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DEPARTMENT OF LITERATURE

**SILENCE AS A STRATEGY FOR TRAUMA ENUNCIATION IN SELECTED
FICTION OF ABDULRAZAK GURNAH: *PARADISE* (1994) AND *DESERTION*
(2005)**

ALFRED OYARO OMWENGA, B.ED

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DECLARATION

This project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.

Signature  Date 26/11/2017

Name: **Alfred Oyaro Omwenga**

C50/CE/26829/2011

Supervisors: This project has been submitted after our review and approval as university supervisors.

Signature: 1.  Date 26.11.17

Dr. Ezekiel Kimani Kaigai

Literature Department

2.  Date 27th Nov. 2017

Dr. Esther Mbithi

Literature Department

ABSTRACT

The study offers a reading on how silence has been presented as a strategy for trauma enunciation in Abdulrazak Gurnah's selected novels: *Paradise* (1994) and *Desertion* (2005). It also explores how migration and racial differences have led to the muteness of the characters. This is in order to fill the critical lacuna that exists in the available scholarship on the author. As of now he has written eight novels but the study has focused on two of them because of their poignant deployment of silence. The novels are considered postcolonial because of the historical period that they depict. Hence, the study uses the postcolonial theory in studying them. Besides it, semiotics is applied in the interpretation of silence. The study is based in the library. It involves intensive reading of the two primary texts. It also involved extensive reading of the historiography of East Africa, critical works on Gurnah and the two novels.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Silence: The absence of speech. It is symbolic of trauma.

Trauma: The pain (loss) experienced when a repressed past (life) returns to a character.

Migration: The movement of people physically (regionally or overseas) or metaphorically through memory because of various reasons.

Double Consciousness: It is a “peculiar sensation; of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of the others [where] one ever feels his two-ness” (W.E.B. Dubois 2-3).

Hybridity: It is the “new transcultural forms that arise from cross – cultural exchange.” (Ashcroft et al).

Unhomeliness: It is a “feeling that one has no cultural “home” or sense of cultural belonging” (Tyson 427).

Othering: The “colonizers’ treatment of members of the indigenous culture as less than fully human and colonial oppression in all its forms” (Tyson 427).

Transgressive Love: It is the love that goes against the social and cultural codes of a society.

Symbol: It is “a sign in which the relationship between the signifier and the signified is neither natural nor necessary but arbitrary, that is, decided on by the conventions of a community or by the agreement of some group” (Tyson 217-218).

Racial differences: The prejudices and stereotypes associated with race in a society.

Limen: The “in-between spaces where strategies of identity are elaborated” (Otoi 88).

Ambivalence: “[T]he ambiguous way in which colonizer and colonized regard one another” (Ashcroft et al).

Mimicry: “The attempt of the colonized to be accepted by imitating the dress, behaviour, speech, and lifestyle of the colonizers” (Tyson 427).

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Chapter One

Background to the study

1.0 Introduction

The circumstances that lead to silence in a person are what form the point of departure in this study. For instance, incidences of terror can make a person refuse to speak because of the dreadful scenes that the person might have witnessed. The Westgate and Garissa University terror attacks which took place in Kenya serve as suitable examples. Another example that can devolve a person is sexual abuse either through rape or sexual harassment. The victim of rape or sexual harassment might choose to remain silent as a result of distress or disturbance that the person tries to come to terms with. In addition, war survivors can also be compelled to remain reticent because of the gross inhumanity that characterise these circumstances. For example, the post election violence that took place in Kenya in 2007 and the Rwanda genocide are cases to refer to. These and many other incidences could make literary writers choose to deploy mute characters in their works in order to depict these horrific circumstances that the characters might have undergone.

It is against this backdrop, that the study investigates why Abdulrazak Gurnah includes mute characters in his selected fiction: *Paradise* (1996) and *Desertion* (2005). Gurnah was born in 1948 in Tanzania. His novels include *Memory of Departure* (1987), *Pilgrim's Way* 1988, *Dottie* (1990), *Paradise* (1994), *Admiring Silence* (1996), *By the Sea* (2001), *Desertion* (2005) and *The Last Gift* (2011). Gurnah has been shortlisted for various awards. These include the *Commonwealth Writers* (Eurasia region) for which *Desertion* was shortlisted as the best book in 2006. Another award was *Los Angeles Times Book Prize* (Fiction) for which *By the Sea* was

shortlisted in 2001. In addition, *Paradise* was shortlisted for the *Man Booker Prize* for fiction in 1994. Gurnah is a literary critic who has edited several volumes of literary criticism that include *The Cambridge Companion to Salman Rushdie* (2007), *Essays on African Writing: A Re-evaluation* (1993) and *Essays on African Writing: Contemporary Literature* (1995). Also, Gurnah is a short story writer whose short stories include “Bossy” (1985) and “My Mother lived on a Farm in Africa” (2006).

Gurnah’s selected novels are studied using the definition of silence as the absence of speech. Its manifestation in the texts is symbolic of trauma. The definition tallies with that of Pierre Macherey and Cheryl Glenn. Macherey (1978) postulates that when speech has done its work in a text and “has nothing more to tell us ...we investigate silence for it is the silence that is doing the speaking” (85) whereas Glenn (2004) maintains that silence is not just ‘as powerful as speech’ but also ‘an absence with a function’ (xi; 4).

1.1 Statement of the problem

The repressed past of a character can return to memory. When this happens a character becomes reticent. This is the rationale behind examining the presentation of silence in Gurnah’s *Paradise* and *Desertion* as a strategy that enunciates trauma. The study also explores how migration and racial differences have devoiced the characters.

1.2 Research objectives

The objectives of the study are the following:

- 1) to analyse silence as a strategy that enunciates trauma in Gurnah’s *Paradise* and *Desertion*
- 2) to examine the silencing by migration
- 3) to investigate the devoicement by racial differences

1.3 Research questions

The questions that are addressed by the study are the following:

- 1) Why is silence deployed as a strategy in *Paradise and Desertion*?
- 2) How does migration silence the characters?
- 3) How do racial differences devoice the characters?

1.4 Research Assumptions

The assumptions that are formulated for the study are the following:

- 1) That some of the characters are mute is a strategy that enunciates trauma in *Paradise and Desertion*.
- 2) That migration has silenced the characters.
- 3) Racial differences have devoiced the characters.

1.5 Justification and significance

Some studies have been done on the thematics and narrative aspects of Gurnah's novelistic oeuvre. Ezekiel Kaigai as one of the scholars has studied how migrants mediate their lives through silence in Gurnah's novels: *Admiring Silence* (1996) and *The Last Gift* (2011). However, he does not relate silence to trauma which is the focus of this study. In studying how Gurnah deploys silence through his characters, the manifestation and significance of silence as a strategy is established. The study also gives an insight on the narrative design of this East African novelist. It also adds knowledge to the available scholarship on Gurnah.

1.6 Scope and limitations

The study focuses on two novels, *Paradise and Desertion* by Gurnah as both portray the same historical period (colonialism) in the East African Swahili coast. The novels are selected as examples from Gurnah's fiction on the basis of their poignant deployment of silence which is the

subject of this study. The study also engages with the historiography of East Africa, critical works on Gurnah and the two novels. In addition, it relies on the postcolonial and semiotics theories.

1.7 Literature review

1.7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this review is to identify what other scholars have studied on Gurnah. This is in order to justify the gap that is to be filled by the study. It focuses on the historiography of East Africa, critical works on Gurnah and the two novels. The historiography of East Africa enables the researcher to comprehend how Gurnah has fictionalised history in the two novels: *Paradise* and *Desertion*.

Abdul Sherrif (1987) observes that the East African coast is “a zone of interaction between two cultural streams, one coming from the African Interior and one from across the Indian Ocean, from which emerged a synthesis, the Swahili civilisation, that every step betrays its dual parentage” (8). The Swahili civilisation could have contributed to the silence of the characters. This is explored by the study which focuses on racial differences. Jonathan Glassman (2000) explores the origin of racialism in Zanzibar in the form of “Arabization” (404). He examines the types of newspapers that were published at the time. For example, the writers of a newspaper called *Africa Kwetu* believed that “God and nature had fashioned humankind into irreducibly separate races and notions and that it was foolish and even blasphemous to mix them” (395). Drawing from this belief, the study is able to explain how racial differences have devoiced the characters. Garth A. Myers (2000) observes that “[r]acially-charged political strife permeated Zanzibar from 1957 to independence in December 1963, a period referred to as ‘The Time of Politics’. In January 1964, Zanzibar’s newly independent government was overthrown and its

Sultan fled by the sea” (429). The volatile political environment at the time culminated to forced migrations of many Arabs. The study is keen on establishing whether the political turbulence of the period is behind the muteness of the characters.

Johan U. Jacobs (2009) observes that *Paradise* “thematizes trade in Africa from the Indian Ocean Coast and fictionally recreates the last of the Great Arab and Swahili Caravans into the region around the Great Lakes” (82). This observation enables the study to understand the novel and explore whether the caravan trade had a bearing in the devoicement of the characters. Anthony Clayton (1981) has described the Zanzibar revolution of 1964 and its aftermath. He observes that “In despair, many Arabs took their children to the mainland or abroad and young Africans saw little need to work” (143). Gurnah’s migration to Britain might have been influenced by the revolution. The study establishes whether his experience of migration is distilled in the characters’ silence. Gurnah has described the revolution in his novel *Memory of Departure* as a “heady atmosphere of intrigue and politics and revenge” (57).

In an interview with Nisha Jones (2005), Gurnah explains the historical period in which he wrote *Desertion* that:

Returning to those particular historical periods, I also wanted to look at very interesting moment in European imperialism, the moment of its greatest expansion, but unbeknown to us and to them, also the beginning of its decline. The new millennium – 1899 going into 1900 – gives it a sense of drama and I wanted to look not only at how imperialists thought the world might look not only at how we might be able to imagine their own self-questioning at the time. Another thing that I had in mind was European settler writing,

particularly from around 1905 – 1910 in which you notice certain exclusions, one of which is women. (38)

This historical period of the novel enables the study to evaluate whether it had an implication on the reticence of the characters. In examining the relationships that existed between the Africans and Europeans, epistemic silences are elaborated by the study.

Jones (2005) establishes through Gurnah that “[s]ilence is ambivalent. It is also powerful and can be far more eloquent” as regards presentation in his novels (39). The study elaborates the role that silence plays in both *Paradise* and *Desertion*. Kaigai (2013) explores how “migrants navigate the intersection of their present and past lives” through silence (128). In drawing from Kaigai, it is realized in this study that the “intersection” that is navigated by the migrants in their lives is connected to trauma that is symbolised through silence in the selected novels.

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. There was this hope that the ending of one would also enable the other.” The historical mendacities in this novel have a connection with the silence of the characters as revealed in this study. Nair (2012) in an interview with Gurnah establishes that the impulse behind writing *Desertion* was to tell about the sorrow that befalls humanity, good people and about choices that one makes in life. With regards to sorrow, Gurnah observes that “experience makes us sorrowful and the more we experience the more oppressed we become. And in the end we become like all the old people we see weighed down by the things that we cannot forget.” The study establishes that sorrow results to the silencing of the characters.

Anne Minayo Mudanya (2013) has established the connection that exists between the “narrative voice” and the “narrative structure” in *Desertion* (12). Her research enriches this study because it provides an understanding of the point of view of the novel. This is critical in comprehending the story. In addition, by acknowledging that characters are part of the “narrative voice” for example, Rashid in *Desertion*, the study is able to explore what is symbolised by their silence. Olausen (2010) analyses the narrative techniques used in both *Paradise* and *Desertion* in order to show “a paradigmatic shift from a world informed by Indian Ocean trade relations to a Euro-centric understanding of modernity dominated by the Black Atlantic” (205). Gurnah does this “In *Paradise* by introducing the Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* as an inter-text as well as through the use of ambivalence [whereas] in *Desertion* through the use of a narrator whose experience of life in Europe undermines his capacity to fully articulate Eastern African historical realities” (205). Taking a cue from Olausen, silence becomes a useful narrative technique in elaborating the paradigm shift. The muteness of the characters in the novels is a symbol of a modernity characterised by trauma.

Folasade Hunsu (2014) has discussed in *Desertion* how Gurnah uses “the auto/biographical mode in the portrayal of biracialism and migration as experiences that redefine and shift the boundaries of the identity of an “African” in a twenty-first century African fiction” (78). In drawing from Hunsu, the study elaborates how migration and biracialism have contributed to the devoicedness of the characters. Their muteness symbolises the new identity of the “African” in the fiction of the twenty-first century, according to this study.

Jopi Nyman proposes that reading Gurnah’s novels in the context of “postcolonial theorizations of trauma” and “melancholia” can be very productive (3). This enables the study to

conceptualize the meaning of silence in *Paradise* and *Desertion*. Jacobs (2009) observes that *Paradise* is a narrative reversal and revision of Conrad's canonical text, *Heart of Darkness* (77). Pietro Deandrea views *Paradise* as postcolonial novel that rewrites *Heart of Darkness* through several theoretical approaches thus bringing to the fore its contemporary relevance (18). Dan Odhiambo Ojwang (2009) observes that *Paradise* is a postcolonial revision of Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness* (1902) (212). The views of Jacob, Deandrea and Ojwang are helpful in comprehending *Paradise* as postcolonial novel while attempting to explore the presentation of silence in it.

Gurnah's *Desertion*, is about the issues of "colonialism and miscegenation" (Lalami 38). The author also elaborates that Zanzibar was termed as a 'confluence of cultures' because it witnessed various colonial masters that include Persians from Shiraz, Arabs from Oman and Europeans from Portugal and Britain. These conquerors intermingled with the locals resulting to the merging of languages and customs. The study establishes how the relations that were developed out of the encounters are reflected in the silences of the characters in *Desertion*. Erick Falk (2007) explores the thematic of subjectivity in a postcolonial setting in Gurnah's *Desertion*. He is of the view that "Gurnah's fiction depicts the intricate meshwork of social codes, emotions, and narratives that shape subjectivity in a highly unstable and cosmopolitan social reality" (4). The study expounds on the trauma that is illuminated through silence and how it shapes subjectivity in Gurnah's *Desertion*.

Stephane Robolin (2012) examines how the writer calls into question the continuum between homosocial and homosexual relationships in *Paradise* (9). The interest of the study is the intimation of the silence surrounding the "homosocial" and "homosexual relationships". Kate Holden (2013) contributes on the male same-sex desire in *Paradise* and *By the Sea* by analysing

how Gurnah problematizes sexual stereotypes in order to depict “the corrosive effects of trade and colonialism on the sexual economies of East Africa, implicating colonial powers in a predatory behaviour” (91). The study positions “predatory homosexuality in the two novels in juxtaposition with “predatory” colonialism in order to interrogate how the deployment of silence in them is used to deepen the understanding of both.

Falk (2007) expounds on the cosmopolitan nature of Gurnah’s fiction by observing that Gurnah’s novels “tell stories of migration and dispossession as characters move-voluntarily or not-from Zanzibar to the African mainland or England or from the East African coastal area into the interior of the continent” (25). The study examines the migration of the subjects as mediated through silence as a stylistic device in the two novels. Godwin Siundu (2013) suggests that:

[I]mmigrancy can impact on the dynamics of identities where ambivalence becomes a central trope of fluidity that invites lingering reflection on various experiences attending to, or even derived from the fact of being members of numerically minority communities. The crises generated in these numerically minority communities [as a result of] otherness, alienation, marginalization, exploitation and a general vulnerability remain the natural entry points in discussing the implications of difference. (105)

Immigrancy which the study explores through the migration of characters is valuable when discussing the identity and difference of the “numerically minority communities” according to Siundu. A realization is made that these “communities” face many “crises” that can be hidden in their silences which the study unravels through engaging with the silence of the marginalised subjects in Gurnah’s *Paradise* and *Desertion*.

Charne Lavery (2013) examines “structural and formal choices in the expression of space” across *Memory of Departure*, *By the Sea*, *Dottie*, *Pilgrims Way* and *Desertion* (117). The portrayal of how migrants’ understanding of space is mediated by the experience of loss and alienation helps the study to determine whether the experience is traumatic. Elizabeth Maslen (1996) reviews *Paradise* in order to show how the author intermeshes story with actuality to show history under construction and how otherness plays a significant role in the construction and deconstruction of selves and cultures (53). The role of “otherness” helps the study in elaborating on racial differences that are influential in the silencing of the characters in *Paradise* and thus contributing to the construction of history. Jacqueline Bardolph (1997) observes that the two novels are stories and historical accounts of Zanzibar besides being dominated with the figure of the uncle who is seen as a powerful figure “from the nephew’s perspective” (88). The study benefits from Bardolph in expounding the story and history of Zanzibar through silence. Dianne Schwerdt (1997) explores how Gurnah “depicts a society in which access to power is determined by race and gender” where men dominate and exclude women and slaves are given feminine attributes (91). This study has taken a keen interest in this topic by examining the manifestation of racial differences in the characters’ silence. David Callahan (2000) argues that *Paradise* inquires about “exchange and bullying, interaction and power” while the characters in the novel argue on pertinent issues like “sameness, belief and value” (69). The issues raised by Callahan especially those of “sameness” and “belief” are implicated in the silence of the characters.

Paradise “depicts the social space that was disrupted by German colonialism” because of the decision that Yusuf makes at the end of the novel to follow the Germans (Berman 51). Through studying silence in *Paradise* an elaboration is made on how the German colonial disturbance and disruption in the East African society prefigures the life and behaviour of characters in the

postcolony. James Hodapp work on *Paradise* is concerned with the imagining of unmediated early Swahili Narratives. The study explores how “unmediated Narratives” are mediated through silence in order to establish how the silence in and around them portrays trauma through the silence of the characters. Siundu (2013) is concerned with how characters in the narratives of *Memory of Departure*, *Admiring Silence* and *Paradise* “invoke ideals of shame and honour to demarcate social, economic, religious and racial boundaries” (105). It is established in this study that these “ideals” rely on strategic reticence. Thus, they help the study to elaborate on the trauma of the subjects in *Paradise*.

Tina Steiner (2010) highlights in *Desertion* “the importance of encounters across various boundaries using the theories of relation by Martin Buber and Edward Glissant” (124). The study determines that there is distress caused when various boundaries are crossed be they cultural or religious when exploring forbidden love in the novel. Nicoletta Brazzelli (2011) examines in *Desertion* how History is re-written through colonial encounters and forbidden love stories. She shows that “[t]he issue of the ‘contamination’ between colonizers and colonized is put at the centre of the narration where the Zanzibar novelist [traverses] beyond historical patterns, unburying private stories of forbidden relationships and thus developing a new consciousness of the colonial experience located at the margins of official history” (175). The study acknowledges that colonial “contamination” is part and parcel of the narration but it reveals how silence is used to ‘speak’ about forbidden love stories and establishes whether they are culturally silenced or epistemically in the wider official histories that ignore their existence in *Desertion*.

