand is kept away from the male gaze to raise her safe, even then a school teacher impregnates her and shames her in her tender age. Bakari's household is equally fraught with distressing family dynamics. The character Bakari exhibits severe anger and violence within his family, particularly towards his wife and children. The act of setting his wife on fire is an extreme manifestation of this violence. Bakari's abusive behavior is emblematic of a power dynamic that oppresses and subjugates those weaker or more vulnerable within the family structure. The fact that Bakari's wife and children endure repeated physical and emotional abuse suggests that they are trapped in a cycle of violence from which they struggle to break free. Bakari's physical assaults and his fiery assault on his wife are displays of extreme dominance, often associated with a patriarchal power structure, where the husband or father asserts ultimate control over family members. In the context of Bakari's family, this power dynamic creates a toxic and perilous environment, where family members live in fear and experience trauma on a regular basis. Bakari's aggression, his resorting to physical violence, and the sense of power he derives from exerting dominance over his family members have the potential to have long-lasting effects on their psyches.

Within the societal context, power dynamics are palpable. Bwana Ahmed, Hassan's rich uncle in Nairobi, wields significant economic and social influence. Ahmed's

actions reflect the wider post-colonial power structures, where individuals like him maintain control and authority. Hassan's visit to Nairobi and Ahmed's eventual rejection demonstrates how economic power and social status can impact an individual's destiny. In psychoanalytical terms, the societal power dynamics can be seen as external stressors that shape Hassan's identity and self-perception. The town's harsh conditions and Ahmed's contempt for Hassan's family contribute to his feelings of inadequacy and the desire to escape. And before the night of departure, Hassan being briefed by his father about the ruthlessness of travels and unknown societies, it makes Hassan tremble and fear on the thoughts of leaving home and facing the evil society. All these elements affect the psyche of Hassan, and he develops certain symptoms of fear and guilt, which his psyche represses for a certain amount of time and later on in the journey and away from family is evident.

The interplay of family, society, and colony has a profound impact on Hassan's psyche. He grapples with a complex web of emotions, including guilt, shame, anger, and desire. These psychological struggles affect his decision-making and actions throughout the narrative. Hassan's psyche becomes a battleground for conflicting desires and emotions. His choice to leave for England, abandon his family, and later find a position on a ship represents his attempts to escape from the psychological turmoil. His decision to pursue a government- funded teaching position and his eventual departure to Asia demonstrate the internal conflicts he faces. In *Memory of Departure*, Abdulrazak Gurnah presents a compelling exploration of family, society, and colony in post-independence East Africa and their profound impact on the protagonist, Hassan. The novel offers a psychoanalytical lens through which to understand the formation of symptoms and their impact on Hassan's psyche. The family's dysfunctionality, societal power dynamics, and the enduring legacy of colonialism all contribute to the psychological struggles that Hassan faces. This critical evaluation underscores the novel's ability to capture the complexities

of human experience and the multifaceted interplay of internal and external forces on an individual's development.

Chapter 5

Common Neurotic State in Child Characters

Building on the exploration of symptom formation in Abdulrazak Gurnah's characters in the previous chapter, shaped by the interplay of dysfunctional familial, social, cultural, and colonial systems, this chapter shifts focus to the psychological consequences of these cumulative traumas: the emergence of a *common neurotic state*. While the previous chapter traced how external systems generate symptoms of psychic fragmentation, this chapter interrogates how these symptoms crystallize into enduring neuroses, as defined by Freudian psychoanalysis, and how they manifest in the lived experiences of Gurnah's child protagonists. Freud's *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1917) conceptualization of neurosis as a "compromise between the repressed and the repressing forces" (344) provides a framework for understanding how Yusuf, Hassan, Hussein, and others child characters internalize and negotiate the violence of their environments. Their neuroses, far from isolated pathologies, emerge as legacies of colonial alienation, patriarchal tyranny, and fractured kinship, systems that warp their capacity for emotional connection and selfhood.

In *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, Freud posits that the common neurotic state arises from unresolved psychic conflicts, often rooted in childhood experiences of fear, repression, and unresolved attachment. Freud (1917) writes: "The neurotic…is in essence a piece of antiquity, a child, and even in the midst of his adult personality he retains his infantile traits" (352). This formulation resonates profoundly in Gurnah's novels, where child characters like Yusuf (*Paradise*), Hassan (*Memory of Departure*), and Hussein (*By The Sea*) are burdened by traumas that arrest their emotional development, trapping them in cycles of anxiety, dissociation, and compulsive repetition. Freud's (1917) assertion that neurosis stems from the "conflict between the ego and the id" (358), a clash between

conscious selfhood and repressed desires, illuminates how Gurnah's children navigate worlds where familial and colonial violence disrupt their nascent identities.

For instance, Yusuf's displacement into servitude in *Paradise* exemplifies Freud's (1917) observation that neurosis often arises when "the ego avoids a rupture by deforming itself…through restrictions and symptoms" (359). Sold by his father to settle a debt, Yusuf internalizes his exploitation as a form of 'deformed' selfhood, oscillating between obedience to his master, Aziz, and repressed rage at his abandonment. His recurring nightmares haunted by huge dogs" with "yellow teeth" digging into his belly (124), reflect the neurotic's fixation on unresolved childhood trauma, a psychic wound that Freud (1917) likens to "a splinter in the flesh" (361). Similarly, Hassan in *Memory of Departure* embodies Freud's 'anxiety neurosis', his terror of his abusive father rendering him perpetually hypervigilant: "I lived in terror of him. Sometimes I cried as soon as I was in his presence" (15). When Bessel van der Kolk (2014) says trauma is both *psychological* and *physiological*, he means that a traumatic event does not only affect our thoughts or emotions, it actually changes the way our brain and body function. Amygdala's heightened reactivity as amygdala is the brain's alarm system. After traumatic experience(s), it becomes oversensitive, so even harmless stimuli can trigger intense fear or anxiety as in Hassan's case above. In literary terms, this explains why Gurnah's characters sometimes overreact to small triggers. they're not being irrational; their nervous system has been rewired by trauma.

Gurnah's child characters, however, do not merely replicate Freud's Eurocentric models of neurosis; their suffering is uniquely shaped by the intersection of environmental conditions like (poverty, war, colonial disruption, displacement, family instability, abuse, neglect), Sociocultural influences like (norms, beliefs, community narratives, colonial legacies), Interpersonal dynamics like (parent–child bonding, peer relationships, exposure

to violence), . As Seedat (2005) notes, "exposure to violence in childhood…reduces the ability to form emotional relationships and enhances the likelihood of psychopathology" (5). In *By The Sea* Hussein's neurotic withdrawal, his "habit of silence, as if words themselves were a betrayal" (132), stems not only from familial neglect but from the broader violence of German colonial rule, which erases his cultural referents. Here, neurosis as Muponde, (2005) writes, becomes a survival mechanism, a "self-defense against…domination" (12), albeit one that calcifies into psychic attrition. Gurnah's portrayal of these children challenges the myth of childhood innocence, reframing it as a battleground where neurosis is both a wound and a weapon. Their stories, steeped in Freudian anxiety yet transcending his clinical framework, reveal how colonial and patriarchal systems engineer neurosis as a condition of subjugation, and how resilience flickers in the interstices of their fractured selves.

Yet, to view these child characters solely through the lens of victimhood would be to overlook their capacity for agency, resilience, and tactical self-fashioning. While much of Gurnah's fiction foregrounds the vulnerabilities of child characters, it is equally important to recognise their active agency, which often emerges in subtle yet impactful ways. In *By the Sea*, Saleh Omar's boyhood in Zanzibar is marked by a capacity for adaptive negotiation, memorising oral narratives and leveraging kinship ties in ways that echo Masten's Ordinary *Magic: Resilience in Development* (2014) concept of 'adaptive functioning under chronic stress.' In *Admiring Silence*, the unnamed narrator's childhood is shaped by colonial residue and parental authority, yet he develops a quiet tactical intelligence, using selective muteness as both a protective shield and a form of resistance, aligning with Scott's *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (1990) notion of 'hidden transcripts' and Twum-Danso Imoh's (2012) idea of African children as 'situated agents.' Similarly, in *Paradise*, Yusuf's mastery of linguistic skills, trade

etiquette, and caravan diplomacy reflects Ungar's *The Social Ecology of Resilience: A Handbook of Theory and Practice* (2012) theory of 'ecological resilience,' as he mediates between instinctual desires and environmental demands, a mature ego function in Freudian terms. Together, these instances reveal that Gurnah's child characters are not passive recipients of trauma but active negotiators of their circumstances, capable of self-fashioning, strategic withholding, and adaptive survival within the constraints of their socio-historical contexts.

While the analysis draws upon Freud's concept of collective neurosis to trace the transformation of repressed instincts into symptomatic behaviour, it also recognises that psychic states in postcolonial and diasporic contexts cannot be exhaustively explained through a single theoretical lens. In Gurnah's fictional worlds, children's formative experiences are shaped by a constellation of cultural, historical, and environmental forces, some identifiable, others emergent or only partially theorised. These include culturally embedded silences surrounding slavery and sexual violence, disorientations of geographical and identity displacement, intergenerational transmission of traumas without direct memory, hybrid forms of guilt arising from the coloniser-colonised nexus, and sensory triggers that act as anchors for collective memory. Such phenomena, while resonating with Freudian notions of repression, exceed his original formulations and invite an expanded interdisciplinary frame that synthesises psychoanalysis with postcolonial theory, ethnographic insight, and literary hermeneutics. This layered approach preserves psychoanalytical rigor while accommodating the specificity of Gurnah's narrative and the lived realities it refracts.

All such traumatic events that child characters in Gurnah's works are subjected to, the toll on their psyche leads them to the neurotic state, as is identified in psychoanalysis and particularly with Sigmund Freud as he asserts in *The Introductory Lectures on*

Psychoanalysis "the theory of the neuroses is psychoanalysis itself" (431). Jonathan Lear (2015) in his work named *Freud* talks about neurosis like, Freud believed that as we transition from childhood, a substantial portion of our discontent and lack of freedom results from self-imposed factors. This stems from a unique interplay of both nature and nurture, causing the psyche to be divided into distinct, often conflicting components. Freud's interpretation of this phenomenon is his account of neurosis, a distinctly human form of misery. Interestingly, this aligns with Plato's philosophy, as outlined in the *Republic*, where Socrates contends that the best life is a just one, characterized by the harmonious collaboration of psychic elements. Conversely, lives deemed unjust by Socrates involve internal conflicts among psyche components, leading to unhappiness, resembling Freud's concept of neurosis (18). Freud in his work *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, from one of his lectures *The Paths to Formation of Symptom* talks about neurosis in practical and theoretical senses to demonstrate the basic condition and precondition of one being in neurotic state, he says:

> Since this outcome depends mainly on the quantity of the energy which is thus absorbed, you will easily see that 'being ill' is in its essence a practical concept. But if you take up a theoretical point of view and disregard this matter of quantity, you may quite well say that we are all ill - that is, neurotic – since the preconditions for the formation of symptoms can also be observed in normal people. (407)

In this extract Sigmund Freud's *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, Freud discusses the concept of being ill or neurotic from both practical and theoretical perspectives, particularly in the context of the formation of symptoms. Freud suggests that, from a practical standpoint, being ill or neurotic is essentially a concept based on the quantity of energy absorbed by an individual. Here, "energy" refers to psychic energy, and the concept

revolves around the idea that the process of being unwell involves the mind absorbing or expending a certain amount of psychological energy. This implies that the experience of illness has practical implications and consequences. Freud introduces a theoretical perspective, emphasizing the role of quantity in this context. He suggests that when one considers the theoretical framework and disregards the specific quantity of energy involved, it becomes conceivable to argue that everyone is neurotic. This is because the preconditions for the formation of symptoms, which are characteristic of neurosis, can be observed even in normal individuals. The term 'preconditions for the formation of symptom's refers to the psychological factors and processes that contribute to the manifestation of symptoms associated with neurotic conditions.

