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FACULTY OF LETTERS AND LANGUAGES

DOMAIN: FOREIGN LANGUAGES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

STREAM: ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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OPTION: LITERATURE AND CIVILIZATION

**DISPLACEMENT, HOME, AND IDENTITY**  
**ISSUES IN ABDULRAZAK GURNAH'S**  
*PARADISE*

A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for a Master's Degree in Literature and Civilization

Candidate: Ms. ARBIA Leila

Supervisor: Dr. MIHOUBI Houria

2021/ 2022

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates postcolonialism in Abdulrazak Gurnah' *Paradise* (1994). Gurnah provides us with a snapshot of life in the eastern coast of Africa before the coming of the Europeans. This life was characterized by multiple wicked practices rooted in the African communities such as slavery, displacement, social hierarchy, and racial stereotypes. The current study is actually discussed through a descriptive analytical approach for portraying the issue of migration and its effects on the subject. It also discusses the theme of identity and how it changes from being static to fluctuating. Thus, the research is made up of two main chapters. The first chapter is theoretical and deals with a socio-historical and a conceptual framework. The second chapter represents the core of the study in which the postcolonial theory is applied.

**Key words:** postcolonialism, migration, slavery, identity.

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is sincerely dedicated to

The most generous and tender woman in the world, my mother. Thank you for all your encouragement, sacrifice, devotion, love and tears.

To the one who is always by my side, my father.

To my dear sisters.

Special dedication to my soul mate, my best friend, Fairouza

**Leila**

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In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

First and Foremost I thank Allah for providing me with the strength and patience  
to finish this work.

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### CHAPTER TWO

#### DISPLACEMENT, HOME, AND IDENTITY IN *PARADISE*

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## INTRODUCTION

Postcolonialism is a very broad field of study. Its writers are overwhelmed with issues such as colonialism, language, migration, exile, home, memory, and identity. These issues are at the core of the Noble Prize laureate Abdulrazak Gurnah's writings. This research provides a nuanced reading of his fourth novel *Paradise*<sup>1</sup> (1994).

*Paradise* is to a great extent a postcolonial work. In order to test this hypothesis, the dissertation attempts to answer a number of questions. The main question that shapes this dissertation is in what way *Paradise* is a postcolonial work. In order to answer this latter question, a number of sub-questions should be posed. This research demonstrates how some oppressive practices such as slavery existed in Africa, particularly the coastal east, long before the coming of the European colonizers. This study also examines how *Paradise* portrays the fate of the displaced characters in the middle of multiple cultures. Moreover, it clarifies the way in which the experience of migration and displacement can be psychologically detrimental to the displaced as well as the role of this experience in the maturity of the protagonist. Additionally, the research analyzes the way coming of age issue is addressed in the novel and gives an explanation of how the protagonist's identity changes from being static and fixed to changing and fluid, depending on the setting and context he is in. Finally, a demonstration of how postcolonialism is reflected on *Paradise* at the level of the language and form is of paramount importance in this work.

*Displacement, Home, and Identity Issues in Abdulrazak Gurnah's Paradise* is going to be conducted using a postcolonial theory. Therefore, through a descriptive and analytical reading, the current study aims at highlighting the postcolonial elements in *Paradise* by means of exploring its major themes: slavery, migration, racial discrimination, identity, and language.

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<sup>1</sup> Summary of *Paradise is* provided in Appendix 1.

It also attempts to demonstrate the damaging effects of displacement on the psychology of the characters. Another aim is to show the diverse phases of the development of personality and the construction of identity while coming of age. This study is conducted using qualitative method since the data used in this research is in the form of text. The information which is in the form of words, phrases, and sentences are carefully chosen as textual evidences to answer the research questions. The following corpus of studies will help conduct this study and fulfill these aims.

This review aims at identifying the multiple works done by scholars so as to study and analyse Gurnah's *Paradise*. This is in order to justify the gap that is to be filled by this study. Each scholar has chosen to examine *Paradise* from a particular point of view. Compared to other African writers and novelists such as Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiongo, the Tanzanian writer Abdurazak Gurnah has not been given much attention from literary scholars and critics. A number of researches has examined his works. As soon as the Noble Prize committee declared the winner of the Noble Prize in literature 2021, many scholars and researchers have become interested in studying the literary works of the little-known writer Abdurazak Gurnah. On the 7<sup>th</sup> of October, 2021, the Permanent Secretary of the Swedish Academy Mats Malm announced that The Noble Prize in literature 2021 was awarded to Abdurazak Gurnah "for his uncompromising and compassionate penetration of the effects of colonialism and the fate of the refugee in the gulf between cultures and continents."

In 2009, the African literary scholar Johan Jacobs considers, in his article *Trading Places in Abdurazak Gurnah's Paradise* that *Paradise* is a postcolonial work. It is postcolonial since it "provides a narrative reversal and revision of Conrad's canonical text, *Heart of Darkness* (1902), self-consciously returning its colonial gaze from a postcolonial position" (77). Jacobs explains that Gurnah's novel is a writing back to Josef Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* because it offers its readers a story of a journey to the "heart of darkness", but from

the East Coast of Africa and with a purely African touch. Gurnah provides his readers with a distinct topography of Africa which is absolutely different from that of Conrad.

Jacobs maintains that in *Paradise* “servitude and slavery are not simply the consequence of European colonization but have always been inextricably woven into the social fabric.” (86). Gurnah portrays the pre-colonial East Africa on the verge of a radical change mainly brought by the European colonizer. His focus is on the African life with its multiple beliefs, rituals, traditions, and values on the eve of the German colonialism. To put it more simply, issues like slavery, servitude, and racial stereotypes were deeply rooted in the East African world before the coming of the colonizer. This fact, it goes without saying, does not deny the cruelties and crimes committed by the German colonization. Gurnah states: “the history of the German colonialism in East Africa is the history of terror” (qtd. in Jones 42).

In addition, in his Ph.D dissertation entitled *Itinerant Narratives: Travel, Identity and Literary Form in Abdulrazak Gurnah's Fiction*, Marco Roberto sees that Gurnah's depiction of the theme of slavery totally differs from the colonial one. Unlike the European accounts in which the story of slavery is told by the superior western characters and from an angle that serves their imperial interests, Gurnah chooses to reverse this by giving opportunity to the minorities— Arab merchants, young male and female slaves, Indian Sikhs —to raise their voices which “were previously silenced, distorted or ‘translated’ by colonial master-narratives.” (Roberto 137). In an interview with the *Deccan Herald* newspaper, Gurnah declares that one of the major motives behind writing *paradise* was rewriting the history of slavery in East Africa which was, for many years, represented from a western European point of view.

The notion of otherness is of paramount importance in Gurnah's *paradise*. In Elizabeth Maslen's opinion, otherness is ‘a necessary means of self-construction, self-affirmation’ (qtd. in Roberto 55). The fact that *Paradise* is set in East Africa particularly in the Swahili coast

makes it a crossroad for multiple cultures. People of different races, religions, and beliefs are gathered from scattered places so as to trade. Any reader of this novel will notice the crystal-clear process of othering which is shown in the culturally-diverse characters' use of the two terms 'civilized' and 'savage'. Maslen explains that each character in the novel tries to set himself superior to the other as a way of identifying and asserting himself.

Another research on Gurnah's oeuvre is made by Alfred Oyaro Omwenga. In his MA dissertation entitled *Silence as a Strategy for Trauma Enunciation in Selected Fiction of Abdulrazak Gurnah: Paradise (1994) and Desertion (2005)*, Omwenga attempts to show how silence is used mainly by the protagonist Yusuf as a refuge from his trauma. This study explains the circumstances, such as enforced migration, servitude, and racial stereotypes, which Yusuf goes through during his journey and how they make him unable to speak and express himself in many instances.

While many researchers tried to study *Paradise* from a postcolonial angle dealing with themes such as migration, slavery, and trade, Anne Ajulu Okungu, in his Ph.D dissertation entitled *Reading Abdulrazak Gurnah: Narrating Power and Human Relationships*, discusses the diverse power relationships between characters. According to him, *Paradise's* readers are given "an opportunity to read East Africa through the basic units of the community, focusing on ordinary everyday lives and interactions." (17). He applies the ideas of Foucault on power who sees it as pervasive in the society and is in "constant flux and negotiation". (qtd. in Okungo 4)

Furthermore, in his article *Gender identities and the search for new spaces: Abdulrazak Gurnah's Paradise*, Eleanor Anneh Dasi discusses the theme of identity and the diverse notions of gender in *Paradise*. In terms of gender roles, Dasi claims that Gurnah's *Paradise* focuses on "women who defy their traditional gender roles and Muslim men in search of a new kind of

masculinity” (116). In his view characters manifest various gender and sexual identities. Most of them do not follow the mainstream society, but rather they act oppositely to the socio-cultural and biological definitions of their genders.

This dissertation adds to these a reading of Gurnah’s fourth novel *paradise*. It demonstrates the effects of migration on the displaced and how this experience plays an important role in his self-discovery and maturity.