Steiner and Maria Olausson (2013) argue that “Gurnah’s work deserves more attention than it has received to date” (2). In addition, Sally-Ann Murray (2013) agrees with these views where she observes that Gurnah is rendered “a virtual non-entity” because many critics focus on

Kiswahili writers in Tanzania (151). The same opinion is advanced by Barasa and Makokha (2011) who assert that Tanzania's fiction "remain quite a neglected area of literary study" (216). Furthermore, Kaigai (2014) expresses concern that "various critics have bemoaned the relative critical neglect of Gurnah's work" (3). These observations by various scholars are what informed the study in order to fill this critical lacuna.

From the review of the critical perspectives of Gurnah's fiction, it is evident that many scholars concur that a literary gap exists that needs to be filled because Gurnah has not received enough scholarly attention as many critics tend to have a bias towards Kiswahili writers in Tanzania. This is the rationale for conducting the study. In addition, it is clear in the review that though silence has been studied in Gurnah's fiction by Kaigai, the trauma enunciated through it has not been studied. This is what justifies a critical engagement with the selected novels in order to explain the disturbance that the characters underwent as a result of colonialism.

1.7.2 Theoretical framework

The study is guided by selected tenets of the postcolonial and semiotics theories in the interpretation of how silence symbolises the trauma of the characters in and from the postcolony in the texts under study. The tenets deployed by the study in the postcolonial theory are "ambivalence", "mimicry", "unhomeliness", "hybridity", "liminality", "doubleconsciousness" and "othering". In semiotics the tenet was "symbol". In order to organize and understand the phenomena of silence in Gurnah's selected novels, the study engages with the ideas on theory of Jonathan Culler (1997) who observes that "theory is interdisciplinary, analytical and speculative, a critique of common sense and reflexive" (14-15). The idea of interdisciplinarity helps the study in reading and interpreting the selected novels. The disciplines that are involved are history, religion, economics and the geo- politics of East Africa.

According to Daura Prasenjit (2002) the postcolonial perspective seeks to deconstruct the grand narratives of imperial and national histories deriving from a vision of continuous progress, in order to reveal suppressed, defeated and negated historical events and private, marginal stories (417-431). Ecaterina Patrascu argues that the revelation of the issues outlined by Prasenjit, “involve a recuperation of memory which is regarded as traumatic as far as the postcolonial fiction is concerned” (3). Patrascu adds that the common themes to be discussed are victimization, guilt and melancholia [or] “tripling self-reflexivity” while recuperation and psychic resistance will be obscured (3). Felicity Hand observes that “the work of remembering is central to Gurnah’s literary art, much of which is based on a desire to recuperate the history/ies of the Swahili coast, and more specifically of the people of his native Zanzibar” (1). In the study the concern is to unravel the trauma in the history of the Zanzibaris through silence. Patrascu observes that traumatic events are rendered in postcolonial literatures by means of a specific vocabulary, one that functions on concepts of liminality, ambiguity, hybridity and transgression (3). Adrian Otoiu (2003) whose judgement is founded on Bhabha’s position in *The Location of Culture* as to the importance of the “limen” (in-between spaces where strategies of identity are elaborated) sees these as characterizing the ‘in-between spaces’ of cultural ambiguity where diasporic and migrant identities, hovering in the indecision of in-betweenness are shaped” (88; 5). The study engages with the specific vocabulary involved in postcolonial literature while exploring traumatic events that are rendered through silence in order to bring out how the identities of the marginalized groups are shaped.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) contributes to the postcolonial theory by portraying the “subaltern” subject as unable to “know and speak itself” due to the fact that it exists only within imperialist histories and is characterised by its unconsciousness of its conditions of existence

(285). The main concern in the study is what the selected texts do not say yet a lot can be ‘spoken’ by the marginalized subjects even in silence.

Allen Brizee and J. Case Tompkins (2010) argue that postcolonial theory also looks at issues of power, economics, politics, religion, and culture and how these elements work in relation to colonial hegemony (Western colonizers controlling the Colonized). They also raise typical questions to be considered while engaging the postcolonial theory especially when dealing with the postcolony as candidly put by Lois Tyson (2006):

The representation of aspects of colonial oppression explicitly or allegorically, the problematics of postcolonial identity, including the relationship between personal and cultural identity and such issues as double consciousness and hybridity, the person(s) or groups identified as “other” and how such persons/groups are described and treated and the operations of cultural difference—the ways in which race, religion, class gender, sexual orientation, cultural beliefs, and customs combine to form individual identity—in shaping our perceptions of ourselves, others, and the world in which we live. (431-432)

The study explores the ways in which racial differences are expressed by the colonialists in *Paradise* and *Desertion* in order to establish their traumatising effect. Postcolonial identity, double consciousness and hybridity help the study to elaborate on the trauma the characters are facing in the selected novels. The definition of double consciousness is drawn from W.E.B. Dubois (1903) who observes that “double-consciousness is a peculiar sensation; of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others [where] one ever feels his two-ness” (2-3). Moreover, the treatment of the “other” or those who are marginalized is a concern of the study. In studying the silence of the “other”, a clear picture of the trauma of the subjects is determined.

Semiotics theory is useful in the study because it provides a framework for analysing behaviours that are nonlinguistic for example the silence which the study engages with. The study finds Roland Barthes analysis of wrestling quite useful and takes a cue from him in the analysis of the silence of the marginalized subjects in the selected novels. Also Tyson (2006) observes that “[s]emiotics applies structuralist insights to the study of [...] sign systems. A sign system is a linguistic or nonlinguistic object or behaviour that can be analysed as if it were a specialized language” (216). Drawing from Tyson, silence is interpreted as a “sign system” or a language that signifies trauma in the study. According to Tyson, semiotics classifies signs into three: “index”, “icon” and “symbol” (217–218). The signs can be defined as follows:

An index is a sign in which the signifier has a concrete, causal relationship to the signified [...] An icon is a sign in which the signifier physically resembles the signified [and finally] a symbol is a sign in which the relationship between the signifier and the signified is neither natural nor necessary but arbitrary, that is, decided on by the conventions of a community or by the agreement of some group. (Tyson 217–218)

Silence is a religious and a cultural phenomenon in the world of the texts studied hence is interpreted as a symbol due to its arbitrariness in signifying trauma.

Kaja Silverman (1983) argues that “[s]emiotics involves the study of signification, but signification cannot be isolated from the human subject who uses it and then is defined by means of it, or from the cultural system which generates it” (3). The same opinion is shared by Keith Green and Jill LeBihan (1996) who emphasize that “a subject must participate in a semiotic system to create meaning, and thus critics are put in the awkward position of maintaining the

system of meaning which they are attempting to criticise” (85). Following the observations of Silverman, Green and LeBihan the cultural context of the society involved can not be ignored when interpreting the sign (silence) as is the case of the study.

1.8 Research Design and Methodology

The research is qualitative and library based due to its textual nature. It is also interdisciplinary as according to Ruth Ronen (1994) to be fictional “refers to the relations between a world and what lies beyond its boundaries” (1). In addition, a cue is taken in the study from Ato Quayson (2003) who suggests a method of “close reading [that] is about a practice of close reading that oscillates rapidly between domains – the literary-aesthetic, the social, the cultural, and the political – in order to explore the mutually illuminating heterogeneity of these domains when taken together” (xi). This method of reading is beneficial to the study because Gurnah’s novels are not just narratives but statements on and about times and places in real histories.

A reading of the history, geo-politics, economy and religion of Zanzibar is helpful in the study for it gave more insight into the literary world of the texts under study. The works that are read include that of Sherrif (1987), Jones (2005), Jacobs (2009), Myers (2000) and Falk (2007). For instance, an understanding of the history of Zanzibar enables the researcher to distinguish between historical fact and imagination or fantasy in the texts that are studied. Besides this, the geo and economic politics of Zanzibar enables the researcher locate the settings involved in the texts and the routes involved in the trading expedition in the Indian Ocean littoral in order to comprehend the migration of characters as a result of forced displacement. Moreover, a reading of Zanzibar’s religious and cultural environment enables the researcher to interpret the usage of silence in the selected novels. Also, a reading of Zanzibar’s politics and economic histories

enables the researcher to establish whether they are implicated in the characters trauma in the search for self fulfilment.

1.8.1 Data Collection

Data is collected from the primary texts and secondary sources. The secondary sources comprises of the historiography of East Africa, critical perspectives on Gurnah and the two novels. The library serves as a source for the materials that include books, newspapers, journal articles and the internet.

1.8.2 Data Analysis

In the analysis and interpretation of the primary texts; the setting, plot, themes and characters are explored by the researcher. It is done subjectively and descriptively in a “close reading” manner (Quayson xi). It also engages the postcolonial and semiotics theories.

Chapter Two

Strategic Silence: *Paradise and Desertion*

2.0 Introduction

Literary history and the present are dark with silences: some [...] the silences for years by our acknowledged great; some silences hidden; some the ceasing to publish after one work appears; some never coming to book form at all. (Olsen 6)

This chapter explores the graphical and typological renditions of silence in Gurnah's *Paradise and Desertion*, through verbalized silence, pauses and omissions in order to establish its application in enunciating the trauma of the characters. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (1995) posit that the postcolonial theory "addresses all aspects of the colonial process from the beginning of colonial contact" (2). This is the position taken by the study as it explores the characters' silence with the aim of establishing how the colonial masters interfered with the lives of the subjects. The postcolonial theory is applied together with semiotics where the characters' silence is interpreted as a "sign system" and the characters or subjects "participate in a semiotic system to create meaning" (Tyson 216; Green and LeBihan 85). Before delving into the presentation of silence in Gurnah's novels, it is crucial to unravel the definition and history of silence both in religious and literary works in order to get an insight into the interpretation of silence.

The history of Zanzibar is "dark with silences" as drawn from Tillie Olsen (1980) because of the loss that the characters in the selected novels had to grapple with in their lives as a result of

European colonisation that destabilised the Zanzibari society. The Europeans seem to be the worst of all the colonial masters as elaborated by Schwerdt (1997) who observes that “[i]n the process of establishing themselves in the protectorate of Tanganyika, contrary to European myth-making about the “civilising” aspect of the colonial enterprise, German activity is exposed as exploitation of the worst kind” (92). With regards to *Paradise*, in this study, the focus is on the Germans colonial aggression on the characters whilst in *Desertion* it is on the British.

2.1 Definition of Silence

Silence has multifarious definitions. By looking at a few of them, the study benefits immensely as far as the meaning of silence is concerned. According to the *Longman Active Study Dictionary* silence is “When there is no sound or nobody is talking” or “When someone refuses to talk about something.” Chris Miller observes that “to be silent is to neglect or fail to communicate.” All these definitions simply mean the absence of speech. This is what the study is keen on in the selected novels. Daniel Ferguson observes that “Silence is all about interpretation, hidden meaning and indirectly stating something, usually unpleasant or a guilty pleasure that others would frown upon.” This definition is applicable in unravelling the characters’ silence. They are mute because of the guilt of migration.

Macherey (1978) observes that “Silence reveals speech – unless it is speech that reveals silence” (85). Drawing from Macherey, the study is keen on what the characters’ say in order to interpret the meaning of silence. This is because speech and silence are interdependent. Glenn (2004) observes that silence is as powerful as speech and that it is “an absence with a function” (xi; 4). The study takes silence to be an absence of speech that is symbolic of trauma in Gurnah’s *Paradise* and *Desertion*.

2.2 Historical Trajectory of Silence: Religious and Literary Landscape

In the narrative of Christianity about creation, it is the “word” from God that shaped the silent world because God was alone as he uttered the “word”. This can be adduced through a reading from The Bible (Society of Kenya 2008) in John1:1-3 that “[i]n the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made” (87). This biblical reading is contemplated by Alberto Schon as follows:

[I]n the beginning... there is the description of a desert, or abyss, or formlessness or absence. It is the word of the creative god, which is not a dialogue because there was no one to talk to that performs an organizing function interrupting the chaotic continuum. (9)

In the light of this biblical and Schon citations, it is evident that silence predated speech that came laced with divinity and shaped the silent world. This is why silence is normally associated with divinity or religion.

In Christianity and Islamic religion, silence is regarded as a form of prayer. It is also a medium of meditation as in Buddhism. Associated to the silent prayer is ‘a moment of silence’ which is normally observed as an honour/commemoration for the departed or dead in a cultural/religious setting. This “moment of silence” has also been secularized as seen in libraries, courts, banks and hospitals. According to Michelle Foucault (1995) this “silent treatment can be a technique of torture, producing a certain degree of pain, forming part of a ritual, creating a spectacle (link), seen by all almost as [...] triumph” (25). Moreover, in Islam according to (A2Youth inhouse 2015) there is wisdom in silence. In reference to the Quran as follows:

“Wisdom consists in keeping silent, and those who practice it are few.” (Salla Allahu’ Alayhee wa Sallam)

“Behold you are they who disputed about that of which you had knowledge; why then do you dispute about that of which you have no knowledge? And Allah knows while you do not know.” (Ali Imran: 66)

This is what the prophets of God said as pertains to remaining silent which they consider to be a sign of wisdom. This observation is applicable in the world of the selected novels that are Islamic in orientation.

A fascination with silence in literature began with Drama before gaining prominence in the novel. William Shakespeare who is one of the early playwrights deployed silence in many of his tragedies for example in *Titus Andronicus*. In this tragedy, Shakespeare probably deploys silence by cutting off the tongue of one of the female characters called Lavinia so that she is not able to name her attackers (ii.v.Staunton 535). Generally, Shakespeare could have used silence in his drama to “disclose imminent action in male characters” but for the female characters it showed “the characters’ lack of alternatives and a passive or at times forced acceptance” (Rovine 45-69). For instance, Lavinia is forced to accept her plight through being silenced by the playwright.

Later in the nineteenth century, enlightened women of the period might have used the novel to challenge their passivity and submissiveness as elaborated in Shakespeare’s drama. Patricia Laurence observes, in the literary works of Virginia Woolf, Jane Austen and Charlotte Bronte, that the authors “narrate the inwardness of female listeners and observers in conventional frameworks in life and texts, inviting us to interpret their silences not as passivity, submission or

oppression but as an enlightened presence” (156). Here the meaning of silence expanded and became a symbol of enlightenment in the educated women of the nineteenth century.

The meaning of silence might have broadened in the First World War (1914-1918) and the Second World War (1939-1945) for example with the Holocaust, in the Second World War where questions arose among critics as to whether there was an alternative besides speech that could describe the gross inhumanity witnessed in the two wars. Inga Clendinnen (1998) asks “when those who will understand are dead or lost or scattered, why speak?” (37). Silence was preferred over speech to describe the trauma experienced in the Holocaust as also attested by Anne Michaels (1997) who observes that “[n]o act of violence is ever resolved when the one who can forgive can no longer speak, there is only silence” (161). Silence in this context becomes a symbol of trauma as adduced by this study.

Another school of thought that sought an alternative with regards to the ability of language to represent reality was the Dadaist movement (1916-1920). For example, one of its proponents Hans Arp argued that the use of language was “the foolish rational explanation of the world” (Oesterreicher- Mollow 8). In the wake of Dadaism, new literary representations came up that might have engaged silence in a more profound sense for example absurdist theatre like in Samwel Becket’s play *Waiting for Godot* where the characters Estragon and Vladimir are waiting for a presence (Godot) that will give meaning to their society that is filled with silence.

Sarah Dauncey (2003) summarises the usage of silence in the twentieth century as follows:

Amongst the array of roles and meanings ascribed to silence it is seen as a transcendental signifying system, a pre - or post - verbal idyll that is foreclosed by consciousness, an intimation of language's inefficacy, and a sign of the historically repressed and disarticulated. (1)

Drawing from Dauncey, silence has got many roles one of which is describing the “historically repressed and disarticulated” that could be applicable in postcolonial literature for example in Gurnah's novels which are the focus of this study. Silence also could have the role of describing the subjugation experienced by the characters in the selected novels as a result of colonial encounter in East Africa. This can be supported by drawing from David Patterson (1992) who observes that “that which is human is that which speaks, the process of dehumanisation, on the other hand, is a process of rendering silent” (12). Here, muteness becomes a symbol of dehumanisation as evinced in the primary texts in this study.

2.3 Silence in *Paradise*

Paradise is set in East Africa in the late nineteenth century between 1890 and 1914 in the last stages of the caravan trade. It revolves around a protagonist called Yusuf. He is a child of twelve years who is pawned by his father as a *rehani* or slave to a rich and powerful merchant, Uncle Aziz. This is because Yusuf's father, who has been running a hotel at Kawa, is heavily indebted to Aziz. Yusuf who has been already corrupted by Aziz in receiving a ten anna piece from him whenever he visits, mistakes him for his uncle. But to his consternation, the uncle whom he has been admiring turns out to be an oppressor. He discovers that he is an oppressor when he reaches the coast. Yusuf is left to sleep outside Aziz's house in the company of the dogs. The journey to

trade with Aziz in the interior up to the Great Lakes serves to open his naive eyes. He witnesses the immense corruption characterising the caravan trade through the tributes paid to African Sultans by Aziz to grant them a pass into the interior of the East African Coast.

The Arabs dominance in the caravan trade seems to be squashed by the Germans who take over as the new colonial masters. Everybody now, including small children, fears the Germans whom they associate with mystical powers. An example can be drawn from the experience of a trader who attests to the power in the European through the narrator that “[o]ne 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” (72). From the illustration that extols the godliness in the European, it seems evident that the power that is felt in the East African Coast is imperial which has disrupted the organization of the society as is uncovered through trauma that is symptomized in the silence of the characters.

Trauma is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as “a wound or an external bodily injury,” or “a psychic injury, especially one caused by emotional shock the memory of which is repressed and remains unhealed,” or “the state or condition so caused.” The study finds the second and third definitions applicable in the selected novels because the characters experience a sense of psychological pain or loss in their lives as a result of colonial aggression. Kyeong Hwangbo (2004) describes trauma as “the disenfranchised pain and grief that cannot be integrated into a person’s general meaning structure and belief system” (v). This description of trauma by Hwangbo is what is symbolised in the silence of many characters in the selected novels because

they are unable to integrate the pain and grief brought about by colonial oppression into their lives.

The characters admire the Germans for their power but they also dislike their form of colonisation which appears to be worse than that of the Arabs. This ambivalence is signalled in the silence of the characters. Because of the ambivalence that characterizes the relationship between the colonized and the colonizer unnecessary agony is generated which traumatises the colonized. According to (Ashcroft et al), ambivalence is defined as “the ambiguous way in which colonizer and colonised regard one another. The colonizer often regards the colonized as both inferior yet exotically other, while the colonized regards the colonizer as both enviable yet corrupt.” For example, when Yusuf goes to the railway station to watch the train at his home town Kawa, “along the Tanga-Kilimanjaro railway line”, he meets two Europeans whom he cannot resist staring at but they cause him to mutter “the words he had been taught to say when he required sudden and unexpected help from God” (Jacobs 78, Gurnah 2). The silence of Yusuf is a sign of his ambivalence attitude towards the Europeans. Mohamed Abdalla also is mute in “I whispered the Almighty’s name, thinking I was in the presence of evil” (120). Despite their admiration of the lifestyle of the Europeans both Yusuf and Abdalla consider them evil. Their silence is a sign of agony that they feel in the presence of the European. Yusuf’s agony relates to the frightening bodily gesture of the European man who “bared his teeth in an involuntary snarl” like a dog while Abdalla’s relates to “they look like skinless reptiles” (2; 120). The European man is given the images of a dog and reptile that agonize Yusuf and Abdalla compelling them to pray silently – a sign of their Islamic conviction.