The foundational paradigm in Freud's psychoanalytic canon elucidates the ubiquitous struggles of the human psyche, rooted in unconscious conflicts arising from repressed desires and unresolved developmental tensions arising from different dimensions. Freud's structural model of the psyche elucidates neurosis as a dynamic conflict between unconscious drives and societal constraints. In *The Ego and the Id* (1923), he writes: "The ego…is a poor creature owing service to three master's and consequently menaced by three dangers: the external world, the libido of the id, and the severity of the super-ego" (56). This tripartite struggle between the id's primal urges, the ego's pragmatic negotiations, and the superego's moral policing, frames neurosis not as pathology but as an inevitable tension in human development. For Gurnah's child characters, this 'menaced' ego manifests in their fractured responses to colonial and patriarchal violence. Yusuf in *Paradise*, for instance, embodies Freud's "poor creature," torn between his id's longing for autonomy (e.g., his attraction to the rebellious Amina) and the superego's internalized guilt over betraying his exploitative guardian, Aziz.

Freud further posits that neurotic symptoms emerge as compromise formations

between repressed desires and defensive censorship. In *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1917), he explains: "The symptom is…a substitute for something that is held back by repression…a kind of compensation for the unsatisfied drive" (299). These substitutes, phobias, compulsions, somatic disturbances symbolize unconscious conflicts while keeping them disguised. Hassan's paralyzing fear of his father in *Memory of Departure* "I lived in terror of him…" exemplifies this dynamic. His terror is both a literal response to abuse and a symbolic displacement of repressed rage, a compensation for his inability to confront patriarchal authority directly. Freud's (1917) notion of displacement "the drive's aim is redirected toward a substitute object" (312), mirrors Hassan's neurotic fixation on minor transgressions (e.g., obsessive guilt over trivial mistakes), which masks his deeper, inadmissible hatred. The developmental roots of neurosis, Freud argues, lie in unresolved psychosexual crises. In *The Disposition to Obsessional Neurosis* (1913), he states: "The neurotic conflict…dates back to a privation in childhood, a non- fulfillment of one of those indispensable childhood wishes…which are rooted in the infantile constitution" (325).

For Gurnah's children, this privation is compounded by colonial dislocation. Freudian (1926) anxiety "the reaction to a situation of danger…[signaling] helplessness in the face of overwhelming trauma" (166), permeates Gurnah's narratives. Yusuf's nightmares in *Paradise* and Hassan's hypervigilance mirror Freud's assertion that "anxiety is the original reaction to helplessness…and is reproduced in every situation of helplessness thereafter" (137). Their neuroses, thus, are not mere personal failings but historical inscriptions of colonial and familial systems that weaponize helplessness. Freud's framework illuminates how Gurnah's child characters internalize systemic violence as neurotic conflict. Yusuf's id-superego struggle (autonomy vs. obedience), Hassan's displaced rage, and Hussein's repressed trauma all reflect Freudian

'compromises' between survival and selfhood. Yet Gurnah expands Freud's Eurocentric model by situating neurosis within the material realities of colonialism, where the external world is not merely familial but a racialized hierarchy. The Freudian (1923) ego's "service to three masters" (56) becomes, in Gurnah's fiction, service to colonial exploiters, abusive patriarchs, and eroding cultural identities. Neurosis, here, is both a psychic wound and a testament to resilience, as children like Yusuf and Hassan deploy symptoms as covert resistance, a Freudian return of the repressed that defies total subjugation.

Lina A. Kolesnichenko et. el state, according to WHO data, the prevalence of neurotic disorders has risen 24-fold over the past 65 years, with depression and anxiety emerging as the most prevalent mental health conditions. In 2015, the global prevalence of depression and anxiety was recorded at 5.1% (44.3 million) and 4.3% (37.3 million), respectively. Women were found to experience these disorders 50% more frequently than men. These conditions are psychogenic in origin and reversible in nature, often presenting as emotional instability, heightened fatigue, disruptions to overall well-being, and various somato-vegetative dysfunctions. Despite elevated levels of neuroticism, individuals generally maintain a realistic sense of self and stable self-esteem. However, such conditions can contribute to the development of neuroses, which adversely impact mental health (2689). This is illustrated by Freud in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930) as:

> The liberty of the individual is no gift of civilization. It was greatest before there was any civilization. […] The development of civilization imposes restrictions on [instinctual liberty], and justice demands that no one shall escape those restrictions. What has once been decided in the struggle between the urge for individual freedom and the demands of cultural life becomes permanent in the cultural compulsion to repeat. (42-43).

This passage underscores Freud's argument that civilization enforces collective moral

codes that suppress primal instincts (e.g., libidinal or aggressive drives), creating a "cultural compulsion to repeat" restrictive norms. The "common neurotic state" arises as individuals internalize this repression, negotiating between their instinctual desires (id) and the demands of societal morality (superego). For Gurnah's child characters, this dynamic is amplified by colonial and patriarchal systems that weaponize cultural norms. Yusuf's internalized guilt in *Paradise* over his attraction to Amina, for example, reflects Freud's "cultural compulsion" his desire clashes with the superegoic injunctions of loyalty to his master, Aziz, and the broader colonial order. Freud's framing of neurosis as a collective phenomenon no one shall escape those restrictions aligns with Seedat's (2005) observation that childhood exposure to systemic violence perpetuates cycles of psychopathology across generations (5). Neurosis, here, is not merely personal but a symptom of civilizational violence. This universality reveals how the pressures of civilization inevitably induce neurosis at the cost of societal cohesion. Modern psychoanalysis, building on Freud's insights, recognizes how early attachment disruptions, relational traumas, and sociocultural dynamics amplify neurotic predispositions, with thinkers like Bowlby and Winnicott expanding its scope.

However, the social understanding of neurosis is understood through the distinction between 'manifest clinical neurosis' and the 'concealed neurotic process' as understood by Lawrence S. Kubie (2017). Manifest neuroses are overt and often debilitating, primarily affecting the individual who suffers from them. This form of neurosis typically drives individuals to seek help as the impact of their psychological distress becomes unbearable. In contrast, the concealed neurotic process, while asymptomatic on the surface, integrates itself into the individual's personality and behavior in ways that are socially functional or even commendable, at least temporarily. However, this form of neurosis often inflicts significant harm on others- family, colleagues, or society at large, while the individual

remains resistant to recognizing or addressing it. Over time, concealed neuroses can be more destructive than their clinical counterparts, as their subtlety enables them to persist and intensify unnoticed (174). This concept of concealed neurosis resonates profoundly within Abdulrazak Gurnah's literary world, where characters often navigate profound emotional, psychological, and social disruptions. Gurnah's protagonists, such as Salim in *Gravel Heart* and Yusuf in *Paradise*, exhibit behaviors and thought patterns indicative of concealed neuroses. They embody the unresolved tensions and unconscious defense mechanisms shaped by familial, cultural, and colonial influences.

Ahead we will discuss how Salims repressed emotions, driven by his father's absence and his mother's silence, reflect a neurotic process concealed beneath the veneer of functionality. His reluctance to embrace intimacy, coupled with his internalized sense of shame and inadequacy, mirrors the resistance characteristic of concealed neuroses. His avoidance of personal confrontation and reliance on letters to express emotions further illustrate his subconscious defense against deeper psychological pain. This masked neuroticism disrupts his relationships and perpetuates a cycle of alienation, harming both himself and those around him. Yusuf's silent submission to the exploitative structures around him; his enslavement, abandonment, and alienation reflects an internalized neurotic process shaped by trauma. His passivity and inability to assert agency can be seen as a defensive adaptation, masking the deeper wounds inflicted by colonial and familial betrayals. The absence of overt rebellion does not signify psychological health; rather, it underlines the hidden neurosis that eventually manifests as a loss of identity and belonging.

Gurnah's works highlight the destructive potential of concealed neuroses in contexts of cultural and colonial dislocation. His characters often embody behaviors lauded as socially useful or 'normal' (e.g., Yusuf's obedience or Salim's diligence in London), masking the underlying neuroses that ultimately erode their sense of self and damage their

relationships. This aligns with the theoretical argument that such neuroses, though initially adaptive, lead to significant harm over time. In the psychoanalytic framework applied here, Gurnah's narratives challenge readers to recognize the hidden costs of such neurotic adaptations. The external functionality of these characters, much like the socially acceptable forms of neurosis described in the excerpt, belies the psychological toll and eventual destruction wrought by unresolved internal conflicts. These insights not only deepen the psychoanalytic exploration of Gurnah's characters but also affirm the broader relevance of concealed neurosis as a critical lens for analyzing literature. By revealing how these hidden neuroses shape individual and collective fates, Gurnah situates his characters within larger systems of oppression and estrangement, emphasizing the enduring impact of unconscious processes on human lives.

The common neurotic state, therefore, transcends its Freudian origins to offer an enduring framework for dissecting modern dilemmas of identity, alienation, and societal discontents, reaffirming its relevance in understanding the complexities of the human condition that we examine in this chapter through the characters of Abdulrazak Gurnah. Peter Tyrer et. el in their (2016) work state that the General Neurotic Syndrome Scale aims to integrate symptomatic and personality traits into a cohesive framework, providing clinicians and researchers with valuable insights into the long- term progression of anxiety and depressive disorders (195). Sigmund Freud in his seminal work, *The Introductory lectures to Psychoanalysis*, in the lecture of 'Common Neurotic State' writes about neurosis as, "With the peculiar characteristics of neurotic people, their incomprehensible reactions to human intercourse and external influences, their irritability, their incalculable and inexpedient behaviour?" (430).

Neurotic individuals exhibit distinct characteristics marked by emotional instability, heightened sensitivity, and an inclination toward negative emotions such as

anxiety and moodiness. Their reactions in social interactions can be perplexing, often driven by an intense fear of rejection or abandonment, leading to defensive or anxious responses. External influences amplify their irritability, with heightened sensitivity to stimuli and difficulty adapting to change. The incalculable and seemingly inexpedient nature of their behavior arises from rapid mood swings, chronic worry, and an inability to effectively manage stress.

Freud's concept of the common neurotic state provides a compelling framework for analyzing the characters in Abdulrazak Gurnah's literary oeuvre, particularly in the context of their psychological struggles and the sociocultural pressures they navigate. Freud's notion that neurosis emerges from repressed desires, internal conflicts, and the tension between individual psyche and societal expectations resonates deeply with Gurnah's characters, whose lives are marked by displacement, colonial trauma, familial discord, and the weight of unfulfilled aspirations. However, the application of this concept to Gurnah's characters must be critically examined for its limitations and adaptations within the unique sociohistorical and cultural contexts his works portray. Freud's emphasis on repression and unconscious conflict as central to neurosis aligns with the internalized struggles of characters such as Yusuf (*Paradise*), Hassan (*Memory of Departure*), and Latif (*By the Sea*). For Yusuf, the psychological toll of abandonment and servitude in a colonial milieu mirrors Freud's idea of neurosis as a compromise formation where internal conflicts manifest in outward symptoms. Yusuf's passive demeanor and dissociation from agency can be read as neurotic defenses, shielding him from confronting the full extent of his trauma. Similarly, Salim's oscillation between anger and resignation reflects a psychic struggle against repressed desires for autonomy, overshadowed by familial obligations and societal constraints. His emotional entrapment and inability to assert his will echo Freud's concept of unresolved psychic tensions finding expression through symptoms such as

guilt, alienation, and anxiety.