One of the motives behind the choice of this work is that postcolonial fiction is an interesting genre of literature. More importantly, Gurnah’s *Paradise* is a novel which tackles issues of our modern-day life. The issues of displacement, home, and identity are part of the everyday life of each one of us though one may not pay attention to. *Paradise* is the novel which grants its author the 2021 Noble prize in literature. It is due to this achievement for the African literature that my curiosity pushes me to start this study.

This dissertation is outlined as follows: the first chapter, “Theoretical and Sociohistorical Context”, is the theoretical part of this dissertation. It presents the postcolonial theory which is to be applied on the novel. It also gives multiple definitions of some key concepts: slavery, displacement, home, inbetweenness, and identity. Next, in order to contextualize the novel, the biography of Abdulrazak Gurnah is offered, highlighting some chief characteristics in his writings. On the other hand, the second chapter, “Displacement, Home, and Identity in Gurnah's *Paradise*”, represents the core of this study in which the postcolonial theory is applied. The first section of this chapter examines the themes of slavery, displacement, and identity in *Paradise* while the second section deals with the linguistic and stylistic devices used by the author to convey his concerns.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THEORETICAL AND SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The opening chapter of this dissertation introduces the background for our research. It offers a socio-historical context to the novel which is to be studied, *Paradise*. Providing a social and a historical context to the novel goes hand in hand with the theoretical approach to be applied. Therefore, an overview about the postcolonial criticism is essential too.

In this chapter, we attempt to give some definitions concerning the postcolonial criticism and show how this school of thought emerged and who were its leaders. We also discuss some of its major themes such as migration, displacement, home and their effect on the subject's identity.

Secondly, as a prerequisite for this research, the social and the historical context in which *Paradise* is set is mandatory. Therefore, this chapter deals with the issues of slavery and slave trade in East Africa before the coming of the Europeans. In other words, we discuss the role of the Arabs in slave trade.

Finally, at the end of this chapter, we try to offer some pieces of information about the life of the Tanzanian writer Abdurazak Ghurnah and his literary works and writings.

#### **I. 1. Postcolonialism: a Theoretical Background**

Neil Lazarus, in *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies* (2004), stated that prior to the 1970s postcolonial studies did not exist as an academic field of study. Currently, this new branch of literary studies is highly present in the different universities of the world. Many postcolonial research centers have been established not only in the field of literature, but also in other fields such as culture, history, etc. Many journals started to become

known under the broad term "postcolonialism" which refers to postcolonial theory, writings, etc.

However, this does not mean that there were no works dealing with postcolonial issues prior to the 1970s. Many anti-colonial writings have been published by different journals such as *African Literature Today* (1986). Postcolonialism was mostly used to refer to the aftermath of colonial rule. Neil Lazarus defines postcolonialism as follows:

“Post-colonial” (or “postcolonial”- the American variant), in these usages from the early 1970s, was a periodising term, historical and not an ideological concept. It bespoke no political desire or aspiration, looked forward to no particular social or political order. Erstwhile colonial territories that had been decolonized were —postcolonial states. It was as simple as that. (02)

It is so important to draw the readers’ attention to the fact that critics till now could not agree on one definition of the term postcolonialism. Due to its difficulty and ambiguity, multiple definitions have been given to postcolonialism, each focusing on a particular aspect. Some of these definitions are to be discussed in the following.

The American literary theorist of Palestinian descent Edward Said is one of the founders of postcolonialism. The publication of his great work *Orientalism* (1978) is considered to be the spark that gave birth to the postcolonial theory. Leela Gandhi, a postcolonial critic, sees that Edward Said was highly influenced by the ideas of Derrida and Foucault. Therefore, the origins of this theory can be traced back to Poststructuralism and Postmodernism, and their relation to Marxism. She says in her book *Postcolonial Theory: A critical Introduction*:

Some hostile critics have been quick to attribute the links between postcolonialism and poststructuralism to temporal contingency and, therefore, to academic fashion alone. And in truth the alliance with poststructuralism has indeed

enabled postcolonialism to gain a privileged foothold within the metropolitan academic mainstream [...] thus, in a shift from the predominantly economic paradigms of Marxist thought, postcolonialism has learnt- through its poststructuralist parentage- to diagnose the material effects and implications of colonialism as an epistemological malaise at the heart of Western rationality. (25-26)

In this definition, postcolonialism is referred to as a postmodern thought. It is “a specifically postmodern intellectual discourse that consists of reactions to, and analysis of, the cultural legacy of colonialism” (Chousein). Gandhi maintains that the first phase of the postcolonial theory is Orientalism in the sense that its main concern is to defend the “marginalized other” who lives within “repressive structures” of dominative control and to reverse the prevailing arrangement of gender, culture, and race (167).

Additionally, in his essay *Some Issues in Postcolonial Theory (1998)*, John Lye also thinks that the main attention of postcolonialism is the issue of otherness and resistance. He states: “Post-colonial theory deals with the reading and writing of literature written in previously or currently colonized countries, or literature written in colonizing countries which deals with colonization or colonized peoples.” This theory sheds light on how the colonizer used his writings to give a distorted image of the colonized and instill the inferiority complex within them and also how the colonized people attempted to give a true definition of who they truly are and thus reclaiming their real history which was destroyed by the colonizer.

Enquiries about the concepts of language, home, identity, hybridity and so on are issues which postcolonial theorists attempt to clarify on the basis that the colonist wanted to control and influence those concepts by the process of “knowing” the other, as Bill Ashcroft et al. state in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*: “to name the world is to “understand” it, to know it and to have control over it” (283).

Additionally, regarding its themes and concerns, postcolonialism is described by Ashcroft et al. as a talk of “migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place, and responses to the influential master discourses of imperial Europe [...] and the fundamental experiences of speaking and writing by which all these come into being” (ibid 2).

A lot of theorists who belong to this school of thought believe that the colonized people are still under the control and domination of their colonizers even after attaining their independence, so “by exposing a culture’s colonial history, postcolonial theory empowers a society with the ability to value itself” (29). Postcolonialism is an approach which arose from the works of counter-colonial resistance authors such as Fanon, Said and Spivak.

Despite the fact that the term postcolonial was not accepted by Said and Spivak, their works in addition to the work of Bhabha, paved the way to postcolonial theorists and aided them in a way or another.

"In the course of 1980s, Commonwealth literary studies become part of the then-emerging and now vast field of literary, cultural, political and historical inquiry that we call postcolonial studies" (Bertens 200). Postcolonialism is an umbrella under which two conflicting cultures are brought together and in which one culture is superior to the other. At the end, this contact leads to the emergence of a new culture. Homi Bhabha, one of the most prominent postcolonial theorists, says:

Postcolonial perspectives emerge from the colonial testimony of Third World countries and the discourses of ‘minorities’ within the geopolitical divisions of east and west, north and south. ... They formulate their critical revisions around issues of cultural difference, social authority, and political discrimination in order to reveal the

antagonistic and ambivalent moments within the 'rationalizations' of modernity. (qtd. in Dehdari et al. 5)

Postcolonial theory and criticism fundamentally questions the destructively expansionist imperialism of the colonizing powers over the third world colonies and in particular the system of values that supported.

Said, Spivak and Bhabha are considered to be the pioneers of postcolonialism. In his book *Orientalism*, Edward Said exhibited the dominance and the suppression of the west over the east. To represent the gap between the two sides, he used the terms of "orient" and "other" to show the relationship between the western and the eastern cultures. This idea is stressed out by Leela Gandhi: "Orientalism is the first book in a trilogy devoted to an exploration of the historical imbalanced relationship between the world of Islam, the Middle East and the 'Orient' on the one hand, and that of European and American imperialism on the other" (qtd. in Kumar 346).

Edward Said's *Orientalism* studies the two opposing parts: the European superior and the non-European inferior. In his book, Said refers to *Orientalism* as "a particular and long-standing way of identifying the East as 'other' and inferior to the West" (qtd. in Barry 193). In other words, it is a western European tradition to consider all what is not white as inferior, sub-human, uncivilized and barbaric. Consequently, the west believed in and encouraged the ideology of imperialism. Therefore, *Orientalism* is a means which the West used so as to defend their belief in their superiority over the East.

The postcolonial criticism is also linked with the writings of the Indian literary theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak which deal with Marxism, feminism, and deconstruction. She has enriched the field of subaltern literature through her works. In her book *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, she talked about the state of women who are being marginalized and dominated by men

in society. According to Spivak, women are “subalterns” in postcolonial texts, meaning without a voice.

Furthermore, Homi K. Bhabha’s works *The Location of Culture* (1994) and *Nation and Narration* (1990) have made a vital role in developing postcolonial criticism. He used the concepts of hybridity, mimicry and otherness to provide a profound portrayal of the status of the colonized in postcolonialism. Bhabha’s concepts designate that cultures affect one another in the sense that they are correlated and inseparable. Bhabha looks at hybridity as “a problematic of colonial representation which reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal (of difference), so that other ‘denied’ knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority.” (Seldon et al. 227).