Later in the novel, Yusuf’s dread of the dogs is heightened when they begin to appear in his dreams at the coast. This is a sign of trauma. This is evidenced through the narrator in “[i]t

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 dogs in Yusuf’s dreams assume a human body (two-legged) and they appear merciless as they pass over him. The dogs here become symbolic of the oppression from both the Europeans and Arabs. Schwerdt (1997) observes 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” (92). The characters underwent a double colonisation, the first one being that of the Arabs that dominated the East African Coast for a long period of time as purveyors of slave trade. The second colonisation was that of the Europeans which might have been worse than that of the Arabs. This is what aggravates the trauma of the characters as seen in Yusuf who faces a double colonisation as pertains to this study.

The double colonisation could be the cause of the numerous nightmares that traumatise Yusuf in the form of dogs and beasts that are a key motif in his dreams. Yusuf gets to learn about this double colonisation when they reach Tayari which is “based on the slave entrepot of Tabora” on their way to trade in the interior through Uncle Aziz’s retelling of the history of colonialism in East Africa which is “traumatic as far as the postcolonial fiction is concerned” (Jacobs 83; Patrascu 3). Uncle Aziz’s story becomes “a tool for both narrating and silencing and conversely silence [becomes] a valuable dynamic in the telling of a story” (Kaigai 138). Yusuf learns through Uncle Aziz how the Arabs of the sultan of Zanzibar came to Tayari and build kingdoms (fourteen districts) for themselves. Later on the Germans (Amir Pasha and Prinzi) came and displaced them by forcing them to follow their own laws. Some of the Arabs were compelled to migrate to Ruemba, Uganda and Zanzibar. Silence dominates in between the long story about Arab and European colonisation as follows:

The merchant waited to see if Yusuf would say anything, and when he did not, he continued. ‘You’ll be thinking: how did so many of these Arabs come to be here in such a short time? When they started to come here, buying slaves from these parts was like picking fruit off a tree. They 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.’ (131)

Yusuf’s silence is a sign of “melancholia [or] tripling self reflexivity” concerning the double colonisation which he tries to acclimatise with in order to “produce meaning out of [his lost history and history of loss]” (Patrascu 3; Kaplan 514). Yusuf is at a loss because after leaving his home he finds himself in a liminal space of between the interior where Uncle Aziz trades and an unknown destiny. This is what compounds his trauma. Yusuf also realizes that “Arab, European and African: each is a potential oppressor” (Schwerdt 94). This is because he discovers from the story that he is told by Aziz that even his own people (Africans) participated in slavery by selling their cousins and neighbours to the Arabs. Though the Europeans came in the name of abolishing slavery, it never ended. Therefore, the situation became sophisticated because nobody could be trusted. It seemed that colonialism had contaminated Yusuf’s people with its evil.

Like dreams, Uncle Aziz’s presence also becomes repetitive and traumatic in Yusuf’s thoughts as signalled in his silence. The recurrent dreams and Uncle Aziz’s presence can be interpreted as a “collapse of the ego” in Yusuf in drawing from Franz Fanon (1967) (154). Yusuf’s neurotic behaviour begins upon his slight contact with the whites and then it is aggravated by the Arab environment because of its resemblance to the European. For instance, in the text Khalil’s warning that Uncle Aziz is not Yusuf’s uncle keeps on recurring in his mind whenever he

experiences oppression from Uncle Aziz whom all along he has known to be his uncle. When Maimuna asks Yusuf in the text why he had left him in his unreligious state, Yusuf thought “[f]or a start he ain’t my uncle” (99). This made him to remember Khalil as he struggled to suppress a smile (99). The same replicates itself in Abdalla’s words thus “[l]isten to what your uncle is saying” as if Yusuf is absent minded when Aziz is talking to him. Yusuf’s mind is being troubled with the thought that Aziz is not his uncle (132). Therefore, Yusuf’s silence is a sign of agony because of the truth that he is now a slave and not a nephew as he had thought earlier on.

Yusuf does not “find the silence and gloom of the timber-yard disconcerting, for he was accustomed to playing alone” (6) as depicted in the text because even his own people (Africans) had become oppressors like the colonialists. Yusuf’s father tells his son:

We are surrounded by savages. *Washenzi* (fools), who have no faith in God and who worship spirits and demons which live in trees and rocks. They like nothing better than to kidnap little children and make use of them as they wish. Or you’ll go with those other ones who have no care, those loafers and children of loafers, and they’ll neglect you and let the wild dogs eat you. (6)

In the light of this citation, a “complexly layered colonial society [is portrayed] from German dominators down to the “savages” living in the heart of the continent” (Deandrea 12). Yusuf’s father imparts the “language of othering” to his son who begins to believe in racial stereotyping when he is told by his father to play only with the Indian children (Jacobs 85). The Indian children in turn ‘other’ Yusuf by throwing sand and jeer “Golo, golo” at him when he approaches them in the novel (6). Consequently, Yusuf’s silence is a sign of alienation because of the racial differences that traumatises him.

The dreams that Yusuf silently grapples with in the image of the dogs are ambivalent in nature like his colonial masters. This is because apart from terrifying him, they also help to shape his identity by pushing him closer to his colonisers whom he must depend on in order to grow. This can be elucidated through Bardolph (1997) who avers 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” (87). The liminal space of between belonging and shame as a result of colonialism in the dependant Yusuf is what traumatises him. This is evident when Amina asks him if he would leave Uncle Aziz. In a silence that is symptomatic of his trauma, Yusuf laments that “[t]hey have raised us to be timid and obedient, to honour them even as they misuse us” (233). The silence in “They” refers to the Arab colonisers who have enslaved Yusuf and his fellow slaves. Also, the silence in “misuse” is a sign of shame which Yusuf and his colleagues feel as a result of forced submission to the Arabs. The ideal of shame which is invoked by Yusuf as he talks to Amina is demarcative of the racial, social, economic and religious boundaries that exist between the Arabs and the slaves Siundu (2013) (105).

Yusuf reads shame in Khalil’s defence as pertains to leaving his master Uncle Aziz. This can be elaborated through Yusuf’s silence in the text thus “[h]ow can you talk about honour...?” (232). Yusuf is reacting to what Khalil has said concerning him that “[m]y brother, how brave you are” as he is laughing through his tears (232). Khalil further tells Yusuf that “We can all run away to live on the mountain. It is up to her to leave. If she goes without the seyyid’s will I have to go back to being rehani, or pay the debt. This was the agreement, and this is what honour requires. So she won’t leave, and while she stays, I stay” (232). Khalil’s ambivalence towards leaving his master is portrayed through his laughter and tears as he talks to Yusuf who considers the honour invoked by him as just a scape goat. Schwerdt (1997) argues that Yusuf is depicted as

incorruptible by colonisation like others in order “to maintain the image of Africa as enigma [by constructing] the silent Yusuf. Like Aziz, the boy observes much but says little and ironically, the silence is interpreted by others as the silence of the visionary” (97). Yusuf’s silence is considered a sign of wisdom according to the Islamic religion.

There is wisdom in silence as can be established in another slave Mzee Hamdani. He is a gardener in Uncle Aziz’s paradise. He never talks to anyone which could be a sign of trauma as a result of suffering in the hands of Arab colonisers. Though he is offered freedom by the mistress (Aziz’s wife) he declines to embrace it though he believes in it. This is what brings out his ambivalence. His feelings as regards freedom are brought out in this citation:

They offered me freedom as a gift. She did. Who told her she had it to offer? I know the freedom you are talking about. I had that freedom the moment I was born. When these people (Arab colonisers) 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. When they have finished with you, they are still as far away from owning you as they were on the day you were born. (224)

After breaking his silence, Mzee Hamdani speaks to Yusuf who realizes that his silence is a sign of wisdom. Mzee Hamdani believes no one can claim ownership over a person as one is born free. Also that no one can claim that he has freedom to offer anyone. Myers (2000) posits that “Gurnah 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” (442). Yusuf and Mzee Hamdani could have wisdom but they do not have room to express it because of the Arab oppression. They opt to remain silent as a survival mechanism as nobody can listen to them because of their marginality or despicable backgrounds. For example, when Yusuf proposes that he delivers Amina from slavery or colonisation she sees him as a dreamer as illustrated in “[n]o, she has not said anything. She thinks I’m a dreamer” (233).

Like Mzee Hamdani, Aziz’s silence could be a sign of wisdom according to the Islamic faith. Despite the immense suffering or trauma that he undergoes in the hands of the African sultans through the tributes that he has to pay in order to get a pass he remains mute. For example, the sultan of Mkata accuses Uncle Aziz of bringing them evil after one of their women is killed by a crocodile. His response is “[t]rust in God” (123). The silence in “God” is also a sign of colonisation because Aziz is supposed to invoke the name of Allah as a true Muslim. Aziz is an oppressor thus has to be met with vengeance like his fellow Arabs who had swindled the people from the African interior of their ivory. The climax of this on him is shown when he lands in the hands of Chatu who takes his porters captive, orders his men to beat Mohamed Abdalla and confiscates all his goods. Jacobs (2009) observes that “[t]he debasement of trade into exploitation and enslavement is the result of a deep-seated contempt for the culture of the other; in articulating this truth, Chatu reveals himself to be both an object and an agent of othering in the narrative” (85). Though Aziz is othered by Chatu, he does not lose hope as he encourages one of the porters to “[t]rust in God” even after having lost everything (159). His ambivalence is imminent in his silence that instead of seeing a loss he sees profit. This is how Uncle Aziz manages to survive the hostility in his journey across the African interior. Moreover, his silence can be interpreted as a sign of his belief in God.

Uncle Aziz trusts in God even “as he loses many of his porters due to death as they move across a hostile African interior to trade. This is also traumatic to him. Through his many ‘moments of silence’ he reads the Quran. For example, after one of the porters is eaten by a hyena, “The merchant sat for a long time on his mat, silently saying prayers for the man they had lost. From a small Koran, which he pulled out of his box, he read *Ya Sin* for the dead by the light of a lamp hung on the branch of a tree” (125). Here silence comes out as a religious phenomenon. The same ‘moment of silence’ is seen in the Africans whom the Arabs consider to be savages. When one of the sultans at “Ujiji, the base for a vast expansion of the slave trade into the Congolese forest in the nineteenth century”, loses a wife, Uncle Aziz and his servants are asked to “march silently without music or noise, as a mark of respect for the sultans’s bereavement” (Jacobs 84, Gurnah 138). Silence in this context is a sign of respect or honour. This also depicts silence as a cultural phenomenon. Besides being a religious and cultural phenomenon, silence helps to bring out the homogeneity in the Africans though “*Paradise* does not homogenise all non-Europeans simply as Africans, and reproduces all the socio-ethnic strata of that specific African region” (Deandrea 12).

In spite of the resilience exhibited by Uncle Aziz in the silence of “Trusting in God”, symptoms of trauma appear when he decides to hand over his responsibilities to Yusuf because now the Germans have made it difficult to trade as they have taken over. After a long silence since he sought for help from the Germans over Chatu, his ambivalence over what the European is capable of doing is evident in this citation:

We’ll discuss the plans later, to see what you can best do for me. I’m getting tired of all this travelling. You can do some of that for me. You might even get to meet your old friend Chatu again. By the way, take care, both of you. Khalil! You too. There’s talk of

war between the Germans and the English, up there on the northern border. I heard this from the merchants in town when I came in yesterday afternoon. Any day now the Germans are going to start kidnapping people to make them porters for their army. So keep your eyes open. If you see them coming shut up the shop at once and get out of sight. You've heard what the Germans can do, haven't you? (242)

While reminiscing about silence Uncle Aziz indirectly reveals his future plans to Yusuf and Khalil. At the same time, he is able to impart wisdom to them by telling them a story that he has heard about the Germans. Barasa and Makokha (2011) aver that “[s]tories are the repository of our collective wisdom about the world of social/cultural behaviour; they are the key mediating structures for our encounters with reality” (215). Uncle Aziz's story that is anchored in silence is a sign of wisdom of the socio-cultural world as he expresses his agony about the Germans whom he presages will enslave people for their army. Indeed that happens when Yusuf and other young men is caught in the German bandwagon.

Hussein, another Arab from Zanzibar expresses his wisdom and agony in silence. These symptoms of trauma manifest in the conversation between him and Kalasinga. Again, his ambivalent attitude towards the Europeans is revealed in this quotation:

I'm afraid, you're right...though not only of them. We'll lose everything, including the way we live. And these young people will lose even more. One day they'll make them spit on all that we know, and will make them recite their laws and their story of the world as if it were the holy word. When they come to write about us, what will they say? That we made slaves. (87)

The silence (pause) in Hussein is a sign of agony. He agonizes that the Africans especially the young people will lose their culture as a result of mimicry which Tyson (2006) defines as “the attempt of the colonized to be accepted by imitating the dress, behaviour, speech, and lifestyle of the colonizers” (427). The citing of European laws and story is what is termed as mimicry. Another agony that Hussein feels is when the Europeans will write about Africans where they will depict them as slave traders while excluding themselves. Nair (2012) establishes that Gurnah wrote *Paradise* because of “the falsification of history as the people who did most of the Crusading against slavery were also missionaries. There was the hope that the ending of one would also enable the other.” Therefore, silent characters in this case have been included by the author to bring out his intention. According to *Paradise*, it is evident that slavery never ended with the coming of the missionaries in the East African society as might have been assumed by historians.

Like Hussein, Abdalla (another Arab) echoes the same wisdom while referring to European colonisation using silence in the metaphorical sense. His silence is symptomatic of trauma as disclosed in this citation:

But there will be no more journeys now the European dogs are everywhere. By the time they've finished with us they will have fucked us up every hole in our bodies. Fucked us beyond recognition. We'll be worse than the shit they'll make us eat. Every evil will be ours, people of our blood, so that even naked savages will be able to despise us. You'll see. (186)

Abdalla expresses his ambivalence towards the Europeans by calling them dogs. Because after they have misused the Arabs they shall heap every evil on them. This is what will make them be

despised even by the naked savages. The metaphorical silence in dogs, finishing, fucking and eating shit refers to a feature of colonisation that is characterised with oppression and exploitation of the worst kind. Houlden (2013) implicates colonialism as “predatory” in behaviour in his study of homosexuality in both *Paradise* and *By the Sea* (91). This predatory behaviour is a cause of trauma to the characters in the text. In addition, the silence surrounding the evil that Abdalla refers to is a sign of slavery that the Europeans will blame the Arabs on which is a falsification of history.

Few women characters exist in *Paradise*, because Gurnah has created men with “ambiguous gender roles” for example in the beautiful Yusuf (Robolin 2). The silence of women is symptomatic of trauma. It can also be argued that women are silent because they suffer a double colonisation in the form of patriarchy and imperialism. Drawing from Spivak (1988) “the ‘subaltern’ woman is ‘doubly in shadow’” because of patriarchy and imperialism which make her silent (84). This can be elaborated through Zulekha and Amina who are Uncle Aziz’s wives. Zulekha is condemned to stay indoors together with Amina. They are not allowed to interact with the people outside Uncle’s Aziz walled Garden. This is what aggravates their trauma in living with a chauvinist husband. This can be illustrated through Amina who tells Yusuf that the “seyyid [...] likes to say that most of the occupants of Hell are women. If there is Hell on earth, then it is here” (229). The metaphorical silence in Amina with regards to hell on earth is symbolic of the misery that she and her co-wife live in because of gender discrimination that is worsened with the coming of the Europeans. This is because the Germans are seen to recruit only men for their army that they intend to use to fight in the First World War. As a result of the Hell that Zulekha lives in she has developed a strange wound which she feels Yusuf can heal because of his beauty. This is what Khalil tells Yusuf in the text about the madness in Zulekha that:

Now she has a new madness and it's very dangerous. Dangerous for you. Listen, she says you are now a man and the way to cure her wound is to take her whole heart in your hands. Do you understand? I can't utter what is in her mind, but I hope you understand the direction she is heading. Do you understand? Or are you too young and pure-thinking? (206)

Through the metaphorical silence in "you are now a man", Zulekha's wound becomes a sign of sexual deprivation. It is also a sign of slavery from her husband. This is why she and Amina see a saviour in the "beautiful" Yusuf who is a hybrid in drawing from Tyson (2006) who 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 (427). This is because Yusuf is now a product of his culture and that of the Arab.

2.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the silence of the characters in *Paradise* has been brought out as a religious and cultural phenomenon. It has been strategically presented to symbolise the characters' religious conviction, honour for the dead, agony, fear, alienation, shame, wisdom and colonisation. Furthermore, their silence alludes to the repression of history because of its falsification. Migration and racial differences also device the characters in the text.

2.5 Silence in Desertion

Like *Paradise*, *Desertion* is also set in the same period but spans into the middle of the twentieth century (1899-1950s). It is narrated through a male protagonist in the name of Rashid. Rashid leaves Zanzibar in the 1950s through a scholarship in order to study in England. Upon his arrival in England, Rashid attempts to reconnect with his roots in Zanzibar through Amin (his brother) whom he writes to. This is in order to alleviate his discomfort in exile. In this writing venture, Gurnah depicts his natal home Zanzibar in three stories that give an insight into the history of Zanzibar in a subtle way.

The first one begins in 1899 in an unmentioned small town in the coast that comes out to be Malindi in Kenya. A weather beaten and dejected man called Martin Pearce an Englishman arrives silently in this small town after being deserted by his Somali guides to die. His life is rescued by Hassanali a Muslim when he is going to the mosque early in the morning to call his fellow Muslims for the Morning Prayer. After his rescue and the hospitality that he is shown by Hassanali's family, he returns to give his appreciation. He is accompanied with his colleague, Fredrick Tuner (a British colonial administrator). Tuner accuses Hassanali's family of having stolen from Pearce during his stay with them. Ironically, Pearce falls in love with Rehana who is a sister to Hassanali. Unfortunately, this affair ends tragically after Pearce deserts Rehana when she needs him most – a time when she is pregnant with Asma who eventually becomes a mother to Jamila.

In the second part, Rashid depicts the successes and failures of his siblings, Amina and Farida whom he had left behind upon moving to England to advance his studies. The 1950s are a very hectic moment in the history of Zanzibar because independence is in the air. In the third part, Rashid now a postgraduate student in England wants to return home after Zanzibar has gained

independence from the British in December 1963. He has found another love in Barbara Tuner a granddaughter of Tuner and Pearce after his earlier wife Grace deserts him for silencing her and “demanding attention” (228). This is one of the things that Rashid would prefer to remain silent about because of the trauma that it evokes in him as he admits “that is one story I plan to leave well alone” (228). Rashid knows that he cannot return home due to the political unrest as a result of the Zanzibar revolution immediately after independence that culminates to the death of many Arabs and Indians and forced migrations. He keeps on dillydallying when Barbara Tuner demands to be brought home to find her cousin Jamila.