Critically, Gurnah's exploration of collective memory and generational trauma extends the scope of neurosis beyond Freud's focus on the individual psyche. Freud's conception of repression as a mechanism for individual symptom formation falls short in capturing the transgenerational enactments of unresolved historical wounds in Gurnah's works. The cyclical patterns of displacement, loss, and alienation in characters like Yusuf and Latif illustrate how the neurotic state is not merely a personal condition, but a shared legacy shaped by colonial histories and familial dynamics. This collective dimension challenges the Freudian dichotomy of individual versus society, suggesting that neurosis in Gurnah's characters functions as a narrative of communal suffering and resilience. While Freud's framework provides valuable insights into the symptomatic expressions of internal conflict, its applicability to Gurnah's characters must be critically nuanced. Freud's emphasis on repressed sexuality and intrapsychic tension does illuminate aspects of Gurnah's characters, such as their struggles with intimacy, guilt, and identity. However, the theory's limitations in addressing the intersectionality of race, colonialism, and systemic oppression necessitate a broader psychoanalytic lens. Incorporating postcolonial psychoanalysis and trauma studies can enrich the understanding of Gurnah's characters by situating their neuroses within the larger structures of power, culture, and history. Once the idea of neurosis is understood, the immediate need is to know the neurotic symptoms and the relevant human experiences that the characters of Gurnah are subjected to. Literary Theory and Criticism in chapter fifteen about Freud and Psychoanalysis by W. Surprenant writes that:

> Psychoanalysis explored neurotic symptoms alongside various aspects of human expression such as dreams, jokes, and everyday errors like slips of the tongue or pen, mistakes, and forgetfulness, including lapses in memory

> for proper names […] According to this perspective, psychoanalytic ideas and methods are believed to be broadly applicable for interpreting diverse facets of human behavior, encompassing art and literature. (377)

Surprenant's assertion that psychoanalysis interprets neurotic symptoms alongside everyday phenomena like dreams, jokes, and parapraxes (slips, forgetfulness) reflects Freud's *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901) view that "the boundary between normal and pathological states is fluid…the same mechanisms govern the trivial errors of daily life and the symptoms of neurotics" (279). For Freud, neurosis is not an aberration but a heightened manifestation of universal psychic processes, where repressed desires and traumas, surface symbolically. In Gurnah's fiction, characters like Yusuf (*Paradise*) and Hassan (*Memory of Departure*) embody this fluidity: Yusuf's nightmares of dogs scratching his belly and Hassan's paralyzing terror 'I lived in terror of him' are neurotic symptoms that encode repressed rage and betrayal, mirroring Freud's (1917) claim that such symptoms act as "mnemic symbols" (303) of unresolved childhood trauma. Similarly, Hassan's compulsive silence in *Memory of Departure* as he is blamed of his brother's accidental death functions as both a parapraxis, a Freudian "failure" revealing unconscious resistance and a survival mechanism under colonial violence, illustrating how Freud in (1926) states "the ego's flight from perceptions…awakens distressing affects" (95).

Gurnah's characters, through their neuroses, exemplify Freud's (1903) argument that "the price of cultural progress is the loss of instinctual freedom" (44). Their symptoms like Yusuf's guilt, Hassan's anxiety, Hussein's dissociation are not personal failures but collective expressions of colonial and patriarchal repression. Freud's notion of the "common neurotic state" as a universal condition "Everyone is virtually a neurotic…" (457) frames their experiences as logical responses to systemic violence. Gurnah's fiction thus becomes a "cultural text" where neurosis, as Surprenant notes, reveals the interplay

of art and repression, rendering his characters' struggles legible as both individual pathology and collective resistance to domination.

Neurotic individuals may employ coping mechanisms that provide short-term relief but contribute to a persistent state of emotional turbulence. Unlike individuals with psychoses, those experiencing neuroses generally do not lose touch with reality. The term neurosis was originally introduced by psychiatrists in the mid-19th century to describe symptoms believed to have a neurological basis. The addition of the psycho- prefix came later as it became evident that mental and emotional factors played a crucial role in the development of these disorders. While the terms are now used interchangeably, the shorter neurosis is more commonly employed. The foundation for this chapter lies in delving into the realm of human relationships with regards to the fundamental stage of human existence, which is childhood. Notably, as Anne Ajulu Okungu quotes Jack Kearney (2012) in his thesis, has observed in *Paradise*:

> The child protagonists are overshadowed by dominant father figures who, through various means, subdue the children, leading to a diminished self-esteem. Yusuf, the child protagonist in *Paradise*, grapples initially with the oppressive presence of his biological father and later with the merchant Aziz, who becomes his foster father after he is forced into slavery. (134)

The protagonists in the select novels commence their journeys as children, ranging from preteens to teenagers, and undergo a transformative process influenced by various external factors. Within the domestic sphere, they confront a hostile environment marked by violence and poverty. The recurring motif of a journey, a common theme in many of Gurnah's works, takes a central role in these novels, leading to a disruption and interruption of their childhood experiences. This chapter primarily aims to examine how Gurnah shapes the child characters and how their interactions with other characters in the

narrative reveal different forms of control and subjugation and how their psyche delves into the conflict leading to the psychoanalytical behaviours like neurosis as discussed in Sigmund Freud's lecture *The common neurotic state*. It also explores how these child figures gradually gain agency through acquiring knowledge and acting. Numerous factors, whether originating from within or outside the family, disrupt childhood, thereby steering the protagonists onto a new path of growth and maturation into adulthood. Throughout this process, these children find themselves immersed in a quest to establish their sense of self in an environment that often seeks to define them in demeaning and degrading ways.

H. Porter Abbot (2002) suggests, the central elements in a narrative are the characters and their actions. In these particular narratives, the key characters are children, which implies that most, if not all, of the actions in these stories are carried out by children. These children are portrayed as members of various types of families, including biological, surrogate, and foster families. They are often seen as commodities, slaves, labourers, and dependents, but rarely as protectors. Childhood is presented in different ways, sometimes as a heavy burden and at other times as a source of shame. In the novel *Memory of Departure*, for instance, the protagonist's father views childhood as burdensome. In this context, the thesis highlights childhood as a space where human relationships become strained due to abuse and violations, primarily at the expense of the child. It's worth noting that the use of child characters as the heroes of these stories is somewhat ironic because true heroism remains elusive for the protagonists in these novels. It is to say that the child characters are prominently influential in the novels of Gurnah and hence also are prone to psychic dilapidations as understood in the context of Sigmund Freud. Eldred Jones (1998) opines that, "Far from being merely nostalgic yearnings for a lost paradise, many of the treatments of childhood have exposed a grim reality of cruelty, harshness (particularly paternal) egocentricism and extraordinary bruising of the vulnerable child psyche" (7).

The bruising of child psyche is what the analysis draws upon in this study and it is carried through understanding the familial patterns of bruising the child psyche, societal patterns of bruising the psyche and colonial patterns of bruising the child psyche. These dysfunctions in the major institutes within the life fabric of these characters are the preliminary study of this chapter as how these together lead the child characters to the state of being neurotic. It is particular to mention that Gurnah most of the times talks about inflicting violence on male child characters by the male older members only. Given the background set up of the east Africa that Gurnah portrays in his novels, the setting is predominantly Islamic in sense which develops the culture of the same environment and hence restricts the female activity or visibility in the novel and in reality as well. This forms one of the stark realities that Gurnah comments upon very subtly through his narrative formations. So, the leading characters, or the novel in general talks about the male child characters and how on a grim range of scale are these children abused in different circumstances. The quote below from the work of Seedat mentions the general background of violence and trauma in the child characters that almost impairs their psyche. How family and society trample the innocence in child characters:

> Violence against children is ubiquitous. Beatings take place daily or every week. Sticks, belts, or other weapons are used, and injury is common. Generally, the frequency and severity of beatings are greater for boys than they are for girls…The dominant ideals of masculinity, across racial groups, are predicated on a striking gender hierarchy, with demonstrations of toughness, bravery, and defence of honour, which readily translate into risk-taking behaviours. (3,5)

In Gurnah's novels, the family serves as a microcosm of societal issues, manifesting dysfunctional dynamics that deeply affect the child characters. These novels often depict

fractured family structures, marked by secrets, betrayals, and power struggles. The child characters, being vulnerable, absorb these tensions, leading to the development of neurotic states reminiscent of Freud's theories. Gurnah subtly depicts the children as a major form of transactions that take place in the everyday life of East Zanzibar. The transaction is purely materialistic. Children can be a barter to any upheaval and any misfortune. One cannot pay his debts, sell a child. One cannot hold on to his business, get a cheap labor in the form of children. To satisfy one's lust, abuse the child sexually. The coloniser has to fight a war, get war fodder in shape of children. To release the frustration and anger, thrash a child. To blame one's incompetence, blame a child. To show masculinity traits, bully or harass the child. All such postulates and assertions, Gurnah doesn't draw the children as something that's docile, but subtly portrays them as assertive, who try finding identity and meaning, that does come at the expense of their psychic health. This viewpoint of children being put at the face of every transaction, is propounded by David Callahan in his work *Exchange, Bullies, and abuse in Abdulrazak Gurnah's Paradise*, he writes:

> The child is capable of being manipulated by everyone: in Yusuf's case, from his parents who bargain him away, to his master, to his master's wife. Even in heterosexual relations, he is disadvantaged, despite his beauty, and he never acquires equality, let alone control or power. Ironically these deprivations authorise him to represent, for the naive, powerless child's viewpoint also permits a position of detached individualism to be established. (60)

Paradise stands as Gurnah's fourth novel, featuring Yusuf as the central character. A captivating tale unfolds as Yusuf, a striking young boy, becomes the unfortunate victim of his father's imprudent actions, being sold into slavery at the tender age of twelve. The narrative spans five pivotal years of Yusuf's life, concluding just as he approaches

seventeen, on the cusp of adulthood. In Gurnah's *Paradise*, Yusuf's forced departure into servitude under the guise of kinship with Aziz exemplifies Freud's (1917) assertion that neurosis stems from "the conflict between the repressed and the repressing forces" (344). Yusuf's silence and passivity when confronted with his father's betrayal, his inability to "ask no questions" or "pose arguments" reflect a neurotic repression of anger and helplessness. Freud argues that such repression creates "symptoms as substitutes for the repressed" (299), Similarly, in *Afterlives*, Khalifa's separation from his parents due to poverty "He had lived away from his parents for most of his life" (10) mirrors Freud's(1926) observation that "the loss of love in childhood becomes the prototype of all later anxiety" (143). Khalifa's displacement disrupts his capacity for secure attachment, fostering a neurotic state marked by emotional withdrawal, a defense mechanism Freud terms "the ego's flight from distressing perceptions" (95).

The violent familial dynamics in Gurnah's novels further align with Freud's theory of neurosis as a product of unresolved childhood trauma. Hassan's description of his father's brutality in *Memory of Departure* "he would get a beating…my father felled him with a blow on his right shoulder" (11, 13), illustrates Freud's claim that "the child's (1926) helplessness in the face of overwhelming trauma…becomes the model for all later anxiety" (137). Hassan's terror and hypervigilance manifest as Freudian "anxiety neurosis," where repressed rage at paternal violence is deflected into paralyzing fear. Similarly, Salim in *Gravel Heart* internalizes his father's perceived weakness as shame, viewing him as "the owner of a shameful useless body" (48), leading Salim to adopt a neurotic self-image rooted in paternal inadequacy.