Another notion which was emphasized by Bhabha is the notion of cultural identity. Bhabha thinks that the colonized people unconsciously engage in a process of imitating the culture of the colonizer. This process that Bhabha called “mimicry” paves the way for the ruin of the colonized culture. By this process of mimicry, it can be said that the policies of the colonizer are effective and successful in creating the false representations as a way of impressing the colonized. On the other hand, this process also designates the start of what is known as hybridity.

## **I. 2. Displacement, Home and the Dynamics of Memory**

Migration, displacement, and exile are prevalent themes in postcolonial writings. Whether in migration, displacement, or exile there is a journey from one place to another. This journey, however, can be done either voluntarily or involuntarily depending on the reasons that push the person to change his place. During this journey, the migrant, the displaced, or the exile encounters many questionings related to his/ her identity and home.

Migration has been used by postcolonial theorists as a “metaphor” for displacement and is viewed as “a site for interrogating fixity in identity” (Naguib 22). According to Salman Rushdie, one’s displacement either linguistically or socially has given him a new perspective on life and reality. The migrant recognizes that “reality is an artefact” and refuses all “absolute forms of knowledge” (qtd in Naguib 23). To put it simply, the migrant who has come across diverse cultures has no certainty about the things around him.

Sociologically speaking, migration, in its simplest definition, means to move permanently from one place of residence to another without essentially crossing the borders of the nation. So, migration differs from immigration which means the permanent movement of people from one state to another. By migrants we refer to refugees, immigrants, and any person who takes permanent residence in places away from home.

The concept of displacement can be studied from multiple angles. Originally, displacement takes place at the geographical level when a person is forced to move from one place to another one which is unfamiliar to him. Nevertheless, displacement is not only about a loss and absence of a place, but also, a loss of context. This context is one that is located physically and non-physically in our daily life. It is the one which makes the person able to interact and communicate with others. The person feels at ease and at home due to this context. In his article *The Meaning of a Place in a World of Movement*, anthropologist David Turton argues that:

Displacement is not only about the loss of a place, and the pain and bereavement this entails. It is also, and inevitably, about the struggle to make a place in the world, a place which makes action meaningful through shared understandings and a shared interpretation of action (21)

Turton thinks that displacement is also about constructing a new place with characteristics of the former place whereby the displaced continually maintains links to imagined or real places of belonging and recognizes the new places according to familiar aspects.

Along with this displacement, the displaced starts to raise questions about the real meaning of home. According to Boym, home becomes an issue for the person only when he loses it. As soon as we “experience the first failure of homecoming”, we commence to ponder the connotations of home (qtd in Naguib 31). Douglas Porteous claims that only travellers are able to understand the meaning of home due to their temporary sense of homelessness which pushes them to try to recreate it (ibid). Prior to migration, any person gives a fixed and simple definition to home as the dwelling or the house in which one lives and does not think outside the “limits and borders of her or his experience” (ibid).

Home for a migrant is something more than a place of residence. Kabachnik et al. explain that home is thought of as a place of security and belonging (5). Everyone needs home so as to strive and go through the ups and downs of life. It is the comfort zone where we can find ourselves in harmony with others. Home is “dense with sensual experiences: specific sounds, colors, smells, shapes, conversations, and practices that distinguish it from other places” (Leontis 14). Home should not be condensed to merely a place of residence rather it is supposed to be where the heart is. One can feel and live the sense of home even when he is distant from his place of residence.

Home is a place to which one develops a strong feeling of belonging. It is “an inner geography where the ache to belong finally quits, where there is no sense of ‘otherness’, where there is, at last, a community” (Friedman 195). Feeling at home, according to Merriam-Webster

online Dictionary (2011), is to be on familiar ground; to be at ease; to be relaxed and comfortable, and to be in harmony with the surroundings.

Whenever we discuss the theme of migration or displacement, we must discuss the issue of memory. This latter has been used by migrants as a healing tool to recall their past times. Leyla Maleh sees that “memory becomes a pretext that frames the content of the authors’ experiences, and a pretext to construct a dual or juxtaposed picture of their mental and emotional make up” (37). When postcolonial authors write about their experiences as migrants, they use memory as a remedy just like any other migrant.

As soon as migrants move to a new area, they start to build their new home. The first real significance of home results from the contact between subject and place; home is the outcome of “recurrent, regular investment of meaning in a context with which people personalize and identify through some measure of control” (qtd in Naguib 33).

One major element in constructing the sense of home is time. The subject’s gradual investment in space alters the experience of place and hence creates a home in the new location. Logically, the novel area in which the migrant has just reached cannot yet be considered as home due to the lack of the two essential elements in creating the meaning of home: time and familiarity. The migrant attempts to escape his sense of homelessness either by “familiarizing the unfamiliar” and therefore constructing a home in his new space or by becoming nostalgic to what Marcel Proust calls “times past” and thus believing that home is found only in the place they left behind (ibid ).

Migrants, especially those who were obliged to escape their homelands, are much attached to their home. They “keep an idealized image of home as a paradise they were forced to flee, and never manage to entirely adopt their new dwellings. As such, they share feelings of

solitude, estrangement, loss, and longing” (ibid). This idealisation of home is considered one of the most important characteristics of the migrant culture.

### **I. 3. In-betweenness and Identity Formation**

Due to migration, new sorts of human beings have been formed: people who are rooted in ideas and memories rather than places, people who were forced to define themselves because they have been defined by others, people who deeply have amalgam between what they were and where they find themselves ( Rushdie 124-125).

The migrant finds himself lost in-between the place he left behind and the place he lives in. when people move to a new country, they rarely feel the sense of home in their new setting and they keep searching for that sense. According to Bhabha, in this condition of in-between, the displaced subjects find themselves belonging and simultaneously not belonging to two dissimilar cultures (148). In-between might be a very confusing space for a migrant since this status pushes him to start to negotiate his identity. In this space or “borderland”, Irwin claims that the dislocated person is “ living a thirdness, a new third world in which tradition no longer constitutes true identity: instead, there are multiple identities” ( 29).

Several researchers identify a close and vital relation between place, home, and identity. Kabachnik et al. consider that home is a blend of spatial, societal, psychological, and emotional components which play a significant role in the construction of identity. They point out that “the identity of the displaced is often grounded in the places they were displaced from, their old homes, even after many years” (2). When a person is displaced, he loses the context that gives meaning to his thoughts, actions, and identity. It is home and context that offer a person an identity. Therefore, if a person is displaced, his identity is displaced too.

Recently, the issue of identity has been a matter which is hotly debated in cultural studies and particularly in postcolonial criticism. A wealth of studies was produced related to the

meaning of the word, mostly within the domain of sociology, but there is no universal definition yet. Identity is a vague, contested and fluctuating concept. A key reason for this is simply that it is seen as an intangible term. The simplest definition of identity is “who or what somebody or something is or the characteristics, feeling or beliefs that distinguish people from others” (Wehmeier et al. 770). When being at home, one may not pay attention to these characteristics, feelings, and beliefs simply because these are shared by most if not all the members of his community. Thus, identity is formed within home, within a context and if that home or context is lost, one feels that his identity is lost too.

Identity turns out to be an issue or a crisis when “something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty” (Dizayi 1000). That is to say, when a person is asked “who are you?” he cannot give a clear, direct, and fixed answer.

In a modernist context, identity, on the whole, is beheld as something stable, inflexible and concentrated within the mind of human beings whose actions and features are all constructed from this psychological core. The individual has nothing to do with forming or changing his identity. In the light of this modernist insight, identity is something innate decided only by God (Arjmand 2). There is a strong opposition to this standpoint by postmodernist as well as postcolonial intellectuals who see the concept of identity as varied, conflicting, changing, multiple rather than unique and balanced.

Building on the postmodern and postcolonial interpretation, one’s identity resembles a puzzle, not a whole. This puzzle contains different parts which are the outcome of a person’s communication with many people in diverse social contexts. That is, participating in different social affairs is the major factor behind constructing one’s identity. A person inhabits numerous identities such as being a teacher, a mother, a friend and so on (ibid). In this sense, every function among these requires a distinct sort of the person’s identity to be apparent.

Postcolonial thinkers hold a high view that identity changes as time goes on. They are also confident that “the situations that a person is located in, the events that happen for him, the feelings and the emotions that he experiences leads to inevitable undergoing of identity changes every now and then” (Arjmand 3). On the whole, the concept of identity is not fixed and unique, as a person may express himself in various ways in relation to a given situation.