As opposed to *Paradise* where the driving force of colonialism is material gain, *Desertion* explores another level of colonialism whose motivation is love as observed by Brazzelli (2011):

Gurnah’s interpretation of the history of colonization is double faced. On one hand, the motif of the conquest includes the issue of desire; male desire of appropriating and exploiting the remote and fascinating lands of the dark continent moves colonial history. On the other hand, desire is represented through the encounter of two (male and female) identities, denying the rules of colonial ideology. (184)

This explains why the “heart of this novel” is love stories (Jones 38). Specifically, the novel “traces the danger of an interracial relationship and, at the same time, its inevitability” (Brazzelli 175). The relationship between Martin Pearce and Rehana that is hybrid is very critical in this novel for its implications are reverberated through the future generation of Amin and Jamila whose love affair is also hybrid. These love affairs are considered to be hybrid because they cut across two cultures – the African and the European. These love affairs in the context of the novel

are qualified as transgressive hence not acceptable on both sides of the colonial divide. Referring to the novel:

This was 1899, not the age of Pocahontas when a romance fling with a savage princess could be described as an adventure. The imperial world observed some rigidity about sexual proprieties. The empire had become an extension of British civic respectability, and while that allowed for some high spirits and adventure, it no longer included dalliances with subject floosies, at least not from its officers, at least not officially. There were wives and mothers to consider, and missionaries, and public opinion and dignity [...] (116-117)

In the period of 1899, it would seem that Africans and Europeans were very strict when it came to love affairs as no one was allowed to transcend the boundaries laid down by the two sides. This interaction between Europeans and East Africans in 1899 “reveal[s] the process of othering as a means of cultural self-assertion” (Falk 54). However, there are those who were courageous to get out of these cultural and social boundaries but they got relegated to “the margins of official history” (Brazzelli 175). The trauma that the “transgressors” felt is symbolised in their silence.

The relegation of the transgressive love affairs is evident even in academic scholarship. This is done by Rashid himself who is now a postgraduate student and teaching in England like Gurnah at a conference in Cardiff where he is presenting a paper on “race and sexuality in settler writing in Kenya” in the text thus:

I made some low-key observations on the fiction as well as on some memoirs, remarking on the absence of sexual encounters in this writing or their sublimation into gestures of

pained patronage or rumours of tragic excess. In the discussion phase of my presentation I mentioned the story of Rehana, or what I knew of it, as an example of the kind of story which failed to appear in this writing. I mentioned which town it had taken place in, approximately which period and its unexpected consequences for her granddaughter Jamila. I did not at that point know Pearce's name. Well, it wasn't much of a paper, nothing challenging or ambitious, more like a brief chat about issues that interested me in this writing. (258)

Despite the fact that Rashid highlights the silence that surrounds the transgressive love affairs in his presentation for example the story of Rehana and Pearce, the trauma of retelling the story makes him to relegate it to the "margin as it were" (Patrascu 3, Falk 57). Rashid does not treat his presentation with the seriousness that it deserves because he does not believe in the existence of such affairs in the first place.

Rashid admits in the novel that the story of Rehana and Pearce was impossible to believe though he admits it took place which again thrusts him into a liminal space of between the story occurring and not occurring. This can be illustrated in "I don't know how it would have happened. The unlikeliness of it defeats me. Yet I know it did happen that Martin and Rehana became lovers. Imagination fails me and that fills me with sorrow. Rashid's sorrow which silently afflicts him when his imagination fails is traumatising due to his "collapse of ego" as a result of "cultural imposition" (Fanon 154). This is because to Rashid's ego this affair was transgressive and therefore impractical.

The sorrow that traumatises Rashid also affects his brother Amin as revealed in this citation:

I knew then that this was going to be a tragic story. How could a woman who was abandoned by her husband, who had a child in sin with a European man who also abandoned her, who lived with another elderly European man and who drank herself, find her way back to content? She watched my silence with a sad smile and I felt my eyes watering with love for her. I didn't know what the sadness meant at the time but it made my heart fill with sorrow. (241)

Amin contemplates silently the trauma that befell Rehana after having a double desertion first by an Indian man in the name of Azad and later by a European called Pearce. Furthermore, even cohabiting with another European does not alleviate her pain for she begins to drink. Amin wonders how she is going to recover from all these desertions. Amin closes himself up in sorrowful silence. Amin's sorrow is as a result of the "othering" of Rehana by the Indian and the European which he feels was unjustified, a reason why he does not see anything wrong in loving Jamila – a product of the love between Rehana and Pearce (Tyson 427). Nair (2012) establishes from *Gurnah* that the reason behind writing *Desertion* was on the experience of sorrow that oppressed humanity. Therefore, Rashid and Amin experience oppression because they have been traumatised into sorrowful silence. The sorrow culminates from colonial aggression in the form of forbidden love.

Indians are depicted in the same light as the Europeans through Azad. Azad who blinds Hassanali with his Indian nationality is given a lee way to marry Rehana without following the normal marriage procedure. The silence surrounding Azad's background is symbolic of the doom or tragedy into the affair between him and Rehana. This can be illustrated from the text

through Hassanali pleading to Rehana that “[i]t’s not conceit ... not vanity which makes me hesitate. It makes me happy that he has asked. He is a good man, joyful and courteous and ... pleasing. But we don’t know very much about him or his people. We don’t know ...” (71). The numerous pauses that punctuate Hassanali’s speech are a sign of uncertainty though he purports to know Azad. Also the silence in “he has asked” is symbolic of marriage which Hassanali is shy of mentioning.

Drawing from Schwerdt (1997) like on *Paradise*, Rehana discovers that “each [person] is a potential oppressor” as it does not matter whether it is Indian or European or Arab or to make it worse your brother as the colonial experience “corrupted and brutalized everyone” (94-95). This explains why Rehana is traumatized through the way she treats her brother Hassanali as in this illustration that “[i]n time, Rehana hardened into her disdainful manner and Hassanali unavoidably became resigned to her scorn. He did not know what else to do. It was not only time that made her so scornful. No, it wasn’t. It was Azad and Hassanali’s part in that. Sometimes her voice swelled through his body and made his eyes water with helplessness” (13). Rehana’s silence through her gesture of scorn is a sign of agony that she associates with the presence of Hassanali who in turn is silently affected by his guilt as in “made his eyes water” for he cannot reverse the trauma that they are all wallowing in. Silence as a “guilty pleasure that others would frown upon” as defined by Ferguson (2010) becomes evident in the relationship between Rehana and Hassanali.

Hassanali is portrayed as a devoted Muslim. However, he is also seen in a different light together with his fellow Muslims. The narrator gets into the silence of his mind melancholically or reflexively as defined by Patrascu in order to reveal the trauma of the savage in the hands of the Muslims (3). The Muslims “language of othering” of the savage like in *Paradise* is portrayed

through Hamza who would not have bothered to compete for the wounded Pearce if he was a “stinking savage” in the text (Jacobs 85; Gurnah 14). The “stinking” could be symbolic of marginalisation on the basis of race or religion. Rehana also has the same attitude of othering the savage like Hassanali. Both of them could not have assisted Pearce if he was a savage because all the Muslims are “terrified of the savage” (14). The narrator comments that “[e]veryone told savage stories all the time. No one survived out there in the open country except the wild beast and the savage” (14). The marginal place of the savage like in *Paradise* discloses a “colonial-layered society” right from the British colonizer at the top to the savage who is at the bottom (Deandrea 12).

The British are also seen to “other” the Muslims for example through Fredrick Tuner (Tyson 427). When Tuner accompanies Pearce who is out to thank Hassanali’s family for their hospitality, he accuses the family of stealing from Pearce. Ironically it is Tuner who has stolen silently from them because he does not return the eating mat that they had carried the recovering Pearce in. According to Falk (2007) the conversations and feelings of the Englishmen highlight the mechanisms of othering that Simon Gikandi (1996) identifies as critical aspect in the formation of the identity of the Englishmen historically (54; 50-83). The silence in the gesture of not returning the mat is symbolic of “cultural inferiority” of the British that is indicative of trauma in the minds of Rehana and Malika who feel that the mat has been defiled and needs to be replaced (Falk 54; Gurnah 59-60). The British purport to be in East Africa for a noble mission of civilization. One would cast aspersions on this kind of civilization that depicts the mechanism of “othering as a means of cultural self-assertion” (Falk 54).

As much as Amin empathizes with Rehana because of what has befallen her, he is deeply afflicted with trauma as a result of othering from the society at large. This is because the society that Amin lives in has been contaminated by colonialism (Schwerdt 94-95). His affair with Jamila, though it thrives silently, does not see the light of day as it ends tragically like that of Pearce and Rehana. It is Farida his sister who secretly introduces Amin to Rehana. Out of this secret encounter a transgressive relationship ensues but unfortunately it is discovered by Amin's parents who pressure him to exit the affair because of social stigma. Amin eventually succumbs to this pressure. However, his life becomes traumatic as seen through silence as in this illustration through Rashid who says that:

I had thought often about Jamila and Amin and what had happened between them and what it still meant. In some ways, his silence about her made me understand things I would not have thought about him, and made me think about obduracy and anguish. When I wrote to tell him about Grace, he replied to say that my news filled him with sadness and made him think of Jamila. That was the first time he mentioned Jamila in any of his letters, the first time in all that age since I left home, and the suddenness with which he brought her back into our lives made me want to write their story, Jamila and Amin. Perhaps it was a way of not thinking about Grace. I don't know. I had time on my hands. I had no one to placate and wheedle affection from, and I wanted to think about Amin, to bring him closer, to remember the things that were now lost to me. (119-120)

Rashid admits in the citation that when he thought about Amin's muteness concerning Jamila he thought of "obduracy and anguish." Therefore, Amin's silence is a sign of anguish and obduracy because whenever he remembered his affair with Jamila he is filled with sadness. The same anguish is what afflicts Rashid whenever he remembers his affair with Grace, the reason he

prefers to remain mute (228). Because Rashid has no one to keep him company in England he begins to suffer from “cultures of displacement that are characterized with longing, memory and (dis)identification” (Ajulu-Okungu 18). This is why he thinks about Amin in order to wither out the feeling of “unhomeliness” which Tyson (2006) defines as “feeling that one has no cultural ‘home’ or sense of cultural belonging” (427).

In spite of the trauma that Rashid goes through in exile because of Grace, his hostile reception in England elicits a lot of anxiety in him as elaborated by Said (2000):

cut off from their roots, their land, their past ...Exiles feel, therefore, an urgent need to reconstitute their broken lives, usually by choosing to see themselves as part of a triumphant ideology of a restored people. The crucial thing is that a state of exile free from this triumphant ideology – designed to reassemble an exiles’ broken history into a new whole – is virtually unbearable and virtually impossible in today’s world. (177)

Rashid who is “cut off” from his home in Zanzibar finds it difficult to settle down in England no matter how hard he tries. That is why he is compelled to write letters back home in order to deal with being in exile. Rashid recalls what he witnessed in London upon his arrival thus:

Like many people in similar circumstances, I began to look at myself with increasing dislike and dissatisfaction, to look at myself through their eyes. To think of myself as someone who deserved to be disliked. So at first I thought it was the way I spoke, that I was inept and clumsy, ignorant and tongue –tied, perhaps even transparently scheming, wanting to much to be liked. Those beaming, ingratiating smiles must have embarrassed everyone I talked to, because they had to struggle not to laugh. Then I thought it was the

clothes I wore, which were cheap and ill-fitting and not as clean as they could be, and which perhaps made me look clownish and unbalanced. But despite the explanations I gave myself, I could not help hearing the slighting words or the irritable tone at petty everyday encounters or the suppressed hostility in casual glances. (214)

The “everyday encounters” thrusts Rashid into a state of “double consciousness” where he begins to look at himself through their eyes (Europeans) (Dubois 2-3). Also, the melancholia or “tripling self-reflexivity” in the silence forces Rashid to give himself several explanations as he attempts to “produce meaning out of [his lost history and history of loss]” (Patrascu 3, Kaplan 514). His efforts prove futile as he could not help himself from hearing “slighting words or the irritable tone at petty everyday encounters or the suppressed hostility in casual glances” that echo in his mind. These silent gestures that traumatise Rashid are a sign of the anxiety that he has to contend with in exile.

2.6 Conclusion

In *Desertion*, silence is symptomatic of the characters’ trauma, through sorrow and anguish in the hybrid love affairs that are regarded as transgressive on both sides of the colonial divide. Like *Paradise*, silence is indicative of a layered colonial society through the mechanism of “othering” that radiates on racial differences (Jacobs 85). Moreover, in *Desertion*, silence shows the anxiety that exiles such as Rashid have to grapple with coupled with double consciousness. In the next chapter, the study shall focus on the devoicement of characters through migration.

Chapter Three

Migration

3.0 Introduction

Migration which is hereby defined as the movement of people regionally or overseas in search for self fulfilment is the subject of this chapter. The movement from home to exile through forced displacement, slavery and forbidden love is discussed. It is both physical and metaphorical. This is because the characters that move physically to exile are unable to return home because of discomfort. The only way they can do so is through memory (metaphorically). As a result, migration has devoiced the characters.

The experience of migration is depicted in Gurnah (2001a) which captures the moment when Gurnah and his brother were escaping from Zanzibar to Britain because of the terror meted on them by the government of the day. Unfortunately, upon their arrival in Britain they encounter another terror through Enoch Powell's speech on 'Rivers of Blood'. Maurice O' Connor observes that because of "racial tension, arrival from the postcolonial state to the old metropolis was fraught with fear and anxiety." This fear and anxiety that Gurnah had as a result of the hostile reception in Britain by the natives is disclosed in his article "Fear and Loathing" as follows:

East African Asians were arriving in Britain because they thought that they had the right to. They had British passports, offered to them out of an imperial largeness that, it turned out, Britain thought it could no longer afford. When times became hard for them under African-led governments – the very reason they had taken the passports in the first place – the United Kingdom seemed appalled by their arrival. (Gurnah 2)

Gurnah might have distilled his experience of migration in his characters. This is because their silence is symptomatic of terror, fear and anxiety which are traumatic to the characters.

3.1 *Paradise*: The search of Home and Self

As established in the previous chapter, the characters in *Paradise* and *Desertion* are mute because of being displaced as a result of colonialism that perpetuates slavery and forbidden love. Forced displacement compels the characters to move from home to exile in search for a home and self. According to Ajulu-Okungu (2006) “[t]ravelling is undertaken as a search for a home as well as a search for the self” by Gurnah’s characters (17). As characters “search for a home and self” through migration as highlighted by Ajulu-Okungu, there is an ironic twist of events as the characters are traumatised because of fear, anxiety and terror in diaspora as symbolised by their silences.

Beginning with *Paradise*, Yusuf gets subjected to “Arabization” silently through a ten anna piece given to him by Uncle Aziz as illustrated in “[i]t was always at the moment of departure that the ten anna piece changed hands, when uncle Aziz would offer his hand to be kissed and stroke the back of Yusuf’s head as he bent over it. Then with practiced ease he would slip the coin into Yusuf’s hand” (Glassman 404; Gurnah 4). As a result, he is metaphorically moved to the coast (Tanga) from Kawa through the ten anna piece given to him. The kissing and stroking that Yusuf is exposed to by Uncle Aziz is symbolic of the servitude that Yusuf has been in even before he is given away by his father to the paternal Aziz. According to Schwerdt (1997) Yusuf becomes “the epitome of the disempowered colonial subject, seeing in his departure for the hinterland “an unwelcome interruption to the equanimity his life in captivity had acquired over the years” (93).

In following Aziz, Yusuf hopes that his life will become better but it turns out to be traumatic because he is displaced.

Yusuf, Khalil, Mzee Hamdani and Amina who are all slaves serving under Uncle Aziz fit within the definition of Den Roberta Cohen and Francis M. Deng (1998) who define displacement as a “forced removal of people from their homes through armed conflict, internal strife, systematic violations of human rights and other causes traditionally associated with refugees across international borders” (7). This is because their human rights are violated by their fathers who forcibly displace them by pawning them as a *rehani* – a kind of slave in order to stand in for the debt owed to their oppressive Arab creditors. Ajulu-Okungu (2006) observes that “Gurnah narrates a geographical space that is characterized by domination and inequities of power and wealth that is also instrumental in creating a sense of rootlessness in a majority of the characters presented” (18). The struggle for dominance as observed by Ajulu-Okungu is what affects the characters in *Paradise* who are enslaved and rendered rootless by their parents who “mimicry” or copy the behaviour of the oppressors – their creditors (Arabs) who are powerful, wealthy and dominant (Tyson 427). The debts that Yusuf’s father owes Aziz are kept silent from Yusuf because they are too much. Yusuf’s father’s silence is a sign of fear and anxiety. These debts play a role in displacing Yusuf physically from his home. The narrator reports that “[h]e could not remember any mention of debts, and they seemed to live well enough compared with their neighbours” (24). Though Yusuf and his parents live well, it is only a façade as they are heavily indebted or enslaved and thus traumatised.

Khalil, a slave pawned in a similar manner as Yusuf quashes all the hopes that Yusuf has about being freed from slavery in “[b]ut I don’t think anything like that will happen. You Ba is probably completely poor now, just like my marehemu Ba was, and couldn’t repay his debt in

this world or the next. So no mountain retreat for you...But the seyyid won't even ask him, I don't think" (190). Khalil commiserates with Yusuf by expressing his disillusionment through the silence in the pause concerning the debts that their fathers owe Aziz. That the debts are not payable in this world or in the next symbolises endless slavery from the oppressor Aziz. Therefore, Khalil who is left with no choice but to submit to his oppressor Aziz considers it prudent to advise Yusuf on how to survive as a slave which is through mimicry; learning Arabic in order to win the love of the oppressor and ensure that he does not go wrong all his life (25). Ajulu-Okungu (2006) observes that "[t]he relationship between Yusuf [and Khalil] and the opulent merchant Aziz [that Yusuf takes to be his uncle] helps us to understand the workings of nascent imperial processes in Africa that set the pace for grand imperialism" (7). With grand imperialism many countries in Africa including Zanzibar have remained under colonial influence even after independence, making the notion of nationalism that is central to many subjects in the postcolony an elusive paradise.

In addition, emotional displacement of Yusuf and Khalil is deeply felt in their "unhomeliness." This is because they find themselves in a liminal space of between slavery and freedom. Their situation can also be conceptualized through their "hybridity" which Tyson in the same text defines as "experiencing one's cultural identity as a hybrid of two or more cultures, which feeling is sometimes described as positive alternative to unhomeliness" (427). Rosemary Marangoli George (1996) observes that:

Today, the primary connotation of 'home' is of 'private' space from which the individual travels into the larger arenas of life and to which he or she returns at the end of the day. And yet, also in circulation is the world's wider significance as the larger geographic space where one belongs: country, city, village, community. Home is also the imagined

location which can be more readily fixed in a mental landscape than in actual geography.