Gurnah's critique of cultural and ethnic hypocrisy such as Yusuf's father condemning the "Washenzi" as child abductors while selling his own son, reflects Freud's argument in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930) that "society's moral codes are built

on the repression of instinctual drives" (84). The father's moral posturing masks his complicity in systemic violence, exposing what Freud terms "the cultural compulsion to repeat" oppressive norms (43). Yusuf's psychic "delapidation", his mute acceptance of his fate mirrors Freud's (1917) assertion that neurosis arises when "the ego avoids a rupture by deforming itself through symptoms" (359). The transactional reduction of children's value, as seen in Yusuf's sale and Afiya's abuse in *Afterlives* "she staggered and felt dizzy" (29), underscores Seedat's (2005) observation that "childhood exposure to violence…enhances the likelihood of psychopathology" (5). Freud's framework thus reveals Gurnah's child characters as embodiments of a "common neurotic state" shaped by colonial and patriarchal systems, their symptoms both personal wounds and collective indictments of societal repression. This describes the extreme physical abuse inflicted on the children, and indicates a traumatic event for the child. Hassan further goes into detailing the event of elder brother Syed as:

> My father stepped forward and stopped within inches of the heaving body of his first-born. He kicked him in the stomach. He kicked him again as he tried to get up. He beat him with his fists, butted him with his head, bit him on the wrist. He beat him until his bowels opened. (13)

In the context of neurosis, Sigmund Freud emphasized the concept of 'psychical reality 'in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Trans. James Strachey, saying "in the world of neurosis it is psychical reality which is the decisive kind" (368). This notion underscores the significance of subjective, mental, or psychological experiences over the objective or external nature of events. From the text of Gurnah, it is evident how these physical events are overtaken by the psyche of the character, it is the psyche of the character Yusuf that is gripped in fear and perplexity, he could not understand, he could not talk because all these train of thoughts were playing in

his head only. Similarly, Said and Hassan were abused by their father to the extent that it traumatized them both, Hassan would hide under the bed out of fear. In other words, what matters most in understanding and addressing neurotic conditions is the individual's internal, psychic interpretation and processing of events, rather than the factual or external details of those events like in case of Afiya and Humza. In Freud's analysis of traumatic neuroses, particularly those linked to war, he posits that the ego adopts a "self-interested motive" (433) to protect itself, sustaining the illness as a defense against recurring threats until safety or compensation is achieved. This process reflects the ego's dual function: safeguarding the psyche from re-traumatization and negotiating unresolved grievances. Freud's assertion that "this motive tries to preserve the ego from the dangers... and will not allow recovery to occur" (ibid, 433) illustrates how neurosis becomes a paradoxical coping mechanism. In Gurnah's works, this dynamic is strikingly evident. Characters like Hamza (*Afterlives*) and Yusuf (*Paradise*) exhibit trauma-rooted behaviors, with Hamza's wartime scars manifesting in his hesitancy to trust and Yusuf's passive compliance shielding him from further harm. These characters embody Freud's claim that neurosis, while maladaptive, persists as a strategy for self-preservation. Similarly, Salim in *Gravel Heart* demonstrates how unresolved trauma drives withdrawal and emotional isolation, underscoring Freud's idea that the ego resists recovery until the conditions for safety or restitution are met. Gurnah's narratives, much like Freud's theory, reveal how the unresolved trauma of individuals can echo broader societal and historical wounds, making recovery elusive without meaningful acknowledgment or reparative justice. To such psychical trails, that Freud calls "decisive", has a reason to be so, some unhealthy reasons and traumatic events that dilapidate the patterns of one's psyche and push one into the turbulences of neurosis, which same is the case with Yusuf in *Paradise* and Hassan and Syed in *Memory of Departure*. Sigmund Freud writes about the traumatic events and the

important kind of neurosis led by such events as traumatic neurosis; Freud mentions in his lecture on *Common Neurotic State:*

> One of the ways in which the ego is related to its neuroses is, however, so obvious that it was possible to take it into account from the first […] For you must know that the same factors always come into operation in the causation and mechanism of every possible form of neurosis; but the chief importance in the construction of the symptoms falls now upon one and now upon another of these factors. (433)

In the above provided excerpt, Freud delves into the intricate relationship between the ego and neuroses, with a particular focus on traumatic neurosis. Freud asserts that the connection between the ego and neuroses is evident and pervasive, and it becomes especially conspicuous in the context of traumatic neurosis. Freud's acknowledgment of the ego's constant presence underscores its fundamental role in the psyche. The ego, according to Freud's structural model of the mind, is the component responsible for mediating between the demands of reality, the superego's moral standards, and the instinctual drives of the id. It plays a crucial role in managing and adapting to external challenges and internal conflicts. The mention of traumatic neurosis signifies a specific form of neurotic disorder that emerges from experiences of trauma, like in case of Yusuf's journey in *Paradise,* "The train had been moving for a while before the novelty of it began to wear off for Yusuf, and then the thought that he had left home became irresistible. He thought of his mother's easy laughter, and began to cry" (18). Yusuf's tears are interpreted as a manifestation of repressed emotions tied to separation anxiety or the unconscious conflicts associated with leaving the maternal figure. In *Gravel Heart*, Salim channels his repressed emotions into letters addressed to his parents, using this correspondence as a cathartic means to confront his disconnection from a home that remains a distant

abstraction. In his letters to his mother, he conveys the weariness that life in London imposes upon him, describing the exhaustion he feels navigating its bustling, overcrowded streets. In case of Hassan, he would turn mute in front of his father, he never mustered energy to talk in his father's presence when he was angry, Adding "I lived in terror of him" (15). *Afterlives* reveals how Afiya is treated by her uncle:

> He stepped forward and slapped her on her temple with her left hand, then he slipped then he slapped the cane and slapped her on the face and head with his right hand. she yelled with terrors and did her best to escape to but it was a small room, and he had bolted the door. (41)

Freud's emphasis on the unconscious mind and the lingering impact of childhood experiences aligns with the irresistible nature of Yusuf's, Salims and Hassan's thoughts about home. Traumatic neurosis, also known as post-traumatic stress disorder in contemporary terms, involves the persistent emotional and psychological repercussions of a traumatic event. Freud suggests that understanding this disorder is particularly challenging, indicating the complexity of its causation and mechanisms. Sigmund Freud's overarching theory posits that various factors contribute to the development of neuroses, and these factors operate in a consistent manner across different forms of neurotic conditions. The interplay of unconscious conflicts, repressed memories, and unresolved psychological tensions forms the basis for the genesis of neurotic symptoms.

Freud suggests that while these factors are universal, their prominence in the manifestation of symptoms can vary, emphasizing different aspects at different times. The idea that "the chief importance in the construction of the symptoms falls now upon one and now upon another of these factors" underscores the dynamic and evolving nature of neurotic states. Depending on the individual, the specific circumstances, and the timing of the analysis, different factors may take precedence in shaping the symptoms of neurosis.

Freud's assertion reflects his understanding of the ego's role in responding to trauma. The ego, as the executive component of the psyche, is inherently self-preserving. In the context of traumatic neuroses, Freud proposes that the ego actively seeks to protect itself from the threats and dangers that precipitated the onset of the illness. While the ego might not be the sole creator of the illness, it plays a crucial role in assenting to and maintaining it once it has emerged. This application is visible when Yusuf cries, sobs and is in reminiscence, his ego acts against the emerged traumatic neurosis, Gurnah writes that "After a few moments, Yusuf knew that the tears were no longer coming, but he was reluctant to lose the feeling of sadness. He wiped his tears away and began to study his uncle" (18). Salim's deep-seated fear of intimacy in *Gravel Heart*, compounded by the emotional void left by his parents' neglect, leaves him struggling for years to navigate relationships with women. His unresolved psychological trauma fosters a belief that his mother was coerced into intimacy, leading him to equate romantic and sexual relationships with forms of domination and subjugation. Over time, however, his perspective shifts as he forges a meaningful connection with a woman in his new environment, ultimately embracing sexual liberation through the mutual consent of a second partner. Reflecting on this transformation, he states, "I had spent many years not knowing how to approach women, thinking of sexual intimacy as demeaning and an oppression, which enticed the victim into abjection" (133). In a similar fashion Hassan in *Memory of Departure* is blamed for the death of his brother Syed, all through the novel Hassan could never forget how his mother pointed finger at him, making him responsible for Syed's death, Hassan goes on saying that: "Why did they blame me who had never done him any harm? They all beat him. I was five. He was my friend; he was my brother. He was my only friend and my only brother. Why did they blame me?" (14). This is the ego's way of keeping away the extreme stimulations from harming the psyche and Freud perceives the ego's role maintaining

and responding to trauma in the lecture *Common Neurotic State* as he states:

> Thus, in traumatic neuroses, and particularly in those brought about by the horrors of war, we are unmistakably presented with a self-interested motive on the part of the ego, seeking for protection and advantage…This motive tries to preserve the ego from the dangers the threat of which was the precipitating cause of the illness, and it will not allow recovery to occur until a repetition of these dangers seems no longer possible or until compensation has been received for the danger that has been endured. (434)

In the excerpt from Sigmund Freud's *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, specifically from the lecture on the common neurotic state, Freud delves into the dynamics of traumatic neuroses, particularly those induced by the horrors of war. He suggests that in traumatic neuroses, there is a discernible self-interested motive on the part of the ego, driven by a need for protection and advantage. The self-interested motive of the ego in traumatic neuroses is rooted in a strategic response to perceived threats. The ego, confronted with the overwhelming and distressing experiences of war or other traumatic events, engages in a form of self-preservation. It aims to shield itself from the potential recurrence of the dangers that triggered the initial trauma.

Moreover, Freud introduces the idea that the ego resists recovery until certain conditions are met. The motive for self-protection persists, and the ego is reluctant to allow the individual to move beyond the neurotic state. Recovery, according to Freud, may be delayed until a repetition of the perceived dangers seems no longer possible, or until some form of compensation is received for the endured danger. This concept aligns with Freud's broader theory of neuroses, where symptoms are not merely arbitrary expressions of distress but are influenced by the unconscious mind and the ego's attempts to manage

conflict and anxiety. In the case of traumatic neuroses, the ego's self-interested motive is a driving force in the maintenance of the neurotic state, shaping the individual's response to the traumatic experiences and influencing the trajectory of recovery. In case of Yusuf, Salim, Ilyas and Hassan, they do not perceive any possibilities of security and enhanced conditions and that's why they find themselves in the pool of symptoms that one engages with in the neurotic states. Yusuf, for the time being does wipe his tears and sounds to cope up with the horrifically charged up surrounding, but reminiscence about home, and the conditions around makes him susceptible to the agents of neurosis, which occupies his psyche. And so does Hassan, he never forgot about the mother pointing finger at him, blaming him of a murder, "And I could never forget how she had stood screaming her loss, with her finger pointed at me" (15). In London, Salim channels his suppressed emotions into letters addressed to his parents, using this correspondence as a cathartic means to confront his disconnection from a home that remains a distant abstraction. In his letters to his mother, he conveys the weariness that life in London imposes upon him, describing the exhaustion he feels navigating its bustling, overcrowded streets. Gurnah details in Yusuf, the fears and abandonment as:

> At best he dozed, or lay half awake, nagged by the need to relieve himself. When he opened his eyes in the middle of the night, the sight of the half-full, dimmed carriage made him want to cry out. The darkness outside was a measureless void, and he feared that the train was too deep in it to be able to return safely. (19)

This is the anxious state that Yusuf finds himself in, neurotic anxiety that Freud calls it. These thoughts are the questions he actually had to ask his family, Yusuf was in a state of shock back then he repressed these thoughts and did not open his mouth about this journey, "it never occurred to him, not even for one brief moment, that he might be gone

from his parents for a long time, or that he might never see them again. It never occurred to him to ask when he would be returning" (17). These repressed thoughts now come out of him in this shape of train going too deep to find way back, the void and helplessness. In *Memory of Departure,* Gurnah mentions one of the harrowing incidents in the novel that haunts the psyche of Hassan forever, the marital rape that to in front of a child. Gurnah pens the details that are so haunting that an adult psyche can't cope with the situation and its imprint, how does a child deal with it, he writes:

> He struggled onto the bed and pulled away the kanga she was wearing around her. Then he began again, whispering and muttering, and fucking her…and through my tears I saw him leaning over me. Get out, he said. I struggled on all fours out of the room. My grandmother was standing outside in the hallway. I started to crawl towards her, feeling weak and feeble from the fever. (16)