#### **I. 4. Displacement due to Enslavement in East Africa**

It is very known that slave trade was an essential and integral part of the African continent and its history. Millions of Africans were sold into slavery and displaced from one place to another. Slavery, according to Duncan Clarke, is “the reduction of fellow human beings to the legal status of chattels, allowing them to be bought and sold as goods” (qtd in *New African*). This is particularly what Arabs and Europeans did to Africans, trading millions of them to other parts of the world (*New African*). Slave sale in Africa took its roots from the expansion of the European and the Middle East civilization. Clarke points out:

The African slave trade, surely one of the most tragic and disturbing episodes in the history of mankind had its origins in the intervention of forces from the civilisations that developed in the regions of the Mediterranean sea — today’s Europe and the Middle East — into the arena of the more fragmented civilisations of sub-Saharan Africa.(6)

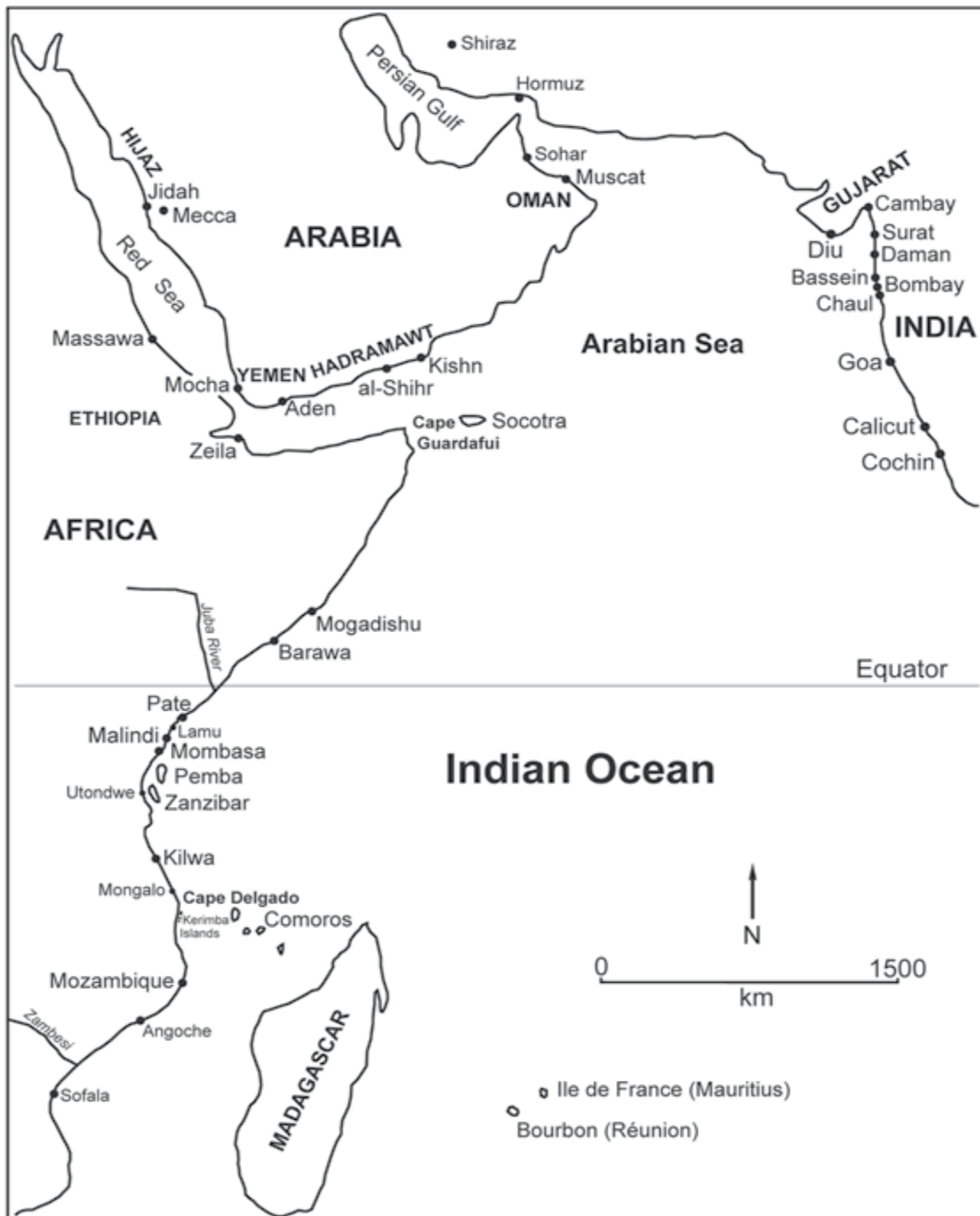
Clarke maintains that Africa supplied the people of the Mediterranean world with servile labour many decades before the discovery of the Americas.

Bondage and slave trade were ancient practices that can be traced back more than two millennia in Africa. These practices were significant features of the lives of the Africans in post-sixteenth century (Kusimba 59-60). According to Martin A. Klein, the acts of purchasing and selling slaves came to be the chief commercial activities for numerous African countries (504).

With the 19<sup>th</sup> century, East Africa witnessed a huge economic growth since “from the 1810s onwards a plantation economy flourished on the coast, which demanded plentiful servile manpower” (Vernet 37). The slave trade in east Africa centered largely in what is known as Zanzibar. It is said that during the 19th century East Africa exported 1.5 million slaves to different parts of the world. Around half of them were directed to other areas in East Africa, while the others were directed to the Indian Ocean Islands, the Middle East, India, and Brazil (Arsenault and Rose 81).

Though the slave trade had been present on the Swahili coast for centuries, during the 17th century, the main commercial power in the region was in the hands of the Omani, who required a very small number of slaves (about 2,000-3,000 per year). At the end of the 18th century, France colonized Ile-de-France and Bourbon Island (nowadays Mauritius and Reunion). The French used local sugar farms as the primary source of revenue. In 1776, however, by signing a contract between them and the sultan of Kilwa which gave them the right to be supplied with 1,000 slaves per year, they established a strong slave transaction with the Swahili coast, mainly with the coastal towns of Kilwa and Zanzibar (ibid). By the end of the century, the Omani took control of Zanzibar and gradually seized the entire coast. They dominated most of the trading posts and fostered the slave trade (Vernet 37).

Coupland points out that slave trade in Eastern Africa was unceasing and colossal since ancient times. The Arabs, according to him, were the leaders of slave trade. They settled on the coastal towns of East Africa and started sale with other parts of the continent. “A “prodigious” number of slaves had been exported, contributing to the depopulation of East Africa, and exceeding the transatlantic slave trade” (Vernet 38).



*The Swahili Coast and the Indian Ocean, 1500 - 1750*

Estimates done by the historian Paul Lovejoy show that some 9.85 million of Africans were traded as slaves to Arabia and to the Indian subcontinent. Lovejoy estimates:

Between AD 650 and 1600, an average of 5,000 Africans were shipped out by the Arabs.

This makes a rough total of 7.25 million. Then, between 1600 and 1800, another 1.4

million Africans were shipped out by the Arabs. The 19th century represented the highest point of the Arabian trade where 12,000 Africans were shipped out every year. The total figure for the 19th century alone was 1.2 million slaves to Arabia. (qtd in *New African*)

In addition to the 9.85 million, Lovejoy adds, another 4.1 million Africans were transported through the Red Sea to the Persian Gulf and India. This operation “was largely conducted by Muslims,” says Duncan Clarke (qtd. in *New African*). During the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, millions of Africans were brought by the Omani sultans of Zanzibar to work on clove plantations

#### **I. 5. Abdulrazak Gurnah: authorial information**

Abdulrazak Gurnah is a Tanzanian writer of Arab descent who writes in English and lives and works in the United Kingdom. He was born in Zanzibar, the semi-autonomous island off the east African coast. In 1964, Zanzibar underwent a revolt in which people of Arab origin were persecuted. At the age of 18, Gurnah was forced to leave his native land and immigrate to England. There, he studied at Christchurch College Canterbury in 1968. Later on, he moved to the University of Kent where he completed his PhD in 1982. When he was 21 years old, he chose to start his writing career using English although Kiswahili is his mother tongue. He is currently a Professor and Director of Graduate Studies at the University of Kent inside the Department of English

Gurnah is mainly interested in postcolonial literature and discourse. He has written many essays and articles on various postcolonial writers, including V.S. Naipaul and Salman Rushdie. He has published plentiful literary works the themes of which revolve around colonialism, slavery, identity, belonging, displacement, exile, memory and loss. In 1987, he published his first novel *Memory of Departure*. Among his other best-known works are his

1994 Booker Prize-shortlisted *Paradise* (1994), *Desertion* (2005), *By the Sea* (2011) and *Afterlives* (2020).

In 2021, Mats the Permanent Secretary of the Swedish Academy Mats Malm declared that Gurnah was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature “for his uncompromising and compassionate penetration of the effects of colonialism and the fate of the refugee in the gulf between cultures and continents.”

Postcolonialism is a literary theory which centers on issues such as migration, displacement, home, and identity. In the context of this study, servitude and slave trade were some of the major reasons that led to the displacement of millions of Africans, hence causing them a sense of not belonging and loss. In the next chapter, we attempt to illustrate how these theoretical concepts can be applied to Abdurazek Gurnah’s *Paradise*.