The term 'home country' suggests the particular intersection of private and public and of individual and communal that is manifest in imagining a space of home. (9)

Three ideas of 'home' manifest in this citation from George: 'private space', 'geographic space' and 'imagined location'. For Yusuf and Khalil their homes are brought out as 'private spaces' in both their natal and hybrid homes and as 'imagined locations' as it is unclear where they want to go after freeing from the Arab oppression in the form of slavery. For instance, when Yusuf is told by Aziz that his father is dead and that the whereabouts of her mother are unknown, "[h]e felt no sense of loss, but a sudden sadness that his mother too was now abandoned somewhere" (241). After this revelation, Yusuf gets into a "long silence" after slight moments of grief but there is something else he is grieving about that Aziz is oblivious about (241). His long silence is a sign of grief that is double-edged for signalling "unhomeliness" as there is no home to return to and servitude that he is in with her love Amina as evidenced in this citation that "I want to take her away. It was wrong of you to marry her. To abuse her as if she has nothing belongs to her. To own people the way you own us" (241). Yusuf is intending to free himself and Amina from slavery that has dehumanized them by denying them freedom. Though Aziz wants to hand over to Yusuf because he has gotten tired of the travelling he is not ready for it as he wants to run away with Amina. There is a lot of silence surrounding Yusuf's chosen destination with Amina. Ajulu-Okungu (2006) observes that "[w]hile both the condition of the displaced and that of the refugee clearly signal the original home as evocative of a sense of belonging, the condition of Gurnah's characters is not clearly brought out" (21). The condition of Yusuf as regards home becomes unclear as one time he is in a "guilty pleasure" through silence for neglecting it and the other time he wants to go away from it (Ferguson). His guilt as regards home can be adduced in this citation:

[H]e 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. He could not resist other memories in this state, and images of his abandonment came to him in a spate. They all condemned him for self-neglect. (174)

This leads the study to conclude that Yusuf is caught in a liminal space of between his natal home and hybrid home.

This is different in Khalil who finds a home in his hybrid home where he remains a slave. This is because after he is released to go by Aziz after marrying Amina, he decides to stay and serve “that poor girl” that his father had sold into slavery (231). Actually, even if he is released he has no home to return to as evidenced in “I have nowhere to go” as his father had died and his mother and siblings had migrated to Arabia (207; 231). Though he chooses to stay in servitude he laments for being submissive to colonial oppression for he blames his father and Aziz thus “[m]y poor Ba, may God have mercy on him, and the seyyid have taken everything else from me. If it was not they who made me into the useless coward you see here, then who did? Perhaps I just have the nature for it, or it is the way we live...our custom” (232). The pause that precedes “our custom” is symbolic of the trauma that Khalil grapples with as a slave.

Bardolph (1997) observes that “the young men (Yusuf and Khalil) have a very insecure, even disreputable background and, by accepting the authority of the (oppressor) are finally recognized and acquire an identity that helps them to grow” (87). Khalil’s silence is symbolic of honour (ungwana) because though he is against slavery, it has assisted him and Yusuf in growing and

having an identity. This is what he tells Yusuf that “[m]y brother how brave you are,” Khalil said, laughing through his tears. ‘We can all run away to live on the mountain. It is up to her to leave. If she goes without the Seyyid’s will I have to go back to being rehani, or pay the debt. This was the agreement, and this is what honour (ungwana) requires. So she won’t leave, and while she stays, I stay” (232). Khalil is caught in between honour (ungwana) and shame as signalled in the silence of laughter and tears; otherwise he is ready to run away with Yusuf. Taking a cue from Siundu (2005) Khalil leans on the “ideals of shame and honour [that] demarcate social, economic, religious and racial boundaries” that exist between the slaves and their masters that explain why slaves submit to bondage (105). The issue of honour (ungwana) is inculcated into Yusuf by Hamid (another Arab oppressor) in this quotation:

Do you know that we who are from the coast call ourselves waungwana?’ Hamid asked. Do you know what that means? It means people of honour. That’s what we call ourselves, especially up here among fiends and savages. Why do we call ourselves that? It is God who gives us the right. We are honourable because we submit ourselves to the Creator, and understand and adhere to our obligations to Him. If you cannot read His word or follow His law, you are no better than these worshippers of rocks and trees. Little better than beast. (100)

Yusuf remains silent throughout the lengthy speech. He only replies ‘yes’ meaning he has submitted fully to his master. This is what is indoctrinated to all slaves by their masters who call themselves honourable by invoking religion as a justification. As a result they end up breeding cowardly slaves. This can be drawn from Yusuf’s silence in a stream of consciousness that “[t]hey’ve raised us to be timid and obedient, to honour them even as they misuse us” (233).

Like Yusuf and Khalil, Mzee Hamdani and Amina are caught in between their natal and hybrid homes due to forced displacement. Despite being offered freedom from their masters they do not embrace it though they yearn for it. This is a sign of “unhomeliness” as symbolised in their silences. If their own fathers can subject them to slavery by selling them to bondage as a *rehani* for their debts who is there to trust? As this situation spells doom for the slaves, Mzee Hamdani – an old gardener in Aziz’s paradise opts for muteness. Silence is quite conspicuous in Mzee Hamdani as he does everything “silently” whether it is leaving the garden , accommodating Yusuf and even welcoming him (183; 197-213). The silence in Mzee Hamdani is a sign of fear because when Yusuf pleads with him to talk “[h]e nodded impatiently, reluctant as always to suffer anyone’s words” (223). Mzee Hamdani who has suffered a lot as a slave in the hands of two masters (Abdul and Aziz) is not ready to suffer anymore from anyone because as drawn from Schwerdt (1997) anyone has the potential to oppress (95). Mzee Hamdani also prefers to remain silent over his natal home. When Yusuf prompts him to tell him where he came from instead of replying he “picked up his book of qasidas without replying, and after a moment he waved Yusuf away” (224). This is a sign of “unhomeliness.” Therefore, even if Mzee Hamdani is released from bondage he has no home to return to even though he would want to be free.

Though Yusuf finds wisdom in Hamdani’s perspective of freedom of being “free born”, he reacts subversively for he faults him for his perseverance and cowardice. According to Yusuf he cannot sit back and watch the “bullies” (oppressors) sit on him and release their “foul gases” on him (224). Though Yusuf “kept silent” which is symbolic of wisdom as explained in the previous chapter he is compelled to migrate by circumstances (the dreadful dogs that eat human excreta in his dream and the locking of Aziz’s doors to his house and garden). He deserts Aziz his master and follows the Germans to try if he could free the servitude of the Arabs (224). Kaigai (2014) argues that because Yusuf has been operating as an “embodied subject” under the Arab

servitude, he finds an “increased control over the use of his body” thus going after the Germans is symbolic of liberation (22-31).

Unlike, Yusuf Amina, is reluctant like Mzee Hamdani to free the Arab slavery. Though Yusuf is ready to risk his life and elope with her she declines as she considers the mission futile. When asked by Yusuf whether she will leave Aziz, she calls him “a dreamer” (229). This means that like Khalil she opts to stay in her hybrid home. Through Amina’s memory of home a realization is made that she had been through trauma like Mzee Hamdani. Amina cannot even remember how her home looked like. This is what she discloses to Yusuf “I think I remember what it was called...Vumba or Fumba, and I think it was near the sea. I was only three or four years old. I don’t even think I can remember how my mother looked. Listen, I have to go now” (228). Amina would rather keep silent than talk to anyone about her home. O’ Connor observes that “the unpleasant or the traumatic is relegated to the unconscious mind.” Amina does exactly this by suppressing her terrific kidnapping from home through silence. In addition, Amina attempts to shape her identity through her memory which “is an essential part of the discourse of identity” according to Connor but she does not recall who her parents were and her sister. Her silence is a sign of “unhomeliness” as she does not have the slightest picture of her home. She is taken away as a slave at a tender age of three or four when she can barely recognize her mother. What about her home? That is why she wants to go away from Yusuf to avoid further interrogation about her home. After she is rescued by Khalil’s father from her kidnappers who adopt her to his family she is again pawned as a slave by her foster father to Aziz who is now her husband. Aziz has subjected her to servitude by caging her together with her co-wife Zulekha. This has resulted to her muteness that symbolises trauma. Her migration from one home to another magnifies her physical and emotional displacement.

Zulekha is another victim of displacement because she undergoes the same servitude as Amina. Despite being the mistress she experiences the worst slavery compared to her servants in the hands of Aziz her husband who is patriarchal. The situation of the mistress is treated with a lot of silence a reason as to why she is put indoors with her husband. Her access to the outside world is through the mirrors that have been placed in the garden. It is through the mirrors that she comes to learn of the beautiful boy Yusuf who evokes craziness in her. Because Yusuf has a hybrid identity for having both masculine and feminine attributes, Zulekha's obsession with "hybridity" that offers her an iota of freedom is undisputable.

Like Yusuf she is tired of captivity and she would prefer some freedom. After learning of Yusuf, she asks to see him through Khalil. Khalil who has been silent over the mistress because he never wanted Yusuf to get to learn of her is forced to narrate her story to Yusuf who is very eager to know. Through Khalil, Yusuf gets to know that Zulekha moved in with Aziz due to the death of her rich husband. After leaving her matrimonial home to her present home, she develops a strange illness which is symbolic of slavery because Aziz took control of all her former husbands' property and became very rich. That is when he began his journeys to the interior. Aziz who is now very powerful and rich has neglected her. Though she remains silent when Aziz is present she laments a lot as evidenced in "[w]hen the seyyid was home she was quiet, and turned her misery against Amina and me (Khalil). She blamed us for everything and abused us with filthy words. When the seyyid went away, she became crazy again and wondered in the dark" (204). Zulekha's silence is a sign of misery due to "unhomeliness" and that is why her reaction is to blame her servants and madness. Dauncey (2003) observes that "the pervasive qualities of a patriarchal ideology leading to the silencing of women and the formulation of woman as silent, cannot be detached from an exploration of an imperialist ideology that also necessitates the construction of a silent other" (49). The portrayal of the women of Aziz's

household as silent is symbolic of the oppression that traumatised the characters as a result of patriarchy and colonisation.

Yusuf is further displaced by the “text” according to Ajulu-Okungu (2006) by “giving him female attributes” that make him prone to forbidden love as a slave (22). Schwerdt (1997) observes that “Yusuf, in fact, is rarely free of the gaze of others for his beauty makes him the object of both heterosexual and homosexual desire” (99). Yusuf’s beauty makes him vulnerable to all forms of oppression. This becomes traumatic to him as evidenced in the heterosexual love affairs that he engages in as he migrates from one place to another. For example, his beauty attracts Zulekha, Aziz’s wife who sees a healer in him because she is suffering from a strange illness that has relegated her to the margin of her household. This is what Khalil tells Yusuf when he comes to sleep on the terraces where they usually sleep: “[a]fter a long silence, he said softly, ‘[t]he mistress has gone crazy’” (199). Because Yusuf is oblivious of the danger he is in, he thinks probably it is because he stayed long in the garden. The silence in Khalil and the ‘going crazy’ of Zulekha signals sexual attraction. That is why Khalil urges him to look for women and desist from visiting the garden. Khalil adds “[w]ith your beautiful looks you can have the whole world. And if you don’t succeed, there’s Ma Ajuza waiting for you anytime...” (199). Even though Zulekha and Ma Ajuza crave for Yusuf’s love his beauty serve to displace him as he cannot reciprocate their love.

The same situation that befalls Yusuf with Zulekha and Ma Ajuza is replicated when he falls in love with Asha, Bati and Amina. His inferior status as a slave drives him to silence in these love affairs that are never consummated. For example, his love affair with Asha (Hamid’s daughter) which is symbolic of oppression is never consummated as he is a savage and a slave, a reason to why Hamid takes him to a Muslim school. The narrator observes that “[i]n the many silent hours

he had to himself he hated himself, and feared what would happen to him if they were discovered” (108). Yusuf’s silence is a sign of hatred and fear because he is a slave who has no rights whatsoever to fall in love with a master’s daughter. Moreover, though Yusuf’s beauty makes him to get favoured by Chatu over his other colleagues (Mwene and Nyundo) it attracts a lot of teasing from women who desire for him at Chatu’s residence in the Great Lakes. The narrator observes that:

The women teased him, shouting remarks at him with wide smiles, though neither the remarks nor the smiles felt entirely kind. They sent the young girls over with small gifts and propositions. Yusuf took them to be propositions, anyway, and translated them to himself to pass the time. Come and see me this afternoon while my husband is taking his nap. Do you want a hand-bath? Have you got an itch you’d like me to scatch? Sometimes they hooted with laughter as they shouted at him, and one of the old women blew kisses and wiggled her bottom whenever she passed by. (167)

Yusuf silently watches these teases by women because slavery has deprived him his “manhood” or destabilized him (Bardolph 87). Yusuf silence is a sign of lack of manhood because of his marginal status in the house of the mighty ruler Chatu. He just has to watch as women are driven insane by his beautiful looks as predicted by Hussein who even invites Yusuf to go with him to Unguja and wed him to his daughter (83).

Homosexual love affairs also depict the predatory nature of the colonialists as explored by Holden in *Paradise*. Mohamed Abdalla and Simba Mwene who are overseers to Aziz exhibit homosexual tendencies to the porters. The porters move with them to the interior of the African continent to trade with Aziz. In one hand, the narrator reports that Abdalla “had a reputation as a

merciless sodomizer and could often be seen absent-mindedly stroking his loins. It was said, often by those [he] had refused to employ, that he picked porters who would be willing to get down on all fours for him during the journey” (47). The gesture of stroking his loins is symbolic of his homosexual urge that is silenced due to its transgressive nature. In addition, the silence surrounding “to get down on all fours” reveals slavery and the involvement in homosexuality or sodomy which is unacceptable in the culture of the characters. This is why when Abdalla makes homosexual advances to Yusuf he is scared to muteness as illustrated in the words of the narrator as follows:

Sometimes he looked at Yusuf with a frightening smile, shaking his head in small delight. *Mashaallah*, he would say. A wonder of God. His eyes softened with pleasure at these times, and his mouth opened in an unaccustomed grin to reveal teeth that were stained with the tobacco he chewed. When this anguish was on him he released heavy sighs of lust and smilingly muttered lines of a song about the nature of beauty. It was he who told Yusuf that he was to come on the journey with them, making even such a simple instruction sound menacing. (47)

Abdalla exhibits various bodily gestures that include smiling, shaking his head, softening of his eyes, opening of his mouth, releasing heavy sighs of lust and singing. They magnify his desire and delight to indulge in predatory homosexuality with Yusuf whom he considers beautiful. The humongous homosexual desire in Abdalla mirrors the desire that the colonialists had in exploiting the resources that they found in East Africa. For example, the native men who are forcibly recruited to help the Germans fight the British in the First World War.

On the other hand, Mwene who takes over as an overseer from Abdalla is not different as he invites Yusuf to homosexuality. This again speaks volumes about the leaders who took over in Zanzibar after colonialism. These leaders were not different from their colonial masters because they continued to propagate the atrocities committed by their predecessors. This disillusionment in the African leaders is what has probably made Gurnah to discard the idea of nationalism that he finds elusive and explore the idea of the family which he finds to be tangible as he has done in *Desertion*. Mwene tells Yusuf “You’re too beautiful for that ugly monster [Abdalla]. Come and give me a massage later tonight and I’ll show you what love is” (117). Transgressive sex is again silenced here with the term ‘massage’ as the study has already pointed out through Khalil. Yusuf reacts with surprise and frowning towards this invitation because of Homophobia. Given the fact that Gurnah has explored homosexuality in his other novels that include *By the Sea* and *Memory of Departure*, this is concrete proof that homosexuality was part of the African society before the coming of the colonialist. Drawing from Evan Mwangi (2009) this study considers *Paradise* as a novel that “disrupt the association of Africa with sexual conservatism and purity [intimating] that homosexuality is not as rare in African societies as might be suggested by the West/ African dichotomy, which claims the West as the site of sexual experimentation and decadence and Africa as a space of Edenic heterosexual purity” (189). It is because of the silence that symbolises homophobia that homosexuality was made to appear as if it was absent in Africa by the West.

Robert Aseda (2015) urges for a peaceful coexistence “with one another and focus on the important issues [because] Homophobia has no place in today’s world” (14). In addition, Kaigai (2014) observes that “Homosexuality has been a thorny issue all over the world” because of the debate that it has sparked among various people (60). As a matter of fact, the issue pertaining to

Homophobia is what is being debated today in all circles whether in the church, politics, academics and social spheres.

The Europeans' colonization force the natives to migrate as testified by Hussein who is provoked by the silence of Kalasinga who seems ignorant on matters he is supposed to be aware off as follows:

Look how they've already divided up the best land on the mountain among themselves. In the mountain country north of here they've driven off even the fiercest peoples and taken their land. They chased them away as if they were children, without any difficulty, and buried some of their leaders alive. Don't you know that? The only ones they allowed to stay were those they made into servants. (87)

The Europeans' colonization seems to be worse than that of the Arabs as they displace the Africans by taking their land, burying their leaders alive, forcing them to migrate and engaging in slavery by converting those who collaborate with them into servants. Through Kalasinga a realization is made that they have been ruling in India for a long time. Though Kalasinga and Hussein differ a lot they agree when it comes to the issue of sameness for he says “[w]e’re the same like this. They are our enemies. That’s also what makes us the same. In their eyes we’re animals, and we can’t make them stop thinking this stupid thing for a long time. Do you know why they’re so strong? Because they have been feeding off the world for centuries. Your grumbling won’t stop them” (87). What is evident in Kalasinga’s silence in “this stupid thing” (animals) is the “othering” which means the colonizers’ treatment of members of the indigenous culture as less than fully human and colonial oppression in all its forms (Tyson 427). The Europeans treat Indians and Africans as others as brought out by Hussein and Kalasinga. Maslen

(1996) observes that “otherness plays a significant role in the construction and deconstruction of selves and cultures” as seen between Hussein and Kalasinga who reconstruct themselves through sameness brought about by the “otherness” of the Europeans. The issue of “sameness” is quite central in the debate between Kalasinga and Hussein as explored by Callahan (2000) (69). Though Kalasinga and Hussein think that they are different, they realize that they are the same in the eyes of the Europeans.

Before the Europeans displace Aziz he is first displaced by Chatu an African oppressor who seizes all her trade goods. Chatu claims that Aziz’s brothers (other Arabs) had swindled ivory from him. Therefore, he must suffer on behalf of his brothers. Aziz is compelled to seek for the Germans intervention which means he has resigned to European colonial domination. Though he recovers his goods he does not escape from making huge losses because the Germans have taken over the trade. This is because “the boundaries between dominator and dominated shift and settle” with power shifting from the Arabs to the Germans who now silence even the powerful Chatu (Schwerdt 92). This can be symbolised by the silence of Aziz as follows:

There’s talk of war between the Germans and the English, up there or the northern border. I heard this from the merchants in town when I came in yesterday afternoon. Any day now the Germans are going to start kidnapping people to make them porters for their army. So keep your eyes open. If you see them coming shut up the shop at once and get out of sight. You’ve heard what the Germans can do, haven’t you? (242)

Aziz’s silence as regards what the Germans can do is a sign of terror of the Germans as he even asks Yusuf and Khalil to shut the shop and run away when they approach. This is also because the Germans can take his servants (Yusuf and Khalil) as porters for their army.