In *Gravel Heart*, Gurnah portrays Salim as a neurotic figure shaped by his father Masud's prolonged absence and his mother's repressive deflections, as when she says, "she said that my father did not want us anymore" (36). This suppression of Salim's questions creates unresolved conflicts within him, fostering an obsessive preoccupation with his father's isolation. His parents' evasiveness instills feelings of inadequacy and rejection, leading to withdrawal and self-doubt. These unresolved tensions manifest as neurotic behaviors, including his fixation on familial failure and his struggle to reconcile his identity within fractured family dynamics. In Freuds work *Inhibition, Symptoms and Anxiety*, Freud understands this notion as, he emphasizes the intricate relationship between anxiety stemming from "external and instinctual dangers" (81). Freud posits that the psyche experiences anxiety when it perceives an impending task or danger from the external world for which it feels inadequately equipped to respond effectively. The effect

of anxiety, according to Freud, is a response to the sense of incapacity in dealing with external challenges. Here Yusuf and Hassan fail to perceive the instinctual dangers, both that are stemming from within and the excitations in the outside. This concept underscores the interplay between the external environment and the internal psychological mechanisms, with anxiety serving as a signal of the psyche's perceived inability to confront and manage external threats. This is further illustrated in *Paradise*, when "He dreamt that his mother was a one-eyed dog he had once seen crushed under the wheels of a train. Later he dreamt that he saw his cowardice glimmering in moonlight, covered in the slime of its afterbirth" (19). In his work, Notes on Trauma and Community in Trauma: Explorations in Memory, which is edited by Caruth, Kai Erikson (1995) justifies that trauma involves "a continual reliving of some wounding experience in daydreams and nightmares, flashbacks and hallucinations, and in a compulsive seeking out of similar circumstances" (184). These instances of dreams, flashbacks, nightmares are what a traumatic child looks like, what trauma stems out like. Hassan in *Memory of Departure* similarly suffers the nightmares and writes "Creatures rose in the night to suck my blood and blont me with waste and sin. I fought them in the way they had shown me. I paid them back pain for pain, silence for silence" (24). These nightmares shared by Yusuf and Hassan is what actually Freud calls the psyche's perceived inability to confront and manage the threats. And in such cases ego lets symptoms play the part only to keep the repressed material in satisfaction, Freud in his lecture *Common Neurotic State* writes:

> The ego takes a similar interest, however, in the development and maintenance of the neurosis in every other case. I have already shown that symptoms are supported by the ego, too, because they have a side with which they offer satisfaction to the repressing purpose of the ego. (434)

Upto this stage of meeting Khalil, Yusuf does repress certain elements of truth, does

not dare to know more about why he left his home, for how long is he going, not asking his parents questions about it, the unusual behavior of his mother, which in Freudian senses is the egos way of keeping calm while repressing the charged material. But as Freud says, the repressed materials and thoughts come back in uglier forms, similar things happen when Yusuf meets Khalil. Khalil admonishes the boy for experiencing "nightmares and crying in the night" (23). His harsh moniker for Yusuf, "Kifa urongo, living death" (23), could have deeply affected the boy's psyche, potentially becoming a significant, even dominant, internal voice. When Yusuf rejects the unwelcome advances of a desperate customer named Ma Ajuza, Khalil labels him a "feeble young coward" (31). At this point, there is ample evidence to suggest that Yusuf will increasingly adopt a self- deprecating outlook, shame, guilt, and fear of being "Found out in a weakness beyond remedy" (125). On the parallel Haasan too perceives the elements of distressed psyche like shame, guilt, pain as Gurnah writes in *Memory of Departure* that, "they made me live years of guilt for a wrong I had not done, And then it was possible to hone self-hate and remorse into a tool for causing pain" (24). Hassan while dehumanised in home, called by his father as a "dirty little murderer" (16), is also shamed outside of his home, is a subject to be preyed upon as the weak and frail looking children would be subjected to sodomy, a rape. Gurnah writes in the context that:

> A man walked past me and then stopped and turned and stared at me. I glanced quickly at him, and he caught my eye and leered. He straightened too, smiling, and looking dangerous. I tried not to look nervous. He turned a full, fleshy grin on me. … His thick neck bulged out of a shirt that was stained green under the armpits. He was my nightmare of a sadistic bugger, a rapist. (22)

This instance is so occupying that Hassan runs out of shame, fear, and dread. His elder

brother would often try making Hassan strong by making him to fight, by paying small children some money to sodomise them. Gurnah gives us the cultural context of how east African children grow strong, and what makes them weak and feeble and how Sodomy is normalised in such societies that it is understood as fun. It is evident that while the children receive religious education, they are kept away from sciences and technology, where sodomy is normal, and sex education is not talked about. In her chapter within Donald Nathanson's book, *The Many Faces of Shame*, a fellow psychoanalyst Helen. B Lewis provides additional insights into the concept of shame, describing it as "a negative experience of the self; it is an implosion or a momentary destruction of the self in acute self-denigration" (95). Both the elementary characters of these two novels, Yusuf, and Hassan's dilemma stems from the fact that the social system through which they encounter shame, represented in the novel by their upbringing community, is no longer accessible to them. As a result, the intended purpose of shame, which is to serve as a "system for return from exile," is thwarted for them due to their prolonged involvement in the world of Aziz and Abdulla in case of Yusuf and in the context of Hassan it is his father, his brothers Said's memory, Sud as the sodomizer.

To clarify, the "acute self-denigration" (134) brought about by shame as discussed by Kearney (2012), instead of being a momentary "destruction" of the self, becomes an enduring experience of deprivation for them. However, despite this, a notable indication of Yusuf's heightened moral character is his resolute decision to avoid engaging in the acts of sodomy practiced by Mohammed Abdulla and other porters (134-135). Similarly, Hassan despised such engagements, he never agreed with Said to demoralise or corrupt some child, and in the school, Abbas would give money to Hassan to make friends at first and to sodomise him later, but Hassan boldly fights back his honor and "I knew that one day he would try to touch me, he would try to shame me in front of all the other boys. I

thought that if he did, I would bring a knife to school and kill him" (23). These examples are evident to propound the intricacies of how both internal (within the subjects/characters psyche) and external determinants (family and society they live in), influence the formation of neurotic symptoms. Sigmund Freud in his lecture *Common Neurotic State,* gives the account of the internal and external agencies responsible for developing the neurotic symptoms, in *The Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*:

> It would not, I believe, have been possible to give you a knowledge of the subject-matter of the theory of the neuroses in so short a time except in this concentrated form. It was a question of presenting you with a connected account of the sense and significance of symptoms and of the external and internal determinants and mechanism of their formation. (431)

In the above lines, emphasis lies on providing a cohesive narrative elucidating the sense and significance of these symptoms. Freud implies that grasping the subject requires an exploration of both external and internal determinants influencing the formation of neurotic symptoms. External factors could encompass societal influences, while internal factors delve into psychological processes. Exemplifying this process in case of Hassan, the death of his brother was an external incident or an accident, this episode carries the physical attributes in it, but Gurnah mentions ahead in the novel, the psychological perspective of this incident when "The beach bleached by the sun, bone-white sand. Tiny crabs were digging holes to hide from my feet. I pursued one and killed it and gave it a solemn burial before I set off for home" (25). This event details the deprived share in the burial of his brother's tragic death, that he is so fixated to the event and this episode so overcharged in his psyche that his ego could no more prepress it and hence in a symptom formation gives a burial to the crab. Additionally, Freud stresses the importance of unravelling the mechanism behind the formation of these symptoms, elucidating the

intricate interplay of various psychological elements. Ultimately, Freud aims to communicate that a nuanced understanding of neurotic symptoms requires identifying their deeper meanings, the contributing factors from both external and internal realms, and the underlying psychological processes orchestrating their formation. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900a), Freud conceptualizes regression as a defensive mechanism, describing it as "an effect of a resistance opposing the progress of a thought into consciousness along the normal path" (546). He further underscores its significance by asserting that "regression plays a no less important part in the theory of the formation of neurotic symptoms than it does in that of dreams." This highlights regression's pivotal role in both the unconscious mechanisms underpinning neurotic symptomatology and the processes involved in dream formation (548). Gurnah's narrative edifice gives a parallel structure to, the character who is subjected to brutal harassments physically, sexually, and emotionally with respect to, the character's will to survive, to assert the notion of life within degeneration of different forms. To this balancing act by Gurnah, Freud also warns us against the superficial understanding and applications of ego and its working on common neurotic states. Freud is cautioning against oversimplifying the understanding of neuroses by exclusively focusing on the ego's perspective. He suggests that a balanced approach, considering the ego along with other psychoanalytic elements, is essential for a more nuanced understanding of the complexities involved in the formation of neurotic states, Freud states that:

> Anyone whom these warnings do not deter from taking the ego's counterfeits as sterling coin…He will be able to declare like Alfred Adler that the 'neurotic character' is the cause of neuroses instead of their consequence; but neither will he be in a position to explain a single detail of symptom-formation or a single dream…and in the formation of

> symptoms without at the same time grossly neglecting the factors revealed by psychoanalysis. (432-433)

These neurotic elements in Yusuf does not end with him being ashamed or the feeling of cowardice, but they potentially grow intensified as much is Yusuf exposed to the brutalities of the fellow human beings and his surroundings. The nightmares intensify with every passing day. He represses his desires more often, and while living with Khalil, the repressed desires are brought to consciousness. Khalil's exposure of Yusuf to certain truths and harsh realities proves to be a psychoanalytical working on repressed memories and desires, which acts as a safeguard or a defense mechanism to take minimum distress on the psyche, but the exposure or bringing such neurotic agents on the surface is the only way of adopting to truths, that Yusuf dodges almost all through the novel. In parallel, Hassan's torments do not seem to end too, the nightmares are a part of him, he dreams of an old man in neighbourhood who tried shaming him and sodomizing him, "I dreamed of those fierce, watery eyes gazing out of the darkness of the dank alleyway" (36), also the thoughts of Syed continuously harm him, his family torments never seem to stop, when he left his home for Nairobi, he is homesick all the time.

Kalil as its mentioned above, exposes Yusuf to harsh realities like, when Yusuf calls Aziz as Uncle Aziz, Khalil exposes him to the harsh reality of how Aziz is not his uncle but master or Syed, further explains him how he was sold into pawning as a means to repay your fathers debts, saying "As for Uncle Aziz, for a start, he ain't your uncle" (23), "He ain't your uncle,' Khalil said sharply, and Yusuf winced in expectation of another blow" (25). On the journey to what Gurnah calls as savage land, Yusuf is exposed to the ugliness of the paradise he is living in. The psyche of Yusuf takes the toll of traumatising events, which he represses but they resurface in the form of nightmares, almost every night Yusuf's psyche subjects him to horrific nightmares that even the rest

of the members come to know about, making Yusuf even more vulnerable, and elements himself to shame and guilt, as Gurnah mentions, "After a moment, Mohammed Abdalla made a derisive snorting noise and shook his head. 'Night- mares! Whimpering in the dark like a sick child! (186), adding, "As if your noisy dreams are not enough" (205). On an expedition to what Gurnah calls savage lands, Khalil announces the news of Yusuf joining the caravan, which further exposes the ugliness of the world he is living in. He fears of the sexual assaults to the infamous and merciless sodomizer named Abdalla, whose gaze makes Yusuf uncomfortable and distressed, as Gurnah writes, "stroking their loins" (47), When this anguish was on him he released heavy sighs of lust and smilingly muttered lines of a song about the nature of beauty" (47). The recurring nightmares that Yusuf encounters are the nightmares about dogs, in *Paradise,* Gurnah writes it as "It spoke lucidly to him, opening its long mouth in broad grins, and flashing its yellow teeth at him. Then it straddled his open belly in search of his deepest secrets" (124), These are the secrets that Freud talks as the repressed material, elements that can disturb the ego and hence the defence mechanism like repression and resistance or transference etc that is visible all through this chapter are employed to protect the psyche from what Freud calls the paralyzing effects of reality. These are the secrets that Khalil gradually open up to Yusuf, Like he is sold by his own parents into pawning "He is quickly enlightened on the fact that he was a slave. "You are here because your Ba owes the Seyyid some money. I'm here because my Ba owes him money "(24). Aziz is not his uncle, later on the news of his father's death, the betraying silence of his mother when he left home, and at the end the almost loss of his family as told by Khalil and other minor characters. All these situations are so harsh that Yusuf develops symptoms because his ego cannot adjust to the external pressures to an extent that psyche develops neurotic symptoms and traumatic neurosis symptom.