## CHAPTER TWO

### DISPLACEMENT, HOME, AND IDENTITY IN *PARADISE*

The second chapter of this dissertation is purely analytical; it offers a postcolonial reading of Gurnah's masterpiece, *Paradise* (1994). The first part of this chapter discusses how the issues of slavery, migration, and stereotypes in the coastal east of Africa are presented through the diverse experiences of the characters especially the protagonist. It clarifies the protagonist's experiences of migration and subjugation due to his enslavement. It also explains how the Swahili coast of Africa in which the novel is set presents a fertile ground for racial stereotypes and otherness. Moreover, this chapter elucidates the diverse effects of displacement and oppression such as the sense of fear, loss, banishment, inbetweenness, and non-belonging. The issue of identity fluctuation and construction is also examined in this chapter. The last point to be studied is the stylistic and linguistic elements employed by Gurnah to tackle his multiple and overlapping themes.

#### II. 1. Slavery, Displacement and Racial Stereotypes in *Paradise*

In an article entitled *Writing and place*, published 2004 in *Wasafiri*, Abdulrazak Gurnah states that one of the themes that has been central to his writing over the years was migration. In 1967, Gurnah decided to escape from "a time of hardship and anxiety, of state terror and calculated humiliations" in Zanzibar to the UK. In his new location, he was overwhelmed by a sense of "strangeness and difference". This feeling had pushed him to start writing "casually, in some anguish, without any sense of plan (58). The experience of migration is always pervaded with that feeling of pain, loss, and bitterness that is agitated by remembrance. The theme of memory and remembrance goes hand in hand with the theme of migration; they are inseparable. About the issue of memory, Gurnah clarifies:

I realised that I was writing from memory, and how vivid and overwhelming that memory was, how far from the strangely weightless existence of my first years in

England. That strangeness intensified the sense of a life left behind, of people casually and thoughtlessly abandoned, a place and a way of being lost to me forever, as it seemed at the time (59).

Gurnah points out that his experience as a migrant is not his unique story, but rather “one of the stories of our times” (59).

The novel under scrutiny *Paradise* is set at the turn of the twentieth century when Europeans started to invade the East African coast. It addresses the issue of local migration due to oppression and enslavement. After having been pawned to an Arab merchant, the protagonist Yusuf finds himself obliged to migrate from his town to his slaver’s town where he is also forced to migrate so as to trade with his master. *Paradise* is a novel which provides its readers with a different portrait of the eastern coast of Africa where African peoples, Arabs, Indian traders as well as Europeans form a cultural mosaic which later on results in a struggle between the several overlapping identities. In *Paradise*, Gurnah addresses issues of slavery, migration, belonging, home, and identity and demonstrates that the sense of “estrangement may be the effect of a highly volatile society, the outcome of a complex interaction of competing and converging codes, laws, and expectations that make up social reality. At no point do his works represent a zero point of identity and belonging” (Falk 25).

Gurnah’s *Paradise* is a coming of age story that revolves around the story of a young boy called Yusuf who was sold into bondage to pay his father’s debt. During his journey to the unknown, Yusuf starts to discover himself as well as the whole world around him. He calls pasts and memories and eventually commences a quest for his identity and freedom.

When dealing with issues such as oppression and racism in *Paradise*, Gurnah chooses to depict the realities of the Swahili society as it was. Gurnah claims that post-colonial literature frequently “falls into the trap of glossing over the fragmentations within indigenous cultures, in

its concern to denounce European colonization and extol native resistance” (Felicity 2). Unlike the prevailing post-colonial narratives, he does not emphasize the role of the colonizer in spreading such practices. Different sorts of control and suppression existed in the life of east Africans before the intervention of the colonial powers. He describes the multicultural Zanzibari society with its internal clashes, contradictions, and corrupt practices. For him domination has its origins in the local lands of Africa long before the coming of the colonizer. The merchant Aziz tells Yusuf and the other traders that “buying slaves from these parts was like picking fruit off a tree. [Arabs] didn’t even have to capture their victims themselves, although some of them did so for the pleasure of it. There were enough people eager to sell their cousins and neighbours for trinkets.’ (Gurnah 131) However, this does not mean that Gurnah was empathetic and compassionate towards the German colonizer. Schwerdt points out that *Paradise* “describes a period in which Africans, having grown accustomed to an uneasy co-existence with their Arab rulers and others, now face a second colonisation even more destabilising than the first” (qtd. in Omwenga 26). East Africa was primarily dominated by the Arabs who were immensely engaged in slave trade. They were the first oppressors of east Africans. Later on, the Arabs’ control was condensed by the Germans who became the new colonial masters. People in the Swahili coast became more anxious about the upcoming of a more domineering and merciless colonizer than the previous one. From the beginning of the novel, the narrator tells us about the European man, standing in the station and holding a huge yellow flag with its picture of a glaring black bird who, when Yusuf kept gazing at him, “suddenly bared his teeth in an involuntary snarl, curling his fingers in an inexplicable way” that made Yusuf flee, “muttering the words he had been taught to say when he required sudden and unexpected help from God” (Gurnah 2). Everyone in *Paradise* fears the German invader whom they associate with magical strength. The narrator tries to illustrate this fear by telling us the story of one of the merchants:

One of the traders swore that he had seen a European fall down dead once and another one come and breathe life back into him. He had seen snakes do that too, and snakes also have poisonous spit. So long as the European's body was not ruined or damaged, had not started to rot, another European could breathe life back into him" (Gurnah 72).

Therefore, whether Arab, European, or African, in *Paradise* they all present a form of oppression and domination, yet with varying degrees.

*Paradise* is extremely hierarchical in the sense that most of the characters are trying to exert their power on one another. The protagonist Yusuf undergoes multiple stages of oppression. Like him, children in *paradise* also face different kinds of oppression and abuse whether physically or verbally; they "exist and operate in the shadow of imposing father figures who through various means oppress the children creating in them low self-esteem" (Okungu 34). Yusuf, firstly, has been oppressed by his father when he was unknowingly sold to a rich Arab merchant called Aziz as a *rehani*<sup>2</sup>. Yusuf has been viewed as a commodity which could be sold when needed. Later on, in his state of bondage, the uncle whom he has been admiring becomes an oppressor. He discovers that he is an oppressor when he reaches the coast. As soon as Yusuf arrived at the merchant Aziz's residence, Khalil, another slave at Aziz's shop, tells him the bitter truth behind his migration: "As for Uncle Aziz, for a start, he ain't your uncle" (Gurnah 23). He goes on saying: "You are here because your Ba owes the Seyyid some money. I'm here because my Ba owes him money" (ibid 24). At that moment, Yusuf sees no harm to work and pay his father's debt; he thinks he can go home as soon as he pays his father's debt.

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<sup>2</sup> *Rehani* is a Swahili word that is derived from Arabic and it means "pledge or security" (Gower 154). The context of becoming a *rehani* comes about when a rich person loans a person in need some money or property the security of which becomes the borrower's child.

In addition to Yusuf, both Khalil and his adopted sister Amina forcefully left their home because their inept father pawned them to Uncle Aziz. Amina's childhood was more miserable than that of Yusuf. Khalil tells Yusuf that she was "*kifa urongo*" and "*magendo*<sup>3</sup> to be sold off somewhere" (ibid 230), then his father rescued and adopted her. Later on, Amina was pawned to pay the debt of her foster father. When Yusuf asked Amina whether she was married to uncle Aziz, she explained that her marriage to Uncle Aziz set her free. Although Amina was set free, she was never happy and her life in Aziz's mansion resembles Hell. She is freed from slavery but is not at liberty. She cannot make important decisions concerning her life. In her talk with Yusuf she said:

I've got my life, at least. But I only know I have it because of its emptiness, because of what I'm denied. He, the seyyid, he likes to say that most of the occupants of Heaven are the poor and most of the occupants of Hell are women. If there is Hell on earth, then it is here (ibid 228-229).

Amina at Aziz's house plays many roles. She is the second wife of Aziz, the household mistress, and the slave. Like Yusuf, she has also been given the nickname "*kifa urongo*" to signify her state of in-betweenness. For her, Aziz's household is a prison where her freedom was stolen. The only thing which enables her to feel the sense of freedom is the garden. When she sees Yusuf helping the gardener Hamdani with various jobs, she senses mixed feelings: "I used to imagine that the shade and the water and the earth helped you ease the pain of what had been stolen from you. I envied you, and thought that one day you would catch sight of me at the door and force me to come out too" (ibid 229).

The Swahili coast is a crossroad for myriad cultures, coming from all over the world. Due to this latter, otherness and racial stereotypes are deeply rooted in the lives of the characters

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<sup>3</sup> A Swahili word which means contraband.

who seem to be continuously engaged in insulting conversations. For example, Yusuf has been called by his mentor Khalil *kifa urongu* meaning living death. Khalil describes Yusuf as “so small and feeble because he’s just come from the wild lands, back there behind the hills. They only have cassava and weeds to eat there. That’s why he looks like living death” (ibid 22). In spite of the friendly relationship between Yusuf and Khalil, Khalil keeps mocking and insulting Yusuf.