Another emotional displacement is that of Chatu – a powerful chief in the Great Lakes who is displaced by the coming of the German. As a result, he is forced into muteness. This displacement is evidenced in the men “song about Chatu the python which had been swallowed by a European Jinn...” (172). Chatu is told “[a]nd you’d better not shout when you speak to me, my friend. Have you not heard of other big-mouthed people like you that the government has silenced and put into chains?” (170). When Chatu keeps on complaining that he had a reason for retaining Aziz’s goods, his argument is brushed off and again he is reminded by the interpreter (Nyundo) that “ This is what the big man says... otherwise you’ll soon know what the government can do. The silence in what the big man (German colonizer) can do signals oppression as a form of silencing the colonized. The natives are seen by the German as the ‘other’ person because they are seen to be big- mouthed when compared to the European. They are not even listened to for example Chatu who is just ignored when he brings out his case of injustice done to him by the Arab. In addition, from the words of the interpreter who pauses (silence) a bit to reveal the power exhibited by the European, a realization of brainwashing is evident. Already his identity is annihilated for he regards himself inferior by calling the German a big man (superior) compared to him. The silencing system of governance of the German paves way for slavery which they purport to be against – a historical mendacity that Gurnah is concerned with in *Paradise*.

Eventually when the European takes control over the Arab, he engages in slavery which the Arab was doing. This servitude puts some characters like Yusuf in a liminal space of having to decide which form of bondage was better. This is evinced in the text that:

The captives were formed into two silent lines, and in the gathering darkness were marched off in the direction of the town. The German officer marched at the head of the shuffling column, his body upright and his movements precisely understated. His white uniform glowed in the fading light. (247)

The trauma of having to serve as a slave under the Germans is symbolised in the silence of the captives on transit who have no say but to follow orders as given by the German officer. Through the testimony of the narrator who is sceptical of the whole scenario by likening it to “darkness”, it is imminent that now the German is in control over the Zanzibari who has been disrupted from his normal life. It is the “white uniform” (German) glowing in the fading light of the Zanzibari. Moreover, we are told that the German form of slavery was worse than that of the Arabs as “[m]ost of the men brought in looked frightened as they were herded into the middle, silently looking around them as if they were in unfamiliar surroundings” (246). The silence of the captives who have been forced to migrate is a sign of terror that has enveloped them out of physical and emotional displacement. The captives’ terror is aggravated through the uncouth beatings or oppression that they undergo in the hands of the Germans. The narrator observes that “[t]hey waited for a few minutes before walking among the clowning men, silencing them with sharp blows and wiping the grins off their faces” (246). According to Gurnah in an interview with Jones (2005) though the “Germans were completely absent from East Africa by the 1950s people still spoke of them. People of the generation I was writing about in *Paradise* were terrified of them. The history of German colonialism in East Africa is the history of terror” (42). The Germans’ terror remains an indelible mark in the minds of the characters thus traumatising them as symbolised by their silences.

3.2 Conclusion

Migration in *Paradise* plays a big role in displacing the characters from their natal homes which they are unable to return to when the conditions in exile become unbearable. Their silences symbolise fear, anxiety, disillusionment, “unhomeliness” and terror as a result of forced displacement, slavery and forbidden love. As much as they want to be free, it becomes impossible as they end up landing into another form of servitude as evidenced in Yusuf who after freeing the Arab slavery lands into German colonialism which is more terrific.

3.3 *Desertion*: Utopian England and Transgressive Love

The same scenario that befalls Yusuf through a ten anna piece (Arab slavery) in *Paradise* is replicated in Rashid in *Desertion*. After he reads books and maps about England (British colonization) he is attracted to migrate there but on arriving there he is shocked to see how the natives look at him with “surprise and irritation” (214). These gestures elicit fear and anxiety in him because he has a utopian picture about England. The silence surrounding the books and maps that he has read about England signal the same mendacity in *Paradise* where history is falsified as pertains to slave trade. Therefore, Rashid realizes that he is perceived as the other person in England despite the “mimicry” of having to adopt the lifestyle of England by reading her books (Tyson 427). Furthermore, he is victimised in this marginalization through his testimony for he attests “Like many people in similar circumstances I began to look at myself with increasing dislike and dissatisfaction, to look at myself through their eyes” (214). This plunges Rashid into a state of “double consciousness” as he begins to see himself from the perspective of the colonizer. This heightens the emotional displacement that Rashid grapples with in England.

Before Rashid left for England he had already been displaced at home through the “mimicry” of the Italians. Though according to Gurnah in an interview with Jones (2005) the Italians imperialism failed especially in Ethiopia, Somalia and Lybia and therefore they were not serious colonisers compared to other colonisers (42). Gurnah observes that “[b]ut my thinking was that Italy was more of a comedy in that period in the 1950s. They were not successful, they were a joke, and yes in that sense, other, not as frightening as the British” (42). Because of speaking Italian and reading her literature Rashid becomes the other person in the eyes of his family and other people thus displaced. Referring to the text Rashid’s “otherness” is symbolised by silence when Farida steals Rashid’s Italian book because she hates his behaviour “Rashid made such an irresponsible fuss, refusing to speak, refusing food, refusing to look his mother in the eye despite the most dire threats, that the book had to be produced” (129). After this incident, the Italian that Rashid spoke was done with “triumphant malice” whenever Farida was around thus traumatising her as evidenced in her silent gestures of “irritable pinches and smacks” against Rashid who tries to oppress her with his Italian (129).

Rashid who is a diaspora was displaced from Zanzibar through a scholarship to study in a university in London. James Clifford (1994) observes that:

In the face of changing global conditions, diasporas has been described as a travelling term, mutating from the narrow sense of Armenian, Jewish and Greek dispersion, to an all encompassing idea that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest worker, exile community, overseas community, ethnic community. (302)

Rashid fits very well in this definition of diaspora by Clifford because he is an immigrant in England who has come there to further his studies. In addition, from the definition a realization is

made that diaspora encompasses individuals or groups of people who have been displaced from one place to another for personal or political reasons. In addition, Ajulu-Okungu (2006), observes that displacement denotes not merely the movement or removal of persons from one place to another, but is also suggestive of uprootedness, so that a displaced person is deprived of ‘place’, his/her place taken over by other people or forces” (20). This kind of situation is what traumatizes Rashid when he lands in England as he is “uprooted” and his “place” is taken by the whites as these examples illustrate as symbolised by silence. Upon his arrival in England, Rashid is compelled to contemplate over the silence that befell the man from the British Council who had come to receive him in London when he arrived towards the end of August. Rashid testifies that “He seemed embarrassed by our encounter, and asked me trite leading questions between long silences” (210). Furthermore, the man promised to see Rashid again but he never came back. The silence surrounding this man signals the fear and anxiety in Rashid. Rashid is traumatized by this encounter that he goes without food in the night and the following day he goes to the dining hall with fear of “mismanaging the tools” (211).

Rashid further admits that “But despite the explanations I gave myself, I could not help hearing the slighting words or the irritable tone at petty everyday encounters or the suppressed hostility in casual glances” (214). The “suppressed hostility in casual glances” that reverberates in Rashid’s silence is a sign of the terror that he feels in exile. O’Connor observes that “[a]rrival at the alien culture is the first and sometimes most traumatic stage in the life narrative of the diasporan.” He adds that Gurnah portrays how “postcolonial subjects negotiate new spaces within an “alien” culture where they can play out those complexities that come about when occupying the metaphorical border space of identity” (1). The having to negotiate out of the “metaphorical border space of identity” as explained by O’Connor is traumatic for Rashid – a postcolonial subject from Zanzibar who gets displaced as he grapples with the situation. The

observation by Jacques Lacan (1998) that “You never look at me from the place I see you” became clear to Rashid who had a utopian conception of England out of the books and maps that he had read about her (98).

Besides the books and the hostile reception of Rashid in England, he is also displaced through the feeling of “unhomeliness.” Like *Paradise*, the idea of home as defined by George (1996) also applies in *Desertion*. However, the wider geographical space of home is what is central in the novel. This is because outside Zanzibar, Rashid has a home also in England. This is what brings out his hybrid identity as a diaspora. The wider sense of home as explained by M. Sarup and Godwin Siundu is also applicable in *Desertion*. Sarup (1994) observes that “[h]ome is (often) associated with pleasant memories, intimate situations, a place of warmth and protective security amongst parents, brothers and sisters, loved ones” (94). Siundu (2005) argues that “[t]he nation as home can ideally be a rooting signifier and a unifying metaphor”. Rashid acknowledges that he could not identify with London as “deep poison [ran] through the experience of flight and homelessness” (209; 200). This is best explained in this citation:

I know I would not have told them how much I longed to be with them, how homesick I was. Or how much I missed everything, my friends, the smells of the streets, the breeze off the sea. How chilling and belittling blue eyes can be. I would not have told them that, not yet, not at first. I would not have wanted them to think me childish and overwhelmed. And even when I did, it was only to Amin, after we started writing to each other properly in the months to come. (212)

Rashid prefers to remain mute over his feeling of “unhomeliness” while in London. This is because of the fear of being seen as “childish and overwhelmed” by his family back at home in

Zanzibar. The feeling of “unhomeliness” is aggravated by the “chilling and belittling blue eyes” that marginalized him. In order to reconnect with his home Zanzibar, he later on began to confide in Amin, his elder brother who gave him news through letters about home which he also replied to. Rashid is able to move to Zanzibar metaphorically through his memory (letters) where he gets a sense of identity. This unsettling exilic experience in Rashid is best explained by Gurnah in an interview with Nair where Gurnah admits that “[p]laces don’t live just where they are, they live within you” (3). Rashid’s memory about Zanzibar attests to the fact that Zanzibar is not just a place but it lives within him.

Like *Paradise*, forbidden love affairs also displace Gurnah characters from the society because they are transgressive for cutting across African and European cultures. The existing cultural and religious sanctions that prevail in this society are against these affairs. Brazzelli in “Rewriting History”, observes that “*Desertion*, in a sense, mainly recollects two doomed love affairs, at first seemingly very different, but deeply connected to each other (178). The two tragic affairs are that of Pearce and Rehana and that of Amin and Jamila which though distant are highly associated with each other. The former affair transmits a lot of emotional displacement in the later affair as shall be indicated by the silence of Amin and Jamila.

The love affair between Pearce and Rehana can be interpreted as form of colonization. The affair is silent as no exchange of pleasantries is witnessed between Pearce and Rehana except the sending of letters to each other. Because of the scandal that this love affair generates Pearce and Rehana are compelled to migrate to Mombasa. Rehana situation after her desertion by Pearce who goes back home is best signalled by the silence of Amin. Rashid says that “[m]y brother Amin knew this story because it had consequences for him, but he could not tell me much about it for various reasons, the most important of which was that I was not there when he could have

told me. He could have written about it in a letter, but he chose not to mention it, not for many years” (119). The silence of Amin is a sign of anguish that the affair between Pearce and Rehana evokes in his mind especially when he remembers his affair with Jamila which could not materialise because of them.

Christian Van Boheemen-Saaf (2004) observes that “trauma is always the effect of a history, even if that history is not accessible to memory” (19). Basing on this observation by Boheemen-Saaf, Rehana’s sorrow migrates metaphorically through history to Amin and Jamila. Amin is compelled into silence by his parents when his secret love affair with Jamila is discovered by them. This is what Rashid witnessed:

Only I was there at the confrontation when they exposed his affair and made him end it. I saw his anguish then, his face glowing, his silence. I felt the tense significance of the late-night conversation from which Farida and I were excluded, and imagined the pleadings and the ultimatums. (208)

When Amin is forced to end his affair with Jamila he is traumatized as signalled by the “anguish” in his silence as evidenced from the citation. Rashid and Farida are kept at bay by the parents in order to ensure that the affair remains secret – the neighbours should not get wind of it. Moreover, Amin is warned by his mother that “And I don’t want this getting told to anybody outside of this house” (205). Amin must remain secretive over the affair as Jamila is the other person in the society. Silence comes out as a sign of secrecy or confidentiality.

Amin's mother says "[t]hey are not our kind of people" her reason being that "[h]er grandmother [Rehana] was a chotara, a child of sin by an Indian man, a bastard [who] when she grew into a woman, she was the mistress of an Englishman for many years, and before that another mzungu gave her a child of sin too [Jamila], her own bastard" (204). Through the testimony of Amin's mother a realization is made on the extent of the "othering" that Rehana and Jamila are subjected to hence they are displaced from their society. Rashid tells us that "[s]o, in a way his affair was over by the time I found out about it, and afterwards Amin refused to talk about it to me" (206). Amin became even more silent than he used to be as observed by Rashid who says "[h]e went to college and came home and went out with his friends, like his old self, except perhaps that he was more silent than he used to be and read longer and longer into the night" (207). The only way for Amin to deal trauma was to remain silent despite many attempts by Rashid to make him speak about the affair with Jamila and reading for long hours as testified by Rashid (206). Amin is definitely uprooted from his normal self by the break-up of the love affair.

Jamila who is displaced due to numerous desertions is traumatized to an extent of having to leave a solitary life downstairs in a big family house situated at Kiponda. This is what Farida tells Amin:

You know those lanes, and that big house there after the turning... that is where she lives. It's their house, the family house, that big house. She lives downstairs on her own. I couldn't do that, not in a big house like that. Have you seen it? Do you know the old house I mean? It must be dark inside, like a tomb or a cave. Like Bi Aziza's house. Although Jamila's house is not a haunted ruin like our neighbours'. Can you imagine living downstairs there, a woman on your own? It's asking for trouble. I would be afraid... of both the shetani and the talk. (165)

The silence of the big house whose inside is dark like a cave/tomb is symbolic of historical trauma due to what had befallen Jamila's grandmother (Rehana) that continues to affect Jamila herself. Farida continues to tell Amin that, "[p]eople talk about her, you know. They talk about her a lot" (165). Jamila is "othered" by the rest of the society because people feel her living is unique – different from them. Their talk which is punctuated with pauses as what people talk about is unknown has a historical connection and a source of trauma to Jamila.

Like Rashid, Farida her sister is caught in a similar situation where Mombasa lives within her although she is in Zanzibar. This is because she suffers an emotional displacement culminating from migrating from Mombasa to Zanzibar thus deserting her lover Abbas in Mombasa. Desertion in this forbidden love is brought about by the entrance examination which physically displaces Farida from Mombasa to Zanzibar. Mombasa was providing a fertile ground for Farida to engage secretly in a transgressive relationship with Abbas whom she had met while schooling in Mombasa. It is only Amin in her family whom she confides in about the secret affair with Abbas. The narrator reports that "[s]he had one of her own which she had told him, swearing him to secrecy" (160). Amin who is about to enter into another hybrid love affair with Jamila is advised by her sister to remain secretive about the affair. Farida is greatly traumatized by her separation with Abbas till Aunt Halima and her husband offer to help her get in touch with Abbas through letters (memory). The narrator recalls that:

[...] one day her aunt made her sit down and tell her everything. She could not take the long looks and the sudden sighs any more. As she confessed, Farida's agony was such that she wept for the whole hour that it took to do so, speaking and wailing at the same time, and having to repeat herself before aunt Halima understood her. (161)

The silence in “everything” symbolises trauma because Farida cannot control her weeping as she confessed to her aunt who finds it hard to console her. The “long looks and the sudden sighs” by her aunt though silent condemn Farida who is driven to tears by them. Farida’s silence signals guilt for having engaged in the affair with Abbas contrary to the Islamic religion. Furthermore, we are told by the narrator that when Abbas mother was coming probably to propose to Farida’s mother because “it was usually mothers or aunts who asked other mothers and aunts in such circumstances”, Farida hushes Amin for fear of bad luck or her secret being exposed (164). Consequently, we realize that it is a belief by the characters that a love affair of this nature has to be silenced by the lovers for fear of a bad omen befalling the affair before it is consummated. Therefore, silence comes out as a cultural phenomenon.

The displacement defined by Cohen and Deng (1998) like in *Paradise* is also applicable in *Desertion* where human rights are violated due to internal strife in Zanzibar. According to Rashid’s father, his job is gone and many other people and his wife cannot get medicine for her eyes due to the volatile political scenario prevailing at the moment (221). Consequently, Rashid is forcibly displaced by his father from home symbolically through a letter where he is asked not to return to Zanzibar his home country due to the political unrest facing the country. Rashid recalls that “[s]ome time later, I received a letter from my father, battered and folded and posted in Mombasa, telling me that terrible things had happened, that there was danger and that I must not think of returning” (221). The silence in the letter concerning the happenings at home symbolise terror. This is the reason why Rashid’s father decides to be mute.

The terror at home migrates metaphorically to Rashid who gets traumatised to an extent of not knowing what to reply for fear of putting his family into more problems (221). This silence

surrounding the terrible things and the danger that has befallen Zanzibar is indicative of Gurnah's sharp criticism of the postcolonial nation, whose independence is an illusion of reality. This can be evinced in the words of Rashid who observes that "Almost exactly one month later I was tuned to the BBC World Service evening news, and heard a report describing the overthrow of a new government" (220). Ajulu-Okungu (2006) observes that, "Gurnah does not valorize the nation state, neither does he present the postcolonial situation as a continuation of colonialism, but he takes a critical look of the postcolonial space without painting the 'angel- demon' binary of the colonizer and the colonized" (4). Gurnah deviates from other postcolonial writers who concentrate in the binary through a breakthrough realized in creating families in a hybrid environment which he considers an alternative to "unhomeliness" as witnessed in his novel *Desertion*. Falk in "Subject and History" observes that "Gurnah's fiction also represents migration and exile as related to a "home" that is not conceived on a national scale. The family, not the home country, is the arena for home-making, though the family may be global and trans-cultural in reach" (27). As established in *Paradise* and *Desertion*, migration and exile are related to the idea of making a home through the family which is more tangible than nationally.

3.4 Conclusion

Migration overseas in *Desertion* is similar to that of *Paradise* where characters migrate within East Africa. It becomes evident through the study of silence that one can be displaced both at home and abroad. This is because of the feeling of "double consciousness" and "unhomeliness" that traumatise the characters. Also, freedom is elusive both at home and overseas. Because of displacement, the characters are left with no option but to toy with the notion of home which Gurnah configures through the institution of the family both locally and globally in *Paradise* and *Desertion* respectively. In the next chapter the study shall focus on racial differences.

Chapter Four

Racial Differences

4.0 Introduction

This chapter explores how racial differences contribute to the muteness of the characters through trauma, otherness and alienation. Martin Bulmer and John Solomos (1999) observe that “racism needs to be situated within a historical perspective that takes account of time and place” (12). The characters in the selected fiction have a history of slavery and colonialism. Therefore, it is in this context in which racial stereotypes and prejudices are discussed by the study.

The characters are unable to forget their racial differences because they are deeply entrenched in their “deep memory” in taking a cue from Sam Durrant. According to him “deep memory turns out to be the collective memory of racism that inscribes itself on individual bodies.” Therefore, deep memory as averred by him as “bodily, fragmented and traumatic” is connected to the history of slavery and colonialism as elaborated in the selected novels.