From now on, the neurosis or the neurotic condition is degraded even further as the main character Yusuf is subjected to certain traumatic events discussed above, haunt him for the rest of his life. These traumatic experiences do not paralyse him in Freudian senses, but the amount of charge is so high that the neurosis develop into traumatic neurosis, which is generally a by-product of war or the parallel charge of violence. Freud in his work *Introductory lectures on Psychoanalysis* talks about the traumatic neurosis as:

> Thus, in traumatic neuroses, and particularly in those brought about by the horrors of war, we are unmistakably presented with a self-interested motive on the part of the ego, seeking for protection and advantage […] This motive tries to preserve the ego from the dangers the threat of which was the precipitating cause of the illness and it will not allow recovery to occur until a repetition of these dangers seems no longer possible or until compensation has been received for the danger that has been endured. (434)

The ego, in this context, represents the conscious mind and the sense of self. In simpler terms, Freud is proposing that traumatic neuroses, especially those arising from wartime experiences, involve the ego's self-interested motive to protect itself from perceived threats. The neurotic condition persists as long as the ego perceives ongoing danger or until some form of compensation or resolution is achieved. This perspective underscores the complexity of neurotic conditions and the role of the ego in their perpetuation, as well as the psychological mechanisms at play in response to traumatic events. Now until the characters of Gurnah perceive the threat and dangers, the characters suffer neurotic state in them, but the characters do not lose the touch with the reality. A psychosis, by contrast, refers to when a patient or the character has completely lost touch with reality. Freud originally distinguished between neurosis and psychosis in the following way in his work *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, saying: "in

neurosis the ego suppresses part of the id out of allegiance to reality, whereas in psychosis, it lets itself be carried away by the id and detached from a part of reality" (202).

The culmination of Yusuf's internal struggle occurs when he impulsively "ran after the column" (255), aligning himself with the German military unit in an act devoid of conscious comprehension. This impulsive decision signals a rupture in his cognitive processes, a breakdown precipitated by the unsustainable psychic charge his defenses have sought to contain. What appears as an illogical, open-ended action in the literary realm resonates with Freud's assertion that 'neurotic individuals often become fixated on a past event', person, or object, culminating in obsessional actions intended to "correct a distressing portion of the past" (317). Such actions, categorized by Freud as "senseless obsessional action" (317), are performed unconsciously, driven by repressed memories and unresolved conflicts. In Yusuf's case, this impulse to join the Germans can be read as an unconscious attempt to amend his pre- traumatic past, a futile effort overwhelmed by the accumulation of 'neurotic symptoms' rooted in separation trauma, betrayal, and enduring abuse. Freud further elucidates this phenomenon, observing that an "extensive formation of symptoms" can deplete the mental energy of the neurotic subject to the point of "paralysing him for all the important tasks of life" (406). Yusuf's paralysis, both psychological and existential, underscores his entrapment within the cyclical dynamics of his trauma.

The decision to join the German forces at the novel's conclusion represents more than mere surrender; it reflects a profound psychological submission to colonial power. This act can be interpreted as an instance of Ferenczi's (1933) psychoanalytic concept of "identification with the aggressor," wherein the oppressed unconsciously aligns with the oppressor as a survival mechanism. This alignment is not simply a strategy for navigating subjugation but also a reflection of deeper psychic tensions; a collapse between the self

and the colonial "other." Yusuf's alignment with the colonial aggressor mirrors the very dominance he has resisted, symbolizing an internalization of subjugation that both protects and undermines his psyche. Furthermore, Yusuf's decision can be viewed through the lens of transgenerational trauma and the notion of the "pluperfect errand," signifying a return to the origins of his subjugation. By submitting to the German forces, Yusuf enacts the unresolved mandates embedded in the colonial social fabric, perpetuating a historical cycle of victimization and domination. This act also resonates with Freud's discussion of traumatic neuroses in *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, where the ego, overwhelmed by danger and psychic injury, resists recovery until safety or restitution is perceived. Yusuf's final act embodies this resistance, as his psyche, incapable of escaping its own torment, resorts to a survival-oriented surrender. Yusuf's trajectory encapsulates the hallmarks of neurotic and traumatic neuroses as outlined by Freud. His fixation on past wounds, coupled with his unconscious enactments, illustrates how repression and psychic defense mechanisms, while protective in the short term, culminate in profound psychological and existential stagnation. Freud ahead in his work gives us the opinion that the conflicts should not result in the paralysing spheres to any patient and here in our case its Yusuf, the conflicts should end in the neurotic states only, saying "Indeed there are cases in which even the physician must admit that for a conflict to end in neurosis is the most harmless and socially tolerable solution" (434), or the character loses touch with the reality like Yusuf in *Paradise*, Ilyas in *Afterlives*, and Hussein in *By the Sea.* This serves as the most significant finding that Gurnah's characters enact, to what I call 'postcolonial psychic afterlives', they show how colonialism, displacement, and familial loss continue to live on in the unconscious. Rather than depicting trauma as something to be 'overcome,' Gurnah presents it as an ongoing negotiation between memory and survival. This study demonstrates that psychoanalysis, when recalibrated through decolonial thinking, can

illuminate these processes without pathologizing them. This reframes Gurnah's work as not just historical fiction but also as a meditation on the psychic costs of colonial modernity.

Conclusion:

Abdulrazak Gurnah's rise to literary prominence, propelled by his Booker Prize-shortlisted novel *Paradise* (1994) and amplified by growing scholarly engagement, highlights his transformative influence on precolonial to postcolonial storytelling. Early analyses, such as Kimani Kaigai's *Encountering Strange Lands* (2014), established critical frameworks for understanding Gurnah's nuanced depictions of migration and displacement. However, recent scholarship signals a broader shift in postcolonial studies, moving beyond rigid colonial binaries to interrogate fragmented histories of 'alternative colonialisms'. Gurnah's work exemplifies this evolution: by rejecting the nationalist themes that dominated earlier East African literature, he aligns with transnational authors like David Dabydeen, whose narratives traverse cultural and geographic boundaries. Yet Gurnah's deep engagement with Swahili oral traditions, linguistic heritage, and regional histories resists simplistic categorization as a 'Black British' writer. Instead, his fiction bridges local and global perspectives, challenging reductive labels while reimagining the complexities of identity, memory, and empire. This thesis, *A Psychoanalytical Study of Trauma in the Select Works of Abdulrazak Gurnah*, situates his oeuvre at the intersection of exile, memory, trauma and subaltern resistance, interrogating how his narratives excavate pre-colonial and intra-African dominations like Arab trade imperialism, patriarchal hierarchies, and ethnic marginalization that Western historiography often obscures.

Gurnah's aesthetic project, as elucidated by Wole Soyinka's critique of post-independence disillusionment, rejects the didacticism of "writing back" to colonial centers. Instead, he channels what Soyinka (1967) terms as quoted in Uche Nnyagu (2022) the "universal collapse of humanity" (52), foregrounding the capillary workings of power in quotidian spaces like families, marketplaces, and childhood haunts, where trauma is both

inflicted and resisted. Evan Mwangi's (2009) observation of a generational shift in African literature, away from nationalist impulses toward 'local forms of oppression', finds resonance in Gurnah's nuanced portrayal of repression as a multiscalar phenomenon: children pawned into servitude (*Paradise*), women silenced by marital rape (*Memory of Departure*), and migrants navigating racialized labor economies (*By the Sea*). By centering child protagonists like Yusuf, and Hassan, Gurnah destabilizes colonial epistemologies that, in Frederick Cooper's terms, "flattened the multisided experiences of the colonized" (1517). Their first-person narratives, fraught with innocence and incisive observation become acts of epistemic resistance, reclaiming agency from the grand narratives of empire.

Gurnah's fixation on intimate spaces, as opposed to national allegories, critiques the binaries of colonizer/colonized that Cooper deems 'limiting' (1517). In *Paradise*, Yusuf's abrupt displacement "The boy first. His name was Yusuf, and he left his home suddenly during his twelfth year" (1) mirrors the destabilization of communal ties under German and British imperialism, yet his journey transcends mere victimhood. Through omniscient and first-person narration, Gurnah layers collective trauma with individual agency, illustrating how power, in its capillary form, permeates kinship networks and intergenerational silences. This narrative strategy aligns with Mwangi's (2009) concept of "equivalents of colonialism" (257) gender, class, and sexual repression, that Gurnah unearths not as abstractions but as lived, somatic realities. His characters' struggles whether Hassan's rebellion against paternal tyranny or Saleh Omar's fragmented recollections of Zanzibar, are not merely personal tragedies but allegories of a continent negotiating its plural histories. In doing so, Gurnah redefines Soyinka's call for universality, not as a negation of African particularity but as an insistence on the global resonance of subaltern resilience.

Abdulrazak Gurnah's literary corpus constitutes a rigorous interrogation of trauma,

transcending its conventional framing as an individualized psychological phenomenon to reveal its profound entanglement with collective memory, identity formation, and the sedimented violence of historical consciousness. This thesis, *A Psychoanalytical Study of Trauma in the Select Works of Abdulrazak Gurnah*, advances a multilayered analysis of trauma across these novels *Paradise*, *By the Sea*, *Memory of Departure*, *Pilgrim's way*, and *Afterlives*, positioning it as a hermeneutic lens to dissect the interplay of psychological, cultural, and sociopolitical registers in postcolonial subjectivity. This study chose *Paradise*, *By the Sea*, *Memory of Departure*, *Admiring Silence*, and *Pilgrim's way* because together they represent Gurnah's most sustained engagement with trauma, colonialism, and exile. *Paradise* allows a study of childhood trauma and colonial encounter; *Memory of Departure* explores rebellion, patriarchy, and psychological estrangement; *By the Sea* foregrounds migration and refugee identity; *Admiring Silence* examines diasporic silence and self-erasure; and *Desertion* interrogates cross-cultural love and colonial memory. These novels give a chronological and thematic spread that traces Gurnah's evolving treatment of psychic fracture. The study excluded few novels mainly to maintain focus and depth though the findings could be extended to them. By synthesizing Sigmund Freud's foundational theories of repression, symptom formation, and the unconscious with Frantz Fanon's decolonial critique of racialized trauma and Homi Bhabha's conceptualization of hybridity and the "unhomely," this study excavates the dialectical tensions between personal anguish and systemic violence. Gurnah's narratives, steeped in the aftershocks of colonialism, reframe trauma not as a discrete event but as a structural condition palimpsest of inherited silences, fractured kinship, and the epistemic violence of cultural erasure.

The Freudian framework, while instrumental in decoding the psychodynamic undercurrents of characters' repressed desires and neurotic symptoms, is deliberately destabilized through Gurnah's postcolonial reimagining of trauma. For instance, Yusuf's

servitude in *Paradise* and Saleh Omar's exile in *By the Sea* exemplify Freud's "return of the repressed," yet these traumas are inextricably bound to the material realities of colonial exploitation and diasporic dislocation, realities that Freud's Eurocentric models inadequately theorize. Fanon's articulation of the "colonial psyche" (*Black Skin, White Masks*), wherein racialization fractures selfhood, provides a critical counterpoint, illuminating how Gurnah's characters internalize and resist the dehumanizing logics of empire. Similarly, Bhabha's notion of the "unhomely" (9) in *The Location of Culture*, a space where the domestic becomes a site of historical intrusion, resonates in the dissonant familial spaces of *Memory of Departure*, where patriarchal abuse mirrors the broader collapse of post-independence nationalist ideals.

Gurnah's fiction, by foregrounding the interplay of Swahili cultural codes, Islamic identity, and the legacies of German and British imperialism, challenges universalist assumptions about trauma's manifestation. The thesis thus contributes to broader debates in postcolonial literary studies by demonstrating how trauma, when analyzed through a culturally attuned psychoanalytic lens, reveals itself as both a psychological wound and a sociopolitical critique, a duality that demands interdisciplinary engagement with fields such as critical race theory, gender studies, and historical materialism. This research repositions Gurnah's oeuvre as a vital site for rethinking trauma's contours, offering a framework that bridges the subjective and the systemic, the repressed and the historically visible. It underscores the necessity of situating Freudian paradigms within the fissures of colonial modernity, where trauma is not merely endured but actively reconfigured through acts of storytelling, memory, and resistance, a process that Gurnah's characters embody with haunting complexity.