Additionally, discrimination on the basis of religion is manifested in the actions of Yusuf’s father. Yusuf is not allowed to play with the other non-Muslim children since for Yusuf’s father they “are surrounded by savages” or as he calls them “*Washenzi*<sup>4</sup>, who have no faith in God and who worship spirits and demons which live in trees and rocks” (ibid 14). The word ‘savage’ is frequently used by different characters to describe the other, especially Africans. Mohammed Abdalla, the foreman of the journey to the interior, keeps warning the porters and guards to stay vigilant because they “are in the country of the savages” (ibid 59). The repetition of many pejorative words such as ‘savage’, ‘washenzi’, and ‘kaffir’<sup>5</sup> becomes a distinctive feature which characterizes the social interactions among all characters in *Paradise*.

## **II. 2. Migration and Its Effects on the Displaced in *Paradise***

Abdulrazak Gurnah’s works are dominated by the questions of identity, memory and displacement. His characters, such as Yusuf, are continually negotiating past and present in the formation of new identities so as to fit their new milieus. Since his departure from home, Yusuf seems to be engaged in an unceasing state of displacement. At first, he finds himself obliged to leave home for no clear reason. He is unaware of what is being planned by his father and Uncle

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<sup>4</sup> A Swahili word which is used by the coastal aristocrats, especially the Arabs to disparage the indigenous Africans.

<sup>5</sup> An ethnic slur used to refer to black Africans in South Africa.

Aziz, yet he “could not think why he did not like the prospect of this journey” (ibid 16). At this stage, Yusuf is naïve and his thinking is limited:

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. He never thought to ask why he was accompanying Uncle Aziz on his journey, or why the business had to be arranged so suddenly (ibid 17).

Yusuf’s experience resembles the story of any displaced or migrant. He is the archetype of a migrant who is positioned in an inbetween space. He is trapped between his memories of home and his new life as an itinerant *rehani*. Orlando Patterson points out: “The slave, in his social death, lives on the margin between community and chaos, life and death, the sacred and the secular” (qtd. in Roberto143). Yusuf seems to rarely speak; his silence is an indicator of “melancholia [or] tripling self-reflexivity”. He struggles to cope with this oppressive environment so as to “produce meaning out of [his lost history and history of loss]” (qtd. in Omwenga 27). Yusuf’s status of loss is due to his liminal space between his home and the interior where Uncle Aziz trades. Now Yusuf is forced to face the wilderness of the interior; he has to cope with expeditions, discrimination and communication with different people, free and bonded. He questions different ways in which the people he contacts with see matters.

Yusuf is traumatized due to his new situation. He suffers from nightmares. He keeps seeing dogs in his dreams: “it seemed that when they came at night, they came for Yusuf. In his dreams they stood two-legged over him, their long mouths half open and slavering, their pitiless eyes passing over his soft prone body” (26). The two- legged dogs which keep annoying Yusuf in his dreams symbolize the oppressors in his real life.

For Yusuf, the most memorable event in his life is his separation from his family and home: “It was not that he pined for them, and in any case he did so less and less with each accumulating moment, rather that his separation from them was the most memorable event of his existence” (Gurnah 48). His parting from what used to give him a sense of belonging and safety has caused him, in addition to his status of inbetweenness, multiple traumas. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, trauma is defined as a “severe and lasting emotional shock and pain caused by an extremely upsetting experience.” or a “physical injury, usually caused by an accident or attack.” These two definitions are applicable to the characters in *Paradise*; however, the first definition is more applicable than the second one since the characters experience a sense of psychological pain and loss in their lives.

Displacement has caused Yusuf a feeling of homelessness. Most of the time he “felt homesick and abandoned, but struggled to keep himself from crying” (ibid 39). Yusuf seems to have experienced the trauma of migration and leaving home once again when Uncle Aziz obliges him to accompany him in his expedition to the interior. This conversation between Yusuf and Khalil manifests how Yusuf is again suffering from the pain and fear of displacement:

‘What is the matter with you?’ Yusuf asked in exasperation, his voice quavering with hurt and self-pity.

‘What do you want me to do? Cry?’ Khalil asked, laughing.

‘I’m going away tomorrow, travelling with that man and his robbers’ (ibid 53)

This is the second time when Yusuf felt exiled and “accused of a betrayal he did not comprehend” (ibid 53). For him, “it was an unwelcome interruption to the equanimity his life of captivity had acquired over the years” (ibid 47). Despite his life in Uncle Aziz’s shop as a

*rehani*, he was to some extent at ease with his friend Khalil. At times, Yusuf keeps remembering pasts and memories of his family and how things should have been done differently:

He thought of things he should have known about them or could have asked them. The bitter fights which had frightened him. The names of the boys who had drowned after leaving Bagamoyo. Names of trees. If only he had thought to ask them about such things perhaps he might not have felt so ignorant and so dangerously adrift from everything (ibid 48).

The voice of his mother keeps haunting him. While working at Uncle Aziz's garden, he hears a voice of a woman singing. This voice reminds him of his mother's voice. It causes him sorrow, pain and "a tremble of fear" (ibid 49).

### **II. 3. Yusuf's Coming of Age and Identity Formation**

Identity in its simplest definition is "who someone is: the name of a person" or "the qualities, beliefs that make a particular person or a group different from others" (Britannica). Identity, however, is not as a simple concept as it seems. In *Questions of Cultural Identity*, cultural theorist Stuart Hall identifies identity as follows:

Identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to a radical historicization, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation. (4)

In other words, identity is always changing as long as there is a change of a setting. Everything around a person, whether people, places or events, contribute in the construction of his identity.

In *Paradise*, while coming of age, Yusuf gradually develops his way of thinking and thus his own identity. Madan Sarup says: "Identity is changed by the journey" (qtd.in Friedman

189). This is what happens to Yusuf; his identity changes throughout his journeys. At the first section of the novel, Yusuf is identified as the poor Muslim child who longs for a better life. Later on, when he reaches the town of Uncle Aziz, a new identification is given to him. He is the beautiful Swahili slave or, as Khalil calls him *kifa urongo*. All the other characters call him the beautiful boy. He holds a new identity which is based on his physical appearance and his actual social status as a *rehani*.

Alfred Omwenga sees that Yusuf is dependent on others to grow up and build his identity. For example he depends on Khalil to get rid of the terrifying dogs that come to him day and night. Thus, the dogs become a source of fear as well as a source that helps Yusuf to build his identity by pushing him closer to his masters. To put it clearly, Bardolph explains that “people in a dependent position may come to enjoy having a master, or can be torn between the pleasure of belonging and shameful knowledge of their submission” (qtd. in Omwenga 29). Yusuf’s liminal position between the sense of belonging and the sense of shame causes him a psychological agony. What is more, being located between two different cultures and settings makes Yusuf a hybrid character. Tyson defines hybridity as “experiencing one’s cultural identity as a hybrid of two or more cultures, which feeling is sometimes described as positive alternative to unhomeliness” (qtd. in Omwenga 36). In the light of this definition, Yusuf can be considered to hold a hybrid identity because he is now a byproduct of his Swahili culture and that of the Arab.

In the last two sections of the novel, he becomes more mature to comprehend and grasp the way the world around him behaves. He has started constructing his identity. This change has been noticed by all the people around him. Uncle Aziz, for example, is surprised of Yusuf’s rapid change in a short period of time: “how you’ve distinguished yourself in these last few weeks!” (Gurnah 241). During the final days of his voyage to the interior, Yusuf feels guilty because his past memories with his parents started to vanish. He tries to erase all contact with

his past which, however, still haunts his mind and “images of his abandonment came to him in a spate” (ibid 174). He is tortured by the abandonment of his family. He looks back upon his pasts with mixed feelings of bitterness and guilt for what he has left behind: “for a long time after, he sat silently with himself, numbed by guilt that he had been unable to keep the memory of his parents fresh in his life. He wondered if his parents still thought of him, if they still lived, and he knew that he would rather not find out” (ibid 174).

After a long time of careful reflection, Yusuf has learnt many lessons during his years of captivity. He comes to a conclusion that nothing would have changed his life; nothing “would unshackle him from bondage to the life he lived” (ibid 174). Like Khalil, Amina, and Mzee Hamdani, the only thing he would become was to be “stranded in the middle of nowhere” (ibid 174). In other words, to be a *rehani* is to have a life that is empty and devoid of meaning. For him, banishment is the worst thing that can happen to any person: “it would be like banishment, but how could it be worse than this?” (ibid 234).

At the first years of his bondage, he felt no harm to be identified as a *rehani* and pay his father’s debt. However, at the end of the story, his way of thinking has absolutely changed. He starts to lay the blame on his parents who were selfish by prioritizing their freedom over their child’s one:

He would feel no remorse about his parents, he said to himself. He would not. They had abandoned him years ago to win their own freedom, and now he would abandon them. If they had gained any relief from his captivity, it would now end while he went to make a life for himself. While he was freely roaming the plains he might even call in on them and thank them for giving him some tough lessons to set him up in life (ibid 234).

At this stage, his mind becomes overwhelmed with deep resentment against his parents for his miserable childhood as well as deep resentment against his weakness and cowardice.