4.1 *Paradise*: Racial Stereotypes

In *Paradise*, “racial silencing” is evident (Dauncey 49). Yusuf’s father practises racism by discouraging his son from playing with his fellow African children whom he “others” as “savages” hence alienating him from his playmates (6). Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks*, observes that:

In the magazines the Wolf, the Devil, the Evil Spirit, the Bad Man, the Savage are always symbolized by the Negroes or Indians; since there is always identification with the victor,

the little Negro, quite as easily as the little white boy, becomes an explorer, an adventure, a missionary 'who faces the danger of being eaten by the Wicked Negroes'. (146)

This is the same scenario that is witnessed in the novel because Yusuf's father inculcates in his little son, that whoever surrounds them is a savage, wicked and cannibalistic albeit preferring his son to play with Indian children whom he considers a better race. However, the Indian Children "other" Yusuf on the basis of race, by throwing sand, jeering and spitting in his direction (6). As a result of this alienation by the Indian children, Yusuf opts to play alone and "did not find the silence and gloom of the timber-yard disconcerting" (6). David Dabydeen (1987) observes that "[s]uch consistent debasement of 'negro-ness' [as seen in Yusuf in the hands of the Indian children] had two major psychological repercussions: it instilled in the black slave overwhelming awe of everything white and at the same time bred a sense of inferiority and self abasement in his innermost consciousness" (31). The silence of Yusuf is a sign of "inferiority" and "self abasement" as observed by Dabydeen. This is why Yusuf finds companionship with the timber-yard because he cannot play anymore with the Indian children.

The boys that Yusuf manages to play with whose parents work as *vibarua* (a Kiswahili word for workers) for the Germans, have fallen into the same trap of "racial silencing" and "debasement" like Yusuf for believing what their parents say about the Germans (Dauncey 49; Dabydeen 31). The parents tell their children that the Germans were afraid of nothing and nobody could stop them from what they wanted. For example, "one of the boys said that his father had seen a German put his hand in the heart of a blazing fire without being burnt, as if he were a phantom" (7). The extraordinary things that are said about the German emanate from what he does to the workers by hanging them "if they did not work hard enough" (7). In the "deep memory" according to Durrant and silenced memories of the Africans and their children, the colonizer

(German) becomes elevated as racially superior over the colonized and this gives him room to operationalise his ideology of imperialism hence oppressing and marginalising the Africans (Washington 691). On the basis of race the Arabs from the coast (Tanga) call themselves *Waungwana/wastaarabu* – a Kiswahili word for the civilized (honourable people) “other” the rest of the people from the interior whom they believe are “fiends and savages” (100). Glassman (2000) elaborates on the basis of this marginalization by observing that:

[...] the project of building a racial state did not begin with the British; rather it had begun with the Omani Sultans who conquered Zanzibar in the nineteenth century, marginalizing the indigenous chiefs. The sultans also sponsored the settlement of Arab planter and political elites and of Indian financiers, and the import of plantation slaves from the African mainland. Thus the groundwork was laid for the major ethnic divisions of colonial Zanzibar: Arabs, Indians, indigenous islanders and African mainlanders. (401-402)

Racism did not begin with the Europeans but with the Omani Arabs who marginalize the ‘other’ Africans for example the Hadimu from the interior because of their skin colour. This is the mentality that Aziz and other Arabs have whenever they go in search of trade as it is evidenced in the text. This results to the alienation of the ‘other’ Africans.

Yusuf is greatly affected by this alienation when he is taken to live with Hamid in the interior. Hamid and his wife are horrified to discover that Yusuf is still a savage even after living with Aziz in the coast. This is can be adduced from Hamid who says “‘Don’t feel bad,’ Hamid said to Yusuf, when the crescendo of their horror had crested its peak. ‘It’s not your fault. God would see us as the guilty ones because we had not made sure that you were taught. You’ve been with

us for months... (99).” The pause in Hamid’s words is a reflection of his guilt of having failed to assimilate Yusuf into the Islamic religion and culture so that he can become an honourable (mungwana) man like Hamid. Through a stream of consciousness Yusuf recalls Khalil’s words that had warned him that Uncle Aziz was not his uncle as he had thought. Yusuf is caught in-between leaving and staying with them in his silence. His feelings can be evinced from the narrator’s words thus “He wished he could walk away, leave them to their lamentations, but a feeling of inadequacy kept him where he was. He felt disgusted for their display of shock and horror. It seemed to him a calculated and ridiculous performance” (99). Yusuf is driven into a feeling of “otherness” by Hamid and his wife but he interprets this as a calculated move meant to make him convert to the Islamic religion and culture which he later subscribes to by beginning to attend the “Imam’s school” together with Hamid’s children which is “mimicry” (Gurnah100; Tyson 427).

Yusuf’s cultural and religious upbringing makes him to see the European as an enemy because when he first encounters two Europeans at the railway station he runs away “muttering the words he had been taught to say when he required sudden and unexpected help from God” (2). Yusuf’s gesture of muttering can be interpreted as a sign of terror as he seeks for divine intervention for he perceives the European as the ‘other’ (enemy) due to the racism that is rooted in his society. Furthermore, according to Islamic Insights “[s]ilence cultivates one’s spirituality and feeling of nearness to Allah.” After “muttering” his words, Yusuf feels secure from his foe. This scenario that Yusuf finds himself in is what Fanon (1967) describes as “a collapse of the ego” that is described in chapter two of this project (154). What has happened to Yusuf is as a result of “cultural impositioning”, a traumatic scenario that has been explained by Laura Christian (2005) who draws from Fanon (221). Even though Yusuf has not experienced any oppression from the European man, he breaks into a run just like “the Negro who becomes abnormal [despite of not

having had] any relations with the whites” (Fanon 145). This observation by Fanon enables the study to explain the behaviour of Yusuf upon encountering the European. It can be attributed to his upbringing by his father who ascribes to Islam due to his close connection with Aziz.

Yusuf’s father alienates his son by telling him that “We are surrounded by savages (...) Washenzi, who have no faith in God and who worship spirits and demons which live in trees and rocks” (6) Ashcroft and Griffiths (1995) posit that hybridity “lays emphasis on the survival even under the most potent oppression of the distinctive aspects of the culture of the oppressed and shows how these become an integral part of the new formations which arise from the clash of cultures characteristic of imperialism” (183). Yusuf’s father whose culture is hybrid after having embraced Islam wants his son to observe the same by not interacting with the savages who still treasure their African culture despite the impending colonial disturbance. This leads the study to conclude that the Africans were not devoid of religion or culture as purported by the colonizers who “othered” them on the criteria in drawing from Achille Mbembe (2001) who observes that:

[F]or each time and each age, there exists something distinctive and particular – or, to use the term, a “spirit” (Zeitgeist). These distinctive and particular things are constituted by a set of material practices, signs, figures, superstitions, images, and fictions that, because they are available to individuals’ imagination and intelligence and actually experienced, form what might be called “language of life.” (15)

The “distinctive and particular things” that the Zanzibari people had in the form of spirits and demons as put by Yusuf’s father is a sign of their cultural and religious beliefs as pertains to this study. The Zanzibaris at this age of colonialism (1890-1914) had their own culture and did not

deserve to be 'othered' because of racism. They got traumatised by being called primitive or uncivilized as symbolised by the silence of the characters.

Still on the basis of racial difference, Yusuf's father is 'othered' by the parents of her first wife who refuse his marriage proposal on the grounds that his mother was a savage and could not allow their daughter to get married and sire "poor children with savage faces" (14). Because of the trauma that is indicated in the silenced and "deep memory" of Yusuf's father, he only spoke about this affair whenever he was angry with his second wife. This is evident in "Yusuf had heard his father too talk about this family, often when he was angry about something or after a disappointment. He knew that the memories caused his father pain and stirred him into great rages" (15). This experience of Yusuf's father concerning his earlier family is traumatic due to a feeling of racial difference evoked by the memories of alienation from the parents' in-law of his former family. Despite the disapproval of the first wife's parents, Yusuf's father manages to elope with their daughter through secret dealings with the help of a "nahodha" – a Kiswahili word for the captain of a ship (14). However, when his first wife goes to her parent's home she never returns. Yusuf's father's words "[m]y love for her was not blessed. You know the pain of that", symbolise his trauma that is also felt by his second wife. She empathises with him in this rejoinder, "[w]ho doesn't know the pain of that? Or do you think I don't know the pain of love that goes wrong? Do you think I feel nothing?" (15).

Chatu is also depicted as an "object and agent of othering" when he confiscates Aziz's merchandise claiming that Aziz's brothers had swindled him of his ivory (Jacobs 85). This makes him to treat even Aziz's porters with a lot of brutality. This is what Chatu says to justify his actions through Nyundo who is a translator "[d]o you take him for a khoikhoi? A khoikhoi will let strangers steal from him while he dances under the moon?" (165). Aziz who is "silent for

a long moment” replies that “his decision shows him to be a ruler of wisdom, but his judgement is not just” (165). The silence surrounding Chatu’s “othering” as regards the khoikhoi who lives in the Sahara desert is clear (Tyson 427). This also explains the racial difference towards the khoikhoi who is alienated from the society as they are considered fools/ primitive as intimated by Chatu’s silence as regards them. Also, Aziz’s silence is a sign of wisdom as he openly resists the “othering” of Chatu.

Abdalla also depicts a lot of “otherness” as regards the savage. This shows the racial differences afflicting the savage. For example, when a guard renders what he has witnessed among the Maasai, Abdalla tells a porter who is inquisitive about them that:

‘Do you ask a savage what for?’ Mohammed Abdalla said sharply, turning round to glance at the young man. ‘Because he’s a savage, that’s what for. He is what he is. You don’t ask a shark or snake why it attacks. It’s the same with the savage. That’s what he is. And you had better learn to walk faster with the load and talk less. You’re nothing but a bunch of whimpering women.’ (60)

Abdalla’s alienation of the savage is clear in the silence of referring to the savage as a “snake” or “shark” as brought out in the citation. The savage is implicated as an enemy to the civilised or ‘wastaarabu’, a Swahili word for the civilised. Maslen (1996) observes that:

Often in the course of the novel the terms ‘civilised’ and ‘savage’, for instance, confront each other, but never giving priority to difference of colour: ‘civilised’ refers to the speaker and those who practise his ways of life, ‘savage’ refers to those who do not, or whom the speaker wishes for the moment to distance from himself. Yet in the end, by

their repetition in different contexts, such terms are deconstructed; they only function in each given context as identifying Self and Other, but are highly debatable as authoritative descriptions of actual ways of life. (55)

The 'savage' is always alienated from the 'civilised' who feels his culture is superior over the former as brought out by Maslen. The two labels used by the Arab oppressors are meant to show the social stratification that exists in this society. This is because of racial differences where the 'savage' is seen as the 'other' person from the 'civilised' hence marginalised.

Yusuf, a savage (slave) is treated as the 'other' person by his master Aziz due to racial difference. Whenever, Aziz pays Yusuf and his family a visit he has to give a ten anna piece silently to him. This can be adduced from the text thus "It was always at the moment of departure that the ten anna piece changed hands, when Uncle Aziz would offer his hand to be kissed and stroke the back of Yusuf's head as he bent over it. Then with practiced ease he would slip the coin into Yusuf's hand" (4). The treatment of Yusuf by Aziz is very questionable as he offers his hand to be kissed and even strikes the back of his head. This affectionate treatment that Yusuf is given by Aziz especially the ten anna piece is later withdrawn by Aziz at the coast as it was meant to confuse Yusuf into slavery. Consequently, Yusuf is alienated from Aziz when he discovers the truth that he is not his uncle but a racist.

The same racial difference is witnessed with Khalil, another slave who also affectionately kisses Aziz's hand when he arrives at the coast. The narrator observes that "[h]e kissed Uncle Aziz's hand reverently, and would have kissed it again and again if Uncle Aziz had not pulled his hand away in the end" (20). Moreover, the slaves are treated like women because they must submit to

their masters in the name of honour (ungwana). This racial treatment of the slaves alienates them from their masters because they are seen as the ‘other’ people by them.

Yusuf is treated unfairly in Hamid’s house because he is a slave or the ‘other’ person. This points to racial difference which traumatises Yusuf. For example, when he falls prey to the silent sexual desire (oppression) from Asha, Hamid’s daughter when she “came willingly into [Yusuf’s] arms” and they found themselves laying “silently against each other for several minutes” (107). Yusuf is even ashamed of his stirring which he does not want Asha to notice because what they are engaging in is a transgression that is prohibited necessitating its silencing. The silence in Yusuf is a sign of shame which he does not want Asha to notice. Hence shame becomes a defining boundary in the relationship between masters and slaves that is characterised by racial differences (Siundu 105). This plays a big role in alienating Yusuf from women as he is ‘othered’ because of his race.

The same scenario replicates itself again when Yusuf falls in love with Bati, one of the servants in Chatu’s residence. The narrator reports that “That night the girl (Bati) came to him again and sat beside him as she had done before. They caressed each other and finally lay on the ground. He sighed with pleasure, but she sat up almost at once, ready to leave. ‘Stay’, he (Yusuf) said (168). The two sexual encounters that Yusuf is caught in are very traumatizing. These experiences can be explained by drawing from Boheemen-Saaf in “Joyce, Derrida, Lacan, and the Trauma of History” who observes that a traumatic “experience may be stored in the body without mediation of consciousness, and return a flashback, or keep insisting through a compulsion to repeat” (19). Yusuf’s experience with Asha and Bati keeps on repeating itself in him to a point of silencing him as evidenced in the novel.

The narrator observes as pertains to Asha that “[i]n the many silent hours he [Yusuf] had to himself he hated himself, and feared what would happen to him if they were discovered. He rehearsed ways to end her visits but could not make himself say anything (108). The experience that Yusuf had with Asha puts him in a liminal space as at one point he hates himself and at another point he cannot say anything to Asha that would make her stop her visits. Yusuf fears for the worst if the affair with Asha is discovered with her parents who see him as the ‘other’ person because of racial difference. Yusuf is also ashamed to tell Khalil of his sexual encounter with Bati for fear that Khalil would laugh at him. Therefore, he prefers to remain mute over it. The narrator observes that “[w]henver he thought of their stay in Chatu’s town he also thought of Bati and the feel of her warm breath on his neck. It shamed him to think how Khalil would laugh at him if he knew” (181). The silence of Yusuf is a sign of shame. The affectionate feeling that Yusuf had with Bati does not stop to recur in his silenced and “deep memory” whenever he thinks of Bati. This alienates him from women as none of the affairs that he ever has with them materialises.

The teasing of women at Chatu’s residence depicts the racial and gender differences that characterises the society. Seduction which is supposed to be initiated by men in the African society is now reversed hence it traumatises Yusuf who has to just sit and watch as he is mocked by the women who tell him:

Come and see me this afternoon while my husband is taking his nap. Do you want a handbath? Have you got an itch you’d like me to scratch? Sometimes they hooted with laughter as they shouted at him, and one of the old women blew kisses and wiggled her bottom whenever she passed by. (167)

The silence in Yusuf is a sign of inferiority as he is now a woman (slave) who is at no position of addressing the women's plight as a result of racial and gender differences that are prevalent in this patriarchal and colonial society.

Other women who express their sexual attraction openly to Yusuf irrespective of racial and gender differences are the old woman Ma Ajuza and Zulekha, the mistress. For instance, Ma Ajuza calls Yusuf "My husband, my master" but Yusuf kept running away from her (30). The ambivalence in Ma Ajuza's statement is indicative of a patriarchal society where men dominate over women where a man is not only a husband but a master to his wife. This can be elaborated by drawing from Schwerdt (1997) who observes that "[i]f the broader context of the novel is the colonial disempowerment of one race by another, Gurnah is also interested in exploring the particular effect of such disempowerment on the most marginalised members of the colonised world: women (repressed under Islamic law) and slaves" (93). The coming of the European aggravates the plight of women under patriarchy by again exposing them to the worst kind of racial and gender marginalisation. Their chances of freedom become slim as seen in Ma Ajuza and Aziz wives who are desperate for freedom in anyway it comes.

Spivak (1988) observes that patriarchy and imperialism places the subaltern woman "doubly in shadow" by silencing her due to being a product of both discourses (84). Ma Ajuza in this case occupies the subaltern or subject position as explained by Spivak. The same position can be advanced in understanding Zulekha and Amina's plight in Aziz's house. Zulekha and Amina, Aziz's wives have been silenced for long by Aziz who exhibits patriarchal and imperialist qualities by treating them like slaves. For example, Zulekha has been staying indoors for quite sometime due to a wound (bondage). Also, Amina tells Yusuf in the novel that "[h]e, 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 (229). The metaphorical silence of “Hell” is symbolic of the misery that Aziz’s wives live in. Their craving for Yusuf is in order to alleviate their misery as a result of racial and gender discrimination.

Furthermore, “after a long, frightening silence”, Amina told Yusuf what Zulekha had said that “[s]he says that the sight of you gives her so much pleasure it cause her pain” (226). The ambivalence in Zulekha’s words that the sight of Yusuf gives her pleasure and pain explains the relationship between the mistress (Zulekha) and the servant (Yusuf), that even though the servant is ‘othered’ (pain), he (his body) can again be useful (pleasure). This is witnessed when Yusuf agrees to her demands of healing her wound for which surprisingly he is forced to do. Yusuf narrowly escapes this “predatory” encounter (Holden 91). It is evident that “but she [Zulekha] clutched his [Yusuf] shirt from behind and he felt it tear in her hands” (236).

In the case of Amina, the reverse happens for Yusuf gets sexually attracted to her. For he tells Amina, “[a]nd I want to keep seeing you, even though you won’t answer any of my questions” (227). The silence in Amina is a sign of trauma that her history holds (Boheemen-Saaf 19). The ambivalence in Amina comes out in the sense that even though she loves Yusuf, she is not ready to elope with him. Amina finds herself in a liminal space as she has to choose between Yusuf and Aziz. When Yusuf asks her whether she will leave Aziz for him, she just laughs and touches him on the cheek and calls him a “dreamer” (Gurnah 229). Amina now a hybrid chooses to remain with Aziz as she finds this as “a positive alternative to unhomeliness” (Tyson 427). This is what Amina feels after being ‘othered’ because of race. This alienated her from her natal home when she was too young to understand what was happening.

Moreover, Mohamed Abdalla and Simba Mwene as overseers to Aziz are ‘othered’ in the novel by being depicted as homosexuals but they do not engage in homosexuality with anyone overtly in the text. This is what casts aspersions about the author’s treatment of homosexuality in the text as to whether it exists/acceptable in Africa or not. The debate on homophobia which illuminates on racial differences is brought out in the postcolony as discussed in chapter three of this project. This resonates with Aseda’s article “Homophobia has no place, in today’s world”, who observes that “discussions on homophobia have plagued all levels” (14). The debate on homophobia continues even today as people seek for answers as to whether homosexuality is to be tolerated or not in the African society whose cultures and religion prohibit it. In the novel, Yusuf’s homophobia is evident. He silently fears Mohammed Abdalla who has a reputation of a “merciless sodomizer” from people whom he had refused to employ as porters (47). The narrator testifies that “he picked porters who would be willing to get down on all fours for him during the journey” (47). Mohammed Abdalla’s silent sexual urge drives him to “other” other porters who are unwilling to engage in homosexuality with him. The porters are treated this way by their overseer because of racial difference. Mohammed Abdalla’s feelings about Yusuf’s beauty are witnessed by the narrator as follows:

Sometimes he looked at Yusuf with a frightening smile, shaking his head in small delight. Mashaallah, he would say. A wonder of God. His eyes softened with pleasure at these times, and his mouth opened in an unaccustomed grin to reveal teeth that were stained with the tobacco he chewed. When this anguish was on him he released heavy sighs of lust and smilingly muttered lines of a song about the nature of beauty. It was he who told Yusuf that he was to come on the journey with them, making even such a simple instruction sound menacing. (47)

Mohammed Abdalla's sexual desire for Yusuf compels him to compose a song silently in praise of his beauty. He even instructs him to accompany the other porters to the interior. The racial difference that Abdalla has towards the porters symbolises the "predatory behaviour" of the oppressor (Uncle Aziz) whom Abdalla is serving (Holden 91). This explains why Yusuf is traumatised as one of the porters.