At the core of Gurnah's narratives lies the tension between repression and revelation, a dialectic that Freud posits as constitutive of the traumatized psyche, but which

Gurnah recalibrates within the fissures of colonial modernity. Characters such as Yusuf in *Paradise* and Saleh Omar in *By the Sea* embody this tension not as passive victims of psychological determinism but as subjects navigating the fraught interplay of memory, survival, and historical erasure. Yusuf's passive acquiescence to servitude, for instance, transcends Freud's model of repression as mere psychic defense; it becomes a somatic inscription of colonial violence, where his fragmented identity, manifest in disorientation and recurring dreams of escape, serves as both a symptom of trauma and a subversive act of resistance. His dreams, imbued with symbols of unattainable freedom, function as Freudian 'compromise formations' where repressed desires for agency clash with the material constraints of indentured labor. Similarly, Saleh Omar's elliptical narration, marked by strategic omissions and silences, does not merely reflect unconscious defense mechanisms but critiques the epistemic violence of colonial historiography, which renders certain traumas unspeakable. Gurnah's innovation lies in situating these Freudian dynamics within the *longue durée* of colonial dislocation, where forgetting operates as a double-edged sword: a survival strategy for the individual and a form of collective amnesia that perpetuates systemic erasure.

This interplay between repression and revelation extends into the familial sphere, which Gurnah reconceptualizes as a microcosm of colonial sociopolitical hierarchies. In *Memory of Departure, Paradise, By the Sea* and *Desertion*, the family emerges not as a sanctuary but as a contested site where patriarchal tyranny, neglect, and betrayal mirror the broader disintegration of cultural and communal bonds under colonial rule. Gurnah's narrative strategy reflects in his craft of diverging from the linear colonial strata towards more powerful yet dysfunctional agency of family, culture, society and religion. These institutes which Gurnah situates most of his characters and narration in, portrays the already infected native structures where evils existed, families haunted the children and

women more, where sexual abuse was evident and hypermasculinity entertained. Hassan's abusive father, whose oscillating persona, pious patriarch by day, drunken tyrant by night epitomizes what Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* terms the "Manichean delirium" (41) of colonial subjectivity. His violent assertion of dominance, such as raping his wife in front of their children, is not merely an act of domestic brutality but a performance of power that replicates the dehumanizing logic of colonial authority. Here, the familial becomes a theater of colonial mimicry, where the father's brutality internalizes and reenacts the violence of the colonizer, collapsing the boundary between private trauma and public oppression. Yusuf's displacement from his parents and his submission to the oppressive authority of his 'uncle' Aziz highlights the erosion of familial bonds under the weight of external exploitation. This echoes Freud's assertion that early relational disruptions leave indelible marks on the psyche, as Yusuf's passive resistance and internalized trauma reveal the lingering impact of his alienation. Gurnah's framing of familial trauma as a conduit for intergenerational suffering challenges Freud's emphasis on childhood as a universalized developmental stage. Instead, he positions childhood experiences, such as Hassan's exposure to paternal violence or Yusuf's forced separation from his family as historical allegories. These narratives refract the broader collapse of post-independence nationalist projects, where the patriarchal family, much like the nascent postcolonial state, fails to protect its members from inherited cycles of exploitation. The intergenerational transmission of trauma in *Afterlives, Paradise* and *Desertion*, for example, is not merely a Freudian repetition compulsion but a critique of the unresolved legacies of German colonial rule in East Africa. Rashid's abandonment by his father, Amin, and his subsequent estrangement from his own children, mirrors the fragmented genealogies of a nation struggling to reconcile its precolonial past with its colonized present.

Crucially, Gurnah complicates Freud's topographical model of the psyche by infusing it with a materialist critique of colonialism. The "return of the repressed" in his novels is not confined to neurotic symptoms but manifests as somatic and spatial ruptures Yusuf's recurring dreams of escape, Saleh Omar's fragmented recollections of Zanzibar, or the decaying domestic spaces in *Afterlives*. These motifs resonate with Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* concept of the "unhomely" (9) where the domestic sphere becomes a palimpsest of colonial intrusion. The family home, once a site of cultural continuity, is reconfigured as a space of disjuncture, its walls bearing the psychic scars of displacement and its rituals distorted by the demands of survival under empire.

By embedding familial trauma within the historical specificities of East African colonialism, Gurnah exposes the limitations of Freud's Eurocentric framework. While Freudian theory illuminates the psychic mechanisms of repression, symptom formation, resistance and common neurotic state of characters in Gurnah, it fails to account for how colonial violence such as land dispossession, cultural erasure, and labor exploitation shapes the very architecture of trauma. Gurnah's characters do not merely 'remember' repressed events; they inhabit a present perpetually haunted by the aftershocks of history. In *Desertion*, the unresolved betrayal between Amin and Jamila across generations is not a private familial drama but a metonym for the broken promises of postcolonial sovereignty. Similarly, Hassan's flight from his abusive household in *Memory of Departure* allegorizes the diasporic condition, where escape from familial trauma becomes synonymous with exile from the nation itself.

In synthesizing Freudian psychoanalysis with Caruthian, Fanonian and Bhabhaian critiques, Gurnah's fiction thus redefines trauma as a dialectic of silence and testimony, where the unspeakable residues of colonial violence are both buried and unearthed through narrative. The family, in this schema, is not a passive vessel for transmitting trauma but

an active agent in its reproduction, a site where the psychic and the political, the intimate and the imperial, converge. This critical reframing not only expands the theoretical horizons of trauma studies but also demands a decolonial re-reading of Freud, one that centers the material and historical specificities of colonized subjects.

Gurnah's narrative architecture further mirrors the psychological dislocations of his characters. The disjointed temporalities and layered recollections in *By the Sea* and *Desertion* reflect Freud's concept of *Nachträglichkeit* (deferred action), where traumatic experiences gain new meaning through retroactive reinterpretation. Saleh Omar's fragmented storytelling, for instance, resists linear articulation, embodying the Freudian 'return of the repressed' while critiquing colonial historiography's linear, progressive narratives. Similarly, Yusuf's nightmares in *Paradise* imbued with symbols of unattainable freedom, serve as Freudian 'screen memories,' obscuring deeper traumas while hinting at subconscious resistance. These techniques not only mirror psychological fragmentation but also challenge Eurocentric psychoanalytic models by foregrounding the cultural specificities of trauma.

Gurnah's interrogation of cultural hybridity and the "unhomely" (Bhabha) transcends mere thematic exploration, emerging as a radical reconfiguration of postcolonial subjectivity itself. Characters such as Latif in *By the Sea*, Ilyas in *Afterlives* and Yusuf in *Paradise* inhabit liminal spaces where cultural, linguistic, and historical dissonances coalesce, rendering their identities both fragmented and fluid. Latif's fluency in Swahili, Arabic, and English, for instance, is not merely a marker of diasporic displacement but a performative act of survival, a linguistic bricolage that destabilizes colonial hierarchies of language. His polyglot identity echoes Homi Bhabha's theorization of hybridity as a 'third space, where cultural translation becomes a subversive practice. Yet, Gurnah complicates this by embedding such hybridity within the material violence of

colonial history. Latif's linguistic dexterity, while enabling negotiation with oppressive systems, also entraps him in what Abdul Jan Mohamed terms the "manichean allegory" of colonial discourse, a duality where language becomes both a weapon and a wound. Gurnah portrays the weapon and wound context beautifully yet very tragically in *By the Sea,* where Hussein, a child is raped and abused by the aggressor who is a grown-up man of 30. This psychosexual abuse and traumas are reflected in how Hussein is tormented by this cruel act just because his father is colonially opinionated into believing the supremacy of language. Hassan the aggressor promises Hussein that he would teach him the English language and instead rapes him to the extent that Hussein runs away with him in the context of identifying with the aggressor. Similarly, Ilyas in *Afterlives*, caught between German colonial brutality and Swahili cultural erasure, embodies the "unhomely" as a site of psychic rupture. When Ilyas attempts to defend the colonizers, nobody is convinced. Someone replies, "My friend, they have eaten you (52)". His inability to reconcile his African heritage with his forced assimilation into German military structures mirrors Bhabha's assertion that the unhomely is "the shock of recognition of the world-in-the-home, the home-in-the-world" (9). In Gurnah's fiction, the domestic sphere, whether Yusuf's indentured servitude in *Paradise* or Latif's exile in *By the Sea* becomes a palimpsest of colonial intrusion, where the intimate and the imperial collide. What Gurnah's craft achieved very successfully is that it's not the home that's lost, it's not just the land that is lost which breaks the psyche of the characters, generally in other narratives who live in exile and dream of coming back home. Gurnah's narratives give the characters the opportunity to come back only to find themselves lost within the thin line of 'Inbetweenness'. This void of inbetweenness inflicts the psyche of the characters and the author himself, as Gurnah himself tried returning but could not, Yusuf's homelessness within a home portrays a grim reality of dysfunctional familial, social, cultural and

colonial structures. In *Admiring Silence* Gurnah portrays the temporality and Inbetweenness of home, the contestation as:

> It wasn't England that was home […] but the life I had known with Emma. It was the secretest, most complete, most real part of me. I knew that now, and wanted to finish with what needed to be said and done and return to her, return home from here that is no longer home. (170)

Admiring Silence substantiates Edward Said's (1999) 'The Treason of the Intellectuals', Al-Ahram Weekly, June 30, assertion that "there is no such thing as a genuine, uncomplicated return to one's home" (9) by illustrating how the motif of homecoming complicates identity formation for displaced individuals. Gurnah, who himself experienced the disorienting reality of returning to Zanzibar after years of exile, reflects in the interview appended to this study that the concept of "home" remains fluid, oscillating between the remembered *oikos* of his youth and the life he constructed in England. *Admiring Silence's* portrayal of return exposes a rupture between past and present that simultaneously empowers and obstructs. On one hand, it captures the returnee's deepening alienation from familial, communal, and national ties, "always being and feeling on the edges of everything" (213). On the other, it lays bare the dissonance between nostalgic memories and the stark realities of a transformed homeland, underscoring the impossibility of reconciling idealized pasts with lived presents. Evan Maina Mwangi's (2009) argument highlights how postmodern African literature does not exist in isolation from either its indigenous traditions or the influences of global modernity. Instead, it thrives in a complex, fluid space where local cultural values and global anxieties intersect. By retaining the quote:

> The [African] literatures mix local values with global desires and anxieties to signal what Bhabha has called 'interstitial spaces,' locations in which

> precolonial practices are not separated from colonial modernity but are mediated through mutual exchange". (138)

Mwangi underscores the hybridity that defines African literature. This idea aligns with Homi Bhabha's concept of *interstitial spaces*, which refers to cultural in-betweenness where different historical moments, traditions, and ideologies are not distinctly separated but interact in a continuous process of transformation. African literature, in this sense, does not merely contrast precolonial traditions with colonial or postcolonial realities; rather, it negotiates and reinterprets them through a reciprocal process. Precolonial cultural elements persist, but they are constantly reshaped by modernity, globalization, and colonial histories, leading to a literature that reflects both historical consciousness and contemporary struggles.

This exploration of hybridity is inextricably linked to power imbalances rooted in gendered and colonial violence. Gurnah's unflinching portrayal of sexual violence, sodomy, marital rape, normative exploration of sexuality and transactional exploitation, exposes the systemic normalization of abuse under hypermasculine colonial orders. In *Memory of Departure*, Said's predation on young boys, framed as a "sport" (23), is not an aberration but a ritualized performance of power that mirrors the colonial logic of domination. The grooming tactics Abbas employs on Hassan, luring him with pennies to "soften [him] up for the big fuck" echo Douglas Pryor's analysis of predation as "pre-meditated behaviour" (123), yet Gurnah situates this within the broader economy of colonial exploitation. These acts, which John Stoltenberg terms "antisexual sex" (224), function as microcosms of imperial violence, where the bodies of the marginalized become sites for enacting colonial hierarchies. Gurnah's refusal to sensationalize or psychologize these violations presenting them instead with stark, almost clinical detachment, critiques the societal complicity that naturalizes such brutality. This narrative strategy aligns with

Ann Laura Stoler's *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power* contention that colonial regimes perpetuated violence not through overt spectacle but through "the quiet, mundane, and intimate" (8), rendering trauma both ubiquitous and invisible.