His forbidden love to Amina encourages him to take pivotal decisions he were not able to take in the past. He wants Amina to flee with him despite all the obstacles and dangers that will encounter them: “If this is Hell, then leave. And let me come with you. They’ve raised us to be timid and obedient, to honour them even as they misuse us [...] we’re both in the middle of nowhere. Where else can be worse?” (ibid 233).

Yusuf finally recognizes that he and the other slaves should not be shameful of all the messy lives they are living because “ it was the way they had forced him to live, forced all of them to live which was shameful”(ibid 236). He thinks of going away somewhere, but he knows that “ a hard lump of loneliness had long ago formed in his displaced heart, that wherever he went it would be with him, to diminish and disperse any plot he could hatch for small fulfillment” (ibid). Despite the fact that he becomes aware of the bitter truth that wherever he goes, he will face another oppressor, he suggests for Amina to flee from Aziz’s hell, yet she refuses and considers him a dreamer.

All the characters whether Khalil, Amina, or Hamadani seem to have chosen subjugation over freedom; they all refuse to escape. Nevertheless, Yusuf chooses another path. After Amina’s refusal to escape with him, Yusuf unexpectedly and voluntarily chooses to leave Uncle Aziz’s mansion and takes another journey to the unknown, but this time it will be with another oppressor: the German askaris. He exchanges one form of subjugation and enslavement for another as Jacobs suggested (87). Yusuf’s decision to join the German colonizer signifies the upcoming fate of the Africans. His unexpected behavior gives the reader the impression that the worst which is inescapable is yet to come. Another oppressor, the German colonizer, will bring new forms of subjugation and enslavement to the continent. A new reality that Yusuf and all the Africans must adjust to.

#### **II. 4. Stylistic and Linguistic Elements in *Paradise***

The text is not mere content or mere form: it is the process of form recreating reality in the terms set by authorial consciousness, constituting a world which resembles external reality, but is also the novelist's own universe (qtd. in Okungu 1).

In an attempt to study Gurnah's *Paradise*, one is highly required to discuss the way in which Gurnah uses language so as to address his diverse issues and themes. In his book *Tasks and Masks*, Lewis Nkosi mentions that starting from the mid 1960s "experimentation and manipulation of form using language and form" became a distinctive feature that characterized the narratives which were produced in Africa. This feature had offered these narratives "an African identity". Therefore, "the manner of their execution" becomes more focused upon than the content (ibid).

In an essay entitled "Learning to Read" published 2015 in *Matatu*, Gurnah explains some autobiographical elements on the function of multiple languages in his writing. He considers that a Zanzibari writer who was learning how to read and write in English was faced with the difficulty of overcoming the European damaging accounts and creating a "register of his own in English, a language that turned out to be hospitable and capacious after all" (23). This register was molded by an environment called Zanzibar which was characterized by embracing myriad cultures and languages and in which the writer's native language was Swahili, by the language of Quran he learnt at the mosque, by the vulgar and prohibited talks in the streets, as well as by his life as an African exile in Europe:

For someone growing up in Zanzibar, the coexistence of contradictory cultural traditions felt negotiable; later in life, his writing in English developed into a contact zone of its own – a zone as much of migrancy as of the encounter with Swahili and English that occurred in his childhood, as much the experience of England as all the other experiences that he has gone through (ibid).

The Swahili, the Arabic, and the English language in addition to the experience of displacement are cleverly brought together in Gurnah's writings. They formed, as Gurnah's called it, a "contact zone". Gurnah's life whether as a native Swahili boy living at the island of Zanzibar or as a migrant living at England shaped all his literary texts. Thus, a reader of Gurnah's fictions will observe how all these personal, yet not unique experiences are manifested in his novels either at the level of the language itself or at the level of the different overlapping themes.

In Gurnah's view, reading is the lenses through which a writer views the world. It has a great effect on an author's writing because it is reading that inspires him with what to write (ibid 31). After his migration to England and at the age of 21, he decided to begin writing in English. His creative talent as a writer in English was highly affected by the English writings he used to read at that time, yet he contends that "if that is the language I learnt to read and write in, what I was to write had already been given to me a long time before that" ( ibid 32). By this Gurnah wants to say that his thoughts were not constrained by the use of English and that he has remained loyal to his African roots by using an Africanized version of English. To put it clearly, despite the fact that Gurnah's writings are in English, not anybody who is fluent at English is able to read, understand, and grasp the meanings of his writings. It is because he frequently makes use of Swahili as well as Arabic terms and expressions which require a person to translate them so as to get the meaning. Moreover, Gurnah's fictions encompass varieties of African folktales, rituals, storytelling, and myths which are a distinctive feature of oral and written African literature. Gurnah is not merely affected by his Zanzibari roots; his Islamic beliefs and ideas are also present in his literature.

Gurnah believes that the European canonical accounts has been giving a distorted image of Africa and its peoples in order to justify their imperialistic expansion: "I think these accounts, which have been with us for centuries, have progressively made beasts and subhumans of the

rest of the world and have constructed them that way”. In his perspective, it is his responsibility and duty to respond to these falsified accounts: “I wanted to do what I can to show how demonstrably false these stories are, just as much as I would want to resist the lies of any other culture” (ibid 32). That is why he created his own register to express all his preoccupations. All of the above mentioned ideas about Gurnah’s writing are reflected in his *Paradise*.

To begin with, readers of *Paradise* will notice that the bildungsroman is the literary genre Gurnah used in order to present the experience of migration and its effects on the development of the protagonist Yusuf. According to Britannica, the bildungsroman is a “novel that depicts and explores the manner in which the protagonist develops morally and psychologically”. Just as Yusuf takes a journey from his parents’ home to Uncle Aziz’s home, then another journey to the deep interior of Africa, he takes a journey from childhood to maturity as well. Yusuf goes through multiple stages of development, starting from the feeble boy who lives a simple life with his parents to the slave boy who, for the first time, finds himself face to face with the complexities of the diverse communities in east Africa to the mature boy who eventually becomes fully aware of the gloomy reality and the harshness of life.

What is more, this bildungsroman has been given a postcolonial touch. The question of language is of paramount importance when studying postcolonial literature. Kasanga and Kalume claim that the Africanization of English is a strategy that writers use in order to “[obviate] the difficulty of using English to express concepts which do not have readily available terms in the language of their local audience and its host culture” (49). This process of indigenization renders the narrative a “hybrid product” which brings together the African tales, themes, and styles with the English language (ibid). Gurnah has chosen to start his writing career by using English as his language of expression; however, he has Africanized<sup>6</sup> it by

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<sup>6</sup> According to Collins Dictionary, to africanize means to make something or someone African by giving it/ him an African outlook, character, etc.

borrowing a great range of terms and expressions from the Swahili language. Examples of these terms are *kifa urongo*, *washenzi*, *kipande*, *mganga*, *waunguana*, *magendo* among many others.

Besides, *Paradise* is full of African folktales, rituals, and myths. These are one of the main characteristics of the African literature. For example, Khalil tells Yusuf about the stories of the wolf-people, Ghouls, Angels, and Jinns. During their journeys to the interior, traders keep telling one another myths about the Europeans whom they believe “possessed a ring with which he could summon the spirits of the land to his service. North of his domain prowled prides of lions which had an unquenchable craving for human flesh, yet they never approached the European unless they were called” (Gurnah 62-63).

A literary device is a writing technique that authors use in order to express thoughts, convey meanings, and highlight important themes in a particular literary text. One of these devices is silence. Dee Das defines silence as “a tool that has been utilized in literature to heighten emotion, magnify suspense or drama, and let a character grow into their own being”. Silence in literature can be in the form of secret meditation, sighs, gazes, and deliberate gaps and it frequently takes priority over action. Das views language as “often too faulty a medium to rightly portray the ridiculously messy yet supremely spectacular human condition”. Additionally, Foe Coetzee believes that “in every story there is a silence, some sight concealed, some word unspoken [...] Till we have spoken the unspoken we have not come to the heart of the story”. Where there is silence in a literature, there is a deep message to be delivered. Unless the reader grasps that meaning, he will not fully understand the narrative.

Gurnah is one of the many writers who often make use of silence. His fiction is highly characterized by the use of gaps and silences. The Longman Active Study Dictionary defines silence as the situation “When there is no sound or nobody is talking” or “When someone refuses to talk about something”. This means that silence equals the absence of speech. This absence; however, is connotative and symbolic. In her conversation with Gurnah, Tina Steiner

states that Gurnah's characters keep silent in many instances for they are either unable to talk or they have no desire to speak. She questions him about the reason behind keeping his characters silent, yet they still deliver a message in the story. He responds by saying that it is not always possible to say everything when interacting with people because:

It would cause offence, because it would hurt, or because you would be revealing more than you'd want to, and so all the time there is this checking, both of oneself and also of the limits of intercourse and exchange And I guess, the more you trust, the more you release, the less you trust [...] We deal with each other in these sort of suppressed exchanges. Does this mean we can't read what's going on? We can (Steiner 161).