The theoretical tensions between Freudian psychoanalysis and postcolonial critique are further crystallized in Gurnah's treatment of silence and testimony. While Freud privileges verbal articulation as a pathway to catharsis, Gurnah's narratives particularly *Memory of Departure* and *By the Sea* foreground silence as a form of resistance. Hassan's inability to articulate his abuse to his mother, or Saleh Omar's fragmented recollections of Zanzibar, are not mere failures of memory but deliberate acts of withholding that challenge the colonial imperative to render trauma legible. These silences resonate with Gayatri Spivak's critique of the subaltern's muted voice *Can the Subaltern Speak?* yet Gurnah reframes them as agential spaces where unspoken traumas resist assimilation into dominant narratives. The Freudian 'talking cure' is thus subverted; in Gurnah's world, silence becomes a counter-archive, preserving the incommensurability of colonial suffering.

This duality is epitomized in *Afterlives*, where Afiya and Ilyas grapple with cultural erasure. Their struggles manifest in somatic symptoms like Afiya's migraines or Ilyas's hypervigilance and Yusuf's nightmares, align with Bessel van der Kolk's assertion that "the body keeps the score" (21), yet these manifestations are inextricable from the historical weight of German colonialism in East Africa. Gurnah's characters do not merely "repress" trauma; they embody it as a lived dialectic of absence and presence, where the unsaid reverberates louder than the spoken. This challenges Freud's Eurocentric model, which neglects how colonial violence reshapes the very architecture of the psyche. For instance, Yusuf's recurring dreams in *Paradise* of escape through vast, unknowable landscapes are not just Freudian wish-fulfillments but allegories of the collective yearning for liberation from colonial epistemicide.

His fiction reveals that trauma in postcolonial contexts cannot be disentangled from the material and historical specificities of empire, the theft of land, the erasure of language, the commodification of bodies. Instead, Gurnah invites a reading that centers what Walter Mignolo calls 'border thinking' in *Local Histories/Global Designs*, a mode of analysis that straddles Western theory and indigenous epistemologies, acknowledging trauma as both psychic wound and political critique. Gurnah's narratives reframe cultural hybridity and the unhomely not as conditions to be resolved but as sites of radical possibility. Achille Mbembe's (2001) notion of "entanglement" *On the Postcolony* supports such a synthesis, suggesting that African postcolonial subjectivities are formed at the intersection of indigenous and colonial epistemes, making it both historically accurate and analytically necessary to use an interdisciplinary lens. Thus, the efficacy of the outcome is not undermined by using Freud, provided that his concepts are reinterpreted through, and in constant conversation with, African philosophical and cultural frameworks, ensuring that the analysis speaks to both the specificity of Gurnah's Zanzibar settings and the broader universality of human psychic suffering. In the interstitial spaces between languages, identities, and histories, his characters forge resistant subjectivities that defy colonial binaries.

Abdulrazak Gurnah's narrative craft, particularly his refusal to resolve *Paradise* with conventional closure, transcends mere aesthetic experimentation. Instead, it functions as a profound engagement with the psychodynamics of colonial trauma, memory, and fractured identity. Yusuf's impulsive decision to join the German forces, an act that "ran after the column" (255) epitomizes the collapse of agency under the weight of unresolved psychic conflict. Far from an arbitrary narrative choice, this open-endedness crystallizes Freudian and Ferenczian frameworks, revealing how colonial subjugation infiltrates the unconscious, distorting selfhood and perpetuating cycles of violence. Gurnah's insistence

on ambiguity is not a failure of logic but a deliberate mirroring of colonialism's corrosive legacy, where trauma resists linear resolution and instead manifests as compulsive repetition. Central to this analysis is Freud's conception of neurosis as a "senseless obsessional action" (317), wherein the traumatized subject enacts repressed memories in futile attempts to rectify the past. Yusuf's enlistment with the Germans a gesture of both surrender and survival, aligns with Ferenczi's 'identification with the aggressor' (1933), exposing the paradox of agency under colonial domination: complicity becomes a distorted form of self- preservation. His act, steeped in transgenerational trauma, reflects what the thesis terms the "pluperfect errand" (17), a return to the origins of subjugation that underscores colonialism's recursive violence. Gurnah's narrative thus refuses catharsis, insisting instead on the haunting persistence of historical wounds within the psyche.

Critically, this approach challenges readers to confront the inadequacy of binary narratives resistance versus complicity, victimhood versus agency, in contexts shaped by coloniality. By foregrounding Yusuf's psychological paralysis and "existential stagnation" (21), Gurnah illuminates how traumas like Freud in (1916) calls "extensive formation of symptoms" (406) erodes the possibility of coherent action, rendering closure illusory. His work, rooted in the interplay of memory and psyche as he himself acknowledges, demands a psychoanalytic lens to unravel the layered tensions between individual trauma and collective historical erasure.

Gurnah's open-endedness is a radical narrative ethic, one that rejects the commodification of trauma into digestible arcs. It compels us to sit with the discomfort of irresolution, to recognize colonialism not as a concluded historical chapter but as a living, unresolved force. For scholars, this underscores the urgency of psychoanalytical methodologies in postcolonial studies: only through such frameworks can we decode the unconscious transmissions of coloniality that Gurnah's fiction so masterfully encodes.

His work, then, is not merely a literary artifact but a psychological archive, a testament to the indissoluble ties between memory, identity, and the enduring specters of empire.

This research positions literature as an insurgent archive, capable of excavating silenced histories and amplifying marginalized voices that conventional historiography often erase. Gurnah's novels like *Paradise*, *By the Sea*, *Afterlives*, and others do not merely depict trauma; they enact what Saidiya Hartman terms "critical fabulation" in *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*, weaving fragmented memories into counter- narratives that defy colonial amnesia. By meticulously tracing the psychological contours of characters like Yusuf and Saleh Omar, Gurnah bridges the chasm between individual suffering and collective trauma, revealing how colonial violence reverberates across generations and geographies. His work resonates with Ann Cvetkovich's notion of an 'archive of feelings' where trauma is stored not in official records but in the affective residues of storytelling.

The interdisciplinary synthesis of Freudian psychoanalysis, Fanonian critique, and Bhabhaian hybridity in this thesis underscores literature's unique capacity to dismantle disciplinary silos. Gurnah's narratives demand a hermeneutics that is both psychoanalytically nuanced and historically grounded, where Yusuf's dreams of escape or Afiya's migraines are read as somatic inscriptions of colonial dislocation as well as familial dysfunction. This approach aligns with Paul Gilroy's call for a 'postcolonial melancholia' that acknowledges the unresolved legacies of empire while fostering ethical remembrance. By framing trauma as a dialectic of repression and resistance, Gurnah's fiction compels literary criticism to confront its complicity in privileging Western epistemologies, advocating instead for methodologies that center subaltern epistemes.

Future Research Directions:

The critical interventions of this thesis open transformative avenues for future scholarship, inviting rigorous engagement with the following: Intersectional Feminist

Readings: A deeper interrogation of female characters like Zuleikha, Ma Ajuza in *Paradise*, Afiya in *Afterlives*, Zakiya in *Memory of Departure* or Jamila in *Desertion,* through intersectional frameworks could illuminate how gender, race, and class converge in experiences of colonial violence. Incorporating Sylvia Tamale's decolonial feminism *Decolonization and Afro-Feminism* or Chandra Talpade Mohanty's transnational lens *Feminism Without Borders* might reveal how Gurnah's women navigate patriarchal and imperial hierarchies while forging clandestine networks of resilience.

Psychoanalysis of Complicity: Examining characters complicit in colonial systems such as Aziz (*Paradise*) or Khalifa (*Afterlives*) through the lens of "identification with the aggressor" (Anna Freud) could unravel the psychological fragmentation of collaborators. This might extend to Frantz Fanon's concept of "epidermalization" in *Black Skin, White Masks*, exploring how internalized racism and self-alienation manifest in Gurnah's morally ambiguous figures.

Comparative Postcolonial Trauma: Contrasting Gurnah's oeuvre with works by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (e.g., *Wizard of the Crow*) or Jamaica Kincaid (*A Small Place*) could delineate how trauma narratives vary across African, Caribbean, and diasporic contexts. Such studies might employ Françoise Vergès' concept of "racial capitalocène" from *A Decolonial Ecology* to analyze environmental trauma in plantation economies versus urban diasporas. Decolonial Psychoanalysis and Indigenous Epistemologies: Integrating Freud with indigenous knowledge systems such as Ubuntu ethics or Swahili concepts of *hamni* (collective grief) could decolonize trauma theory. Engaging scholars like María Lugones (*Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes*) or Linda Tuhiwai Smith (*Decolonizing Methodologies*) might recenter non-Western healing practices, challenging the pathologizing gaze of Eurocentric models.

Digital Humanities and Trauma Mapping: Utilizing digital tools to map trauma's

spatial and temporal dispersion in Gurnah's novels e.g., geolocating Yusuf's journey in *Paradise* or visualizing Saleh Omar's fragmented memories in *By the Sea* could offer innovative methodologies for analyzing narrative dislocation. This aligns with Franco Moretti's "distant reading" (*Graphs, Maps, Trees*) but demands ethical frameworks to avoid replicating colonial data extraction.

Final Reflection: In Abdulrazak Gurnah's fiction, trauma is neither a closed wound nor a static scar but a living current force that shapes, distorts, and ultimately redefines the contours of human existence. Through the prism of Freudian psychoanalysis, this thesis has unraveled the psychological intricacies of characters whose suffering is inextricable from the violent legacies of German and British colonialism. Yet, Gurnah's narratives transcend the diagnostic, transforming trauma into a site of radical possibility. Yusuf's dreams of escape in *Paradise* are not mere Freudian wish-fulfillments but acts of imaginative resistance, where the subconscious defies the material shackles of indenture. Saleh Omar's silences in *By the Sea* echo Édouard Glissant's "right to opacity" (*Poetics of Relation*), asserting the incommensurability of colonial suffering while refusing its commodification. Gurnah's work dares to envision healing not as a return to an idealized past but as a fraught, ongoing negotiation with history's ghosts. Afiya's tentative hope in *Afterlives*, her determination to "stitch the fragments [of her life] into something whole" mirrors the broader postcolonial project of reassembling identities fractured by empire. This is not redemption but reinvention: a testament to what Toni Morrison, in *Beloved*, termed "rememory" the deliberate, painful act of reclaiming what power seeks to erase.

This thesis reaffirms literature's role as both witness and weaver of worlds. Gurnah's novels do not merely reflect the human condition; they interrogate it, demanding that we confront the spectral residues of colonialism in our present, the racialized borders,

the gendered violences, the epistemic erasures. In doing so, they offer not closure but a charge: to listen to the whispers of the unspoken, to dwell in the ambiguities of the unhomely, and to recognize in trauma's fissures the potential for collective reimagining. As Gurnah's notion of writing is, 'To survive is to tell and To tell is to survive.' In this dialectic of silence and speech, memory and forgetting, lies literature's enduring power not to heal the fractures of history but to illuminate them, forging pathways where light might yet enter. This study also deliberately traced both personal and colonial dimensions of trauma to avoid reducing everything to imperial history. For example, in *Memory of Departure*, Hassan's suffering is not only colonial but also rooted in his abusive father and fractured family. In *Paradise*, Yusuf's servitude is colonial but also deeply personal, he experiences emotional abandonment due to familial dysfunctionality and Gurnah himself mentions in one of the interviews that the evils existed way before colonialism gripped East Africa. So, it's not all because of colonialism that traumas exist and the evils exist but it's nuanced and multilayered that we explored through psychoanalysis, trauma studies within the colonial engagements in this study. By showing how colonialism intersects with family structures and intimate relationships, the study presents a layered picture of trauma. The focus is not on overshadowing but on showing how historical forces penetrate the private sphere.

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