Silence in *Paradise* is symbolic of trauma. In many times Yusuf keeps silent. At the first sections of the novel, he rarely engages in conversation with the other characters and even when he does so, he speaks for a short time. His silence originates from his internal feelings. It indicates a deep psychological as well as emotional trauma. It signifies Yusuf's condition of loss, fear, and non-belonging. Even before his displacement, Yusuf is acquainted with silence; he does not "find the silence and gloom of the timber-yard disconcerting, for he was accustomed to playing alone" (Gurnah 6). In many cases, he fails to speak out his thoughts and opinions. For instance, when he was being asked by Uncle Aziz about his behavior with the Mistress Zulekha and his love to Amina, he was unable to utter the words which "were burning in him. I want to take her away. It was wrong of you to marry her. To abuse her as if she was nothing which belongs to her. To own the people the way you own us" (ibid 241).

Moreover, in the Islamic religion, silence is a characteristic of a wise person. The gardener Mzee Hamdani is also a slave who chooses not to speak with anyone. His silence might be the effect of his master's domination in spite of the fact that Aziz's wife Zulekha gave him his freedom (Omwenga 30). However, Mzee Hamdani refuses it because he believes that freedom is innate in everybody. When he finally speaks to Yusuf, he tells him:

They offered me freedom as a gift. She did. Who told her she had it to offer? [...] I had that freedom the moment I was born. When these people say you belong to me, I own you, it is like the passing of the rain, or the setting of the sun at the end of the day. The following morning the sun will rise again whether they like it or not. The same with freedom. They can lock you up, put you in chains, abuse all your small longings, but freedom is not something they can take away (224).

After this revelation, Yusuf realizes that Hamdani's muteness is a sign of wisdom. Garth Myers believes that Gurnah's employment of silence is because he "wants us to admire the silences of the world's poor majority, to read in them the survival strategies and intelligences so often silenced not only by local regimes but by the globalizing world in which those local regimes take part" (ibid). Both Yusuf and Mzee Hamdani have wisdom, yet they cannot express it because of the oppressors around them. Consequently, they prefer not to speak so as to survive from the cruelty of their masters. In short, silence has been used by Gurnah to express myriad unspoken messages. It signifies the characters' internal feelings of fear, alienation, loss, shame, and wisdom.

More importantly, Gurnah presents his characters using various stylistic devices, yet it is the narrative voice that tends to stand out due to his exceptional way of combining multiple narrative voices. The narrative voice is a significant stylistic feature in literature because it is through it that information is transmitted to the reader. This means that a reader's awareness of events in a novel is affected by the voice that tells these events. A story can be told from the first, second or third-person perspective. The first and third-person perspectives are the most used. The first-person perspective is when the narrator is a character within the story, such as the protagonist. In the third-person narrative, however, the narrator is someone outside of the story.

The opening of *Paradise* presents it as an omniscient third person narrative: "The boy first. His name was Yusuf, and he left his home suddenly during his twelfth year" (Gurnah 1).

The narrator knows everything about the thoughts and feelings of the characters in the story. It is due to him that a reader becomes aware of Yusuf's feelings of loss, pain, banishment, homelessness, and love. Later, Gurnah introduces the first person narrative voice through the use of dialogues. A dialogue is a written composition in which two or more characters are represented as conversing. Dialogues vary in tone and expression depending on many variables such as the cultural, linguistic, economic, and social backgrounds of the speakers. The employment of dialogues makes the events of the novel seem more real and natural (Mudanya 31). Gurnah chooses to engage all his characters in dialogues because, as Roberto mentioned, he wants to give voice to the marginalized and the disadvantaged people whose voices "were previously silenced, distorted, or 'translated' by colonial master-narratives" (137). Furthermore, as mentioned earlier Yusuf is oftentimes mute. As a result, internal monologue is the strategy which Gurnah uses to reveal most of his thoughts, feelings, and impressions. An internal monologue is defined as a "narrative technique that exhibits the thoughts passing through the minds of the [characters]. These ideas may be either loosely related impressions approaching free association or more rationally structured sequences of thought and emotion" (Britannica). A better example of an internal monologue is when Yusuf wants to express his desire to flee with Amina:

If this is Hell, then leave. And let me come with you [...] we're both in the middle of nowhere. Where else can be worse? there would be no walled garden there, wherever we go, with sturdy cypresses and restless bushes, and fruit trees and unexpectedly bright flowers, nor the bitter scent of orange sap in the day and the deep embrace of jasmine fragrance at night [...] It would be like banishment, but how could it be worse than this?" (234).

This is one of the many internal monologues Gurnah uses in an attempt to describe the diverse experiences his characters go through.

As a conclusion, this chapter has given a nuanced analysis of *Paradise*. It explains the ways through which Gurnah provides his readers with a snapshot of life in the eastern coast of Africa before the coming of the Europeans. This life was characterized by multiple wicked practices rooted in the African communities such as slavery, displacement, social hierarchy, otherness, and racial stereotypes. Next, an examination of how the protagonist Yusuf discovers himself and constructs his identity during his journey from childhood to maturity is the subject of this chapter too. The last section of this chapter clarifies the different stylistic and linguistic tools applied in *Paradise*.

## CONCLUSION

One of the main concerns of postcolonial literature is the question of migration and its consequences on the subject. Using Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Paradise* as a case study and the postcolonial approach as a theoretical framework, this study focuses on discussing the issue of migration and its relation to other themes such as slavery, racial discrimination, memory, home, and identity. Through the coming of age story of the protagonist Yusuf, Gurnah portrays the life of the displaced.

In this novel, the reason behind the experience of displacement is enslavement which is a very common practice in the Coast of Africa and which predates the European colonization. The Eastern Coast of Africa or what is known as Zanzibar is the setting in which the story events take place. It is a crossroad for many different cultures where hierarchal suppression, racial stereotypes, and slave trade characterize the social relations and interactions.

After analysing the characterisation of the protagonist Yusuf and the sequence of events that he had to go through, it can be concluded that the story of Yusuf is both the story of an African slave and the story of a migrant. While coming of age, he unknowingly finds himself in a journey from the place which gives him a sense of security and belonging to a place which gives him a sense of in-betweenness and loss.

Based on a descriptive and analytical reading of *Paradise*, this dissertation has shown that migration has shattering effects on the displaced. Yusuf in his new setting suffers from psychological traumas. He is in an in-between space, trapped between the past and the present, the memory of his parents' home and the new transcultural setting. He feels hurt, banished and lost; he is continuously trying to construct a new identity to fit his new environment. Due to displacement, he holds on to multiple identities, depending on the new geographical and social

context. Therefore, his identity moves from being static and fixed to fluid and in constant change.

Additionally, this research has demonstrated that *Paradise* is mostly a postcolonial novel not only on the level of its content but also on the level of its form. Gurnah uses an African version of the bildungsroman as well as an Africanized version of English to convey his postcolonial preoccupations. He also employs the strategy of silence and interior monologue to convey multiple feelings.

This research will hopefully invite future researchers to analyse Gurnah's *Paradise* from a postcolonial point of view. It can provide useful information regarding the damaging effects of displacement on the migrant. Moreover, it can give people a fruitful understanding of the fluidity of identity.

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## المخلص

تبحث هذه الدراسة في ما بعد الكولونيالية في رواية الجنة لعبد الرزاق غرنة (1994). يقدم لنا غرنة لمحة عن الحياة في الساحل الشرقي لأفريقيا قبل قدوم الأوروبيين. تميزت هذه الحياة بممارسات شريرة متعددة متجذرة في المجتمعات الأفريقية مثل العبودية, التهجير, التسلسل الهرمي الاجتماعي والقوالب النمطية العرقية. تمت مناقشة الدراسة الحالية من خلال نهج وصفي تحليلي لتصوير قضية الهجرة وتأثيراتها على المهاجر. كما يناقش موضوع الهوية وكيف تتغير من كونها ثابتة إلى متقلبة. لذلك يتكون البحث من فصلين رئيسيين. الفصل الأول نظري ويتناول إطارًا اجتماعيًا, تاريخيًا ومفاهيميًا. يمثل الفصل الثاني جوهر الدراسة التي يتم فيها تطبيق نظرية ما بعد الاستعمار على الرواية.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Summary of the novel**

*Paradise* is a historical novel by the Nobel Prize-winning Zanzibar-born British writer Abdulrazak Gurnah, first published in 1994 by Hamish Hamilton in London. The novel was nominated for both the Booker Prize and the Whitbread Prize for Fiction. It is at once the story of an African boy's coming of age, a tragic love story, and a tale of the corruption of traditional African patterns by European colonialism. *Paradise* is Abdulrazak Gurnah's great novel. At twelve, Yusuf, the protagonist, is sold by his father in repayment of a debt. From the simple life of rural Africa, Yusuf is thrown into the complexities of precolonial urban East Africa - a fascinating world in which Muslim black Africans, Christian missionaries, and Indians from the subcontinent coexist in a fragile, subtle social hierarchy. Through the eyes of Yusuf, Gurnah depicts communities at war, trading safaris gone awry, and the universal trials of adolescence. Then, just as Yusuf begins to comprehend the choices required of him, he and everyone around him must adjust to the new reality of European colonialism.