4.2 Conclusion

Racial and gender differences have been seen to devoice the characters especially the women and slaves. They are 'othered' and alienated from the society. The same applies to the savage who is treated as inferior on the basis of culture and religion. This is the worst kind of trauma that all these categories suffer as brought out in their silenced and "deep-lying memory" within their bodies because of "Arabization" and colonialism in the novel (Glassman 404; Delbo 2).

4.3 *Desertion*: Epistemic Silences

In the novel, silence symbolises the exclusions that are there in the official history (epistemic silences). This could be a pointer to racial differences that exist in the world at large. One of the exclusions as pertains to race is "women" (Jones 38). Gurnah observes that one of his focus in *Desertion* was "European settler writing from around 1905–1910 [where] European men at the time seemed not to have had any connections with women" something that is impossible (38). In the novel, Rashid who mirrors Gurnah himself as a PhD student, is invited to prepare a paper by one of his friends on *Othello* by William Shakespeare but he decides to do a paper on "race and sexuality" in settler writing in Kenya (258). Rashid observes in the text that in some fiction and memoirs there is an "absence of sexual encounters or their sublimation into gestures of pained patronage or rumours of tragic excess" (258). Due to the racial differences that characterised the sexual encounters between Africans and Europeans they could not be written in books or

documented hence their silence. Rehana and Pearce love affair is an example that Rashid gives of such writings.

Falk (2007) observes that despite Gurnah's attempt to address the gap that exists in "textual genres" through Rashid, Rashid still "places the story [of Pearce and Rehana] to the margin in his presentation at the academic conference "as it were" (57). Falk argues that "It is anecdotal evidence, and speaks to the imagination rather than to accumulated experience" (57). The ambivalence of Rashid over the happening of the story is clear thus "I don't know how it would have happened. The unlikeness of it defeats me. Yet I know it did happen, that Martin and Rehana became lovers" (110). This elaborates on the "otherness" and alienation that those who engaged in transgressive love affairs faced because of racial differences (Tyson 427). For example, Amin and Jamila and Rehana and Pearce are 'othered' and alienated from the society as signalled by the trauma in their silences.

Rehana and Pearce's alienation is depicted through his friend Fredrick Tuner. Tuner's racism is evident in his "othering" as regards Martin and Rehana's liaison (Tyson 427). Tuner begins to write the story of Pearce and Rehana in a memoir upon becoming a literature teacher at the University of Nottingham after leaving Zanzibar. However, he deserts the work and remains silent so that he could not traumatise his close friend Pearce. Rashid the narrator comments that "[h]e would not have wanted to offend his friend" (259). The silence of Tuner signals the shame that Pearce felt after having had an affair with Rehana. The shame is a result of racial difference that haunted Pearce after he had deserted Rehana in the name of going home and never to return. Also, because of the shame Pearce felt he got completely alienated from his wife Rehana. Elizabeth (Pearce daughter) comes to learn of his father's forbidden affair from a native woman after his death in 1939 and after the death of Frederick in 1940. Christie Turner her mother-in-

law is the one who discloses to Elizabeth that her father had gotten involved in the affair with Rehana as keeping silent was now meaningless after his death.

Jamila finds herself ‘othered’ because of racialism that defines her as a hybrid because of a liminal ancestry – she is between European and Indian. The defamation in the society alienates Jamila into silence for she has to live in solitude in a big family house at Kiponda which is described as a “haunted ruin” in the text (165). Jamila’s silence becomes a sign of fear because of the defamation that traumatizes her. Drawing from Cath Caruth (1996), history becomes “precisely the way we are implicated in one another’s traumas” (24). The house at Kiponda and the people’s slander revisit the history of trauma that Jamila’s mother underwent in the hands of Pearce (colonization) which becomes intimated in her silence. For instance, in a dialogue between Farida and Amin the libel concerning Jamila is revealed. Amin tells Farida that he has heard that “her grandmother was a European man’s woman” (166). In the libel, racial differences are manifested because of the way the society blames Jamila’s grandmother as if she was the culprit exonerating Pearce, the European man. This leads to the ‘othering’ and alienation of Jamila from the rest of the society.

Amin who has fallen in love with Jamila does not find anything faulty with Jamila and her grandmother’s scandalous life of having an affair with Pearce for he dismisses people’s talk as “useless malice and gossip” (166). Because of this belief Amin gets into an antagonistic path of loving Jamila. This alienates him from the society when his affair with Rehana is opposed by his parents. Rashid observes in the text that “[o]nly I was there at the confrontation when they exposed his affair and made him end it. I saw his anguish then, his face glowing, his silence” (208). The silence in Amin is a sign of anguish which he feels after he is told to terminate his

affair with Rehana. This anguish goes along way to silence him hence alienating him from the society.

Also, Amin's mother gender difference is clear when she blames Amin's gullibility on Jamila as in "[d]id she trick you? She did, didn't she? She must have done,'she said bluntly, certain and sure of Amin's gullibility. He said nothing, his eyes lowered, his face glowing with sweat" (203). When Amin's mother blames Jamila on having seduced her son, Amin remains silent which is a sign of shame. Because in this patriarchal society, a woman seducing a man is quite unheard off because of gender difference. At this point, Gurnah's writing can be interpreted as concerned with "the hybridized nature of post-colonial culture as a strength rather than a weakness" (Ashcroft et.al 183). This is why Amin finds nothing wrong in falling in love with Jamila whose culture is hybrid irrespective of her race and the libel surrounding her. Moreover, racism hinges on Gurnah's personal experience as he took flight to England that he found to be racist, after being marginalized in Zanzibar because of his hybrid ancestry. This is what he says in "Writing and Place" that "[a]s I wrote, I found myself overcome for the first time by the bitterness and the futility of the recent time we had lived through" (26). In the light of this testimony by Gurnah himself, racial difference is definitely one of the things that he was bitter about as evinced in the novel.

A.J. Da Silva (2000) argues that "among the cruelest legacies of the Caribbean encounter with colonialism is the issue of race and its role within the quest for a sense of self and national identity perhaps occupy the most crucial place" (37). The study finds Da Silva's position applicable in the Zanzibari's encounter with the colonialist. Rashid is compelled to grapple with the question of identity when he encounters the English students in London. He observes a lot of "mischief" in their exchanges and in their "suppressed smiles" outside the library, the coffee bar

and other places (213). The mischievous exchanges and “suppressed smiles”– that are silent are symbolic of racism that alienates Rashid from the white students who perceive themselves as 'other' because of their race. The encounters from the students drive Rashid into “double consciousness” through his testimony as he admits that “I began to look at myself with increasing dislike and dissatisfaction, to look at myself through their eyes” (DuBois 2-3; Gurnah 214). Two identities (white and black) coalesce in Rashid’s mind which is a difficult state to reconcile for he testifies that “despite the explanations I gave myself, I could not help hearing the slighting words or the irritable tone at petty everyday encounters or the suppressed hostility in casual glances” (Gurnah 214). Rashid does not escape from hearing silently the “irritable tone” and “hostility” whenever he comes across the white students. These racist gestures traumatise him in England.

Hassanali who is at home in Zanzibar is caught in-between Arabness and Indianness due to his hybrid ancestry that pushes him into muteness because of his “othering” (Tyson 427). This is evident in the novel as follows:

He thought of himself as small and a bit ridiculous in other people’s eyes, round and overweight. When the banter started he always struggled against the flow of jibes and jokes, and kept quiet to stay out of trouble. He lived in this state of self-absorbed timidity, expecting mockery and inevitably suffering it. (17)

Hassanali is marginalised by the rest of the society because of his mixed race or biracialism. The silenced and “deep memory” (Durrant) as pertains to Indianness that is entrenched in his society necessitates Hassanali to live as a coward in order to unsettle the traumatising perception of the Indian race. According to the narrator in the novel, the “Indian people are cowardly, hopping

about like nervous butterflies” (17). The silence of Hassanali is a sign of fear because of the trouble that his Indianness caused him. This fear in him alienates him from the society because he cannot intermingle freely with people around him.

Like *Paradise*, the same ‘othering’ of the savage is evinced in the silence of Hassanali when attending to Pearce. The narrator observes that if Pearce was a savage he could not have had the luxury of being treated with kindness. This can be illustrated in this citation that “they were all terrified of the savage. Everyone told savage stories all the time. No one survived out there in the open country except the wild beast and the savage” (14). The racial differences that alienate the ‘savage’ from the ‘civilised’ is clear in this citation from the text which according to Maslen (1996) ‘othering’ becomes “a necessary means of self-construction, self-affirmation” (55). The silence of Hassanali is a sign of “self-construction/self-affirmation” as a religious man. As provided in the doctrines of Islam, he has to accord hospitality whenever he is called to do so as in the situation of Pearce.

The whites in the novel who are colonial administrators are depicted in the same light as Hassanali when it comes to the ‘othering’ of the savage. Fredrick Tuner tells Pearce that:

In slavery they learned idleness and evasion, and now cannot conceive of the idea of working with any kind of endeavour or responsibility, even for payment. What passes for work in this town is men sitting under a tree waiting for the mangoes to ripen. Look at what the company estates have achieved. Brilliant results. New crops, irrigation, rotation of the fields, but they’ve had to get people to change their whole way of thinking to get that. We need some British estates around here, and my guess is that it won’t be long before we do. The Arab landowners will have no choice but to sell soon. (45)

Reminiscing on silence which becomes “a valuable dynamic in the telling of a story” as in “drew on his cigar in the silence”, Tuner ‘others’ the savage whom he depicts as lazy because of the legacy of slavery left by the Arabs (Kaigai 138; Gurnah 45). Tuner justifies why the British are here “to change their whole way of thinking.” Pearce who is disinterested in this long talk eventually snores off. Though Pearce is against the British racial ethos, he ends up falling in the same trap. This is seen when he later falls in love with Rehana but the affair ends tragically because of the “deep-lying memory” of racial differences silenced in him (Delbo 2).

4.4 Conclusion

Racial differences manifest both at home and abroad as established in the silenced and “deep memories” of the characters. These differences play a big role in traumatising the characters in both *Paradise* and *Desertion*. As the study has shown racial differences are difficult to erase in the minds of the whites and blacks, a reason why multiculturalism has failed to be actualized in the global world. In addition, “a mono-racial Africa is neither tenable nor feasible in the twenty-first century Africa” because of racial differences (Hunsu 88). The last chapter will give a conclusion on the silence of the postcolonial subject from the exegesis of the selected novels.

Chapter Five

Conclusion: The Silence of the Postcolonial Subject

5.0 Introduction

As this study draws to a close, it focuses on the silence of the postcolonial subject from the exegesis of the selected novels. Their muteness is symbolic of the “survival strategies and intelligences” which were suppressed by colonialism (Myers 442). Because of the suppression the characters in the selected fiction were traumatised as enunciated by their silences.

5.1 *Paradise and Desertion*: Survival Silence

In chapter two, the silence of the characters enables the study to shed light on the existing “social relations” between the colonised and the colonisers and their “historical record.” (Moore and Richard 321). The relationship between the characters and Europeans is characterised by fear because of the “falsification of history” as seen in *Paradise* through Abdalla and Hussein from Zanzibar. The same historical mendacity is discovered by Rashid in *Desertion* who after reading books and maps about England finds her utopian when he arrives there for his further studies. Drawing from Said (1995) the historical mendacities about the Africans arise because the Europeans consider them “imaginary geographies” (54).

However, the Europeans are also credited for their wisdom though their actions traumatise the characters. This is symbolized by Aziz’s silence. He replies through

Nyundo (translator) after a long silence: “Tell him his decision shows him to be a ruler of wisdom, but his judgement is not just” (165). Therefore, anyone who resembled the colonisers was not bad. There are those who had good intentions for example, Aziz who is here purely to trade and not steal from Chatu as his earlier predecessors had done. The same applies to the Europeans who came to East Africa, not all of them had bad intentions as portrayed by Pearce in *Desertion* who is out to adventure but unfortunately he is caught in a transgressive love affair that falls in the path of racial stereotyping as it is explored in chapter four of this study. Gurnah admits in an interview with Nasta (2004) that in *Paradise* he wanted to “portray ways in which the mixed racial groups living within that society create their own racial stereotypes of others” (360). Racial stereotypes also manifest in *Desertion* as seen in Hassanali’s alienation of the ‘savage’.

Silence as religious phenomena is manifested in *Desertion*. Hassanali ascribes to Islam which has taught him kindness and hospitality that he accords to Pearce when he arrives silently in Malindi. This level of humanity exhibited by Hassanali does not go unappreciated by Pearce. Through the omniscient narrator who gets into the mind of Hassanali, a critique is given on the hospitality displayed by Hassanali whether it can be accorded to the ‘savage’ who in this colonial world is ‘othered’ by being called an animal. Through the narrator, a realization is made that it cannot be given to the ‘savage’. Here, it is established that the East Africans had their own culture and religion though it had its weaknesses like any other society. In an interview with Nasta (2004), Gurnah admits that:

All sorts of cruelties existed within it [East African society] which it can't account for even to itself. Cruelties against women, cruelties against children, cruelties against those people that you see as weak, as every society does. This is not to be too harsh on any group. I didn't simply want to say, 'Look, it worked before the European colonial encounter' but instead, 'Look how hard it had to try to work and look at the kind of things it had to do to make itself work. (361)

Therefore, Gurnah has shown that the East African society had its own weaknesses for example the racial and gender differences against women and slaves as explored in chapter four. But he also indicates that the coming of "Europeans imperialism" in East Africa coastal society makes it more "vulnerable" (Nasta 361). This is because even though the East Africans experienced both Arab and European colonization that of the Europeans was "even more destabilizing than the first" (Schwerdt 92).

A change of servitude is another option that Yusuf explores when he realizes that he has to free from the Arab servitude. He does that by going after the German army in order to modify his subjugation as explained by Kaigai (22-31). Zulekha and Ma Ajuza also aspire for the same freedom when they yearn for the beautiful or hybrid Yusuf who is already displaced by the "text" because of his feminine attributes that deprive him of his "manhood" (Ajulu-Okungu 22; Bardolph 88). Looking sharp as envisioned by Abdalla, is what Yusuf settles for in order to overcome his present condition of slavery. He expresses hope in his "smarting eyes" at the end of the novel *Paradise* when he goes after the

terrific Germany's army (246). This is the advice that Abdalla gives Yusuf that provides an avenue out of his trauma:

Look sharp, look sharp... and don't let them make a shopkeeper out of you like that plump fool you used to live with. That Hamid with the big buttocks and empty shop! Muungwana, he calls himself, a man of honour, when he's nothing but a plump little bun, strutting about like his plump white pigeons. He won't have much honour left by the time the seyyid has finished with him this time. Or that little woman [Amina] over there. That one. Don't let them make you into something like him. (187)

Abdalla who is now a reject, because he has no use for Aziz who has been overpowered by the German, is obligated to advise Yusuf accordingly. Out of the advice given to him Yusuf reassess his situation and realizes that he will soon be rendered useless before Aziz like Hamid and Amina in the name of honour (ungwana) that is juxtaposed with shame as symbolized in the silence of the slaves as established in chapter two of this study.

The silence in the selected novels has been presented "as a means toward social enlightenment" in the sense that it has enabled the study to explain why Gurnah emphasises on the importance of family ties as opposed to the nation. Drawing from Homi Bhabha (1990) introduction, he observes that:

Nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye: such an image of the nation – or narration – might seem impossibly romantic and excessively metaphorical, but it is from those traditions of political thought and literary language that the nation emerges as a powerful historical idea in the West. An idea whose cultural compulsion lies in the impossible unity of the nation as a symbolic force.

In reference to *Desertion*, Gurnah goes an extra mile in creating an interracial love affair between Pearce and Rehana though the affair fails to work. This is because the idea of the nation is just imaginary or mythical as elaborated by Bhabha as the idea is a political thought that was embraced by the Europeans. This is why Benedict Anderson (1991) holds that “a nation is a socially constructed community, imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of that group” (6-7).

As regards to forbidden love in *Paradise*, it is established by the study that homosexuality existed in East Africa. It is not a preserve of the West as it is purported to be by many because of homophobia as explored by Kaigai (2014). It has also been used in *Paradise* as a sign of the “predatory behaviour” of the Europeans towards the characters. The Europeans came in the name of abolishing slave trade but ended up exposing the characters to the worst bondage (Holden 91).

Love that transcends all boundaries be they racial, cultural, social or religious is an alternative option against all cruelties committed by both the colonizers and the colonized

as adduced in *Paradise* and *Desertion*. For example, in *Paradise* Yusuf gets hurt when he falls in love with Asha, Bati and Amina irrespective of his slave status that ‘others’ him to a woman like them as he is unable to reciprocate their love. This traumatises him as symbolised in his silence.

In *Desertion*, through Pearce’s book that is given a “phallic imagery”, Rehana and Pearce who belong to different races are brought together (Jones 38). Rehana remains silent about the book despite the accusations levelled against her of stealing from Pearce by Tuner. The silence of Rehana concerning the book is a sign of anxiety, fear and also the shame of being called a thief. These are the feelings that Rehana has to grapple with in her affair with Pearce who is like his book. She cannot read it though she knows how to read. At the end of it all, Rehana’s affair with Pearce culminates into fear and shame because of their racial differences in their “deep-lying memory” as explained in chapter four (Delbo 2).

Though Pearce and Rehana’s relationship is relegated “to the margins of official historical reconstruction” as it has always been by Rashid – now an academic, during his scholarly presentation on “race and sexuality in settler writing in Kenya” at Cardiff later in the novel, Gurnah affirms that these kinds of affairs are inescapable in the present world of globalization (Brazelli 182; Gurnah 257-258). As much as Gurnah advocates for intercultural and interracial affairs, he does not fail to highlight the predicament that those who engaged in forbidden relationships underwent because of the ‘otherness’ that alienated them from the society as illuminated in their anguish, sorrow and melancholia

silenced in them especially when reflecting over their history. During these reflections they found themselves caught in a liminal space of their past and present lives; a condition that was very traumatic. This is the postcolonial effect that many characters had to contend with whether at home or in diaspora as evidenced through the exegesis of both *Paradise* and *Desertion* in chapter two.

Silence in Gurnah's *Paradise* and *Desertion* is indicative of the "historically repressed and disarticulated" as evinced in Aziz and Chatu in *Paradise* who are silenced by the coming of the Germans (Dauncey 9). In *Desertion*, Amin and Jamila suffer from trauma because of history. Their love affair is declared transgressive because of the interracial love affair between Pearce and Rehana as established in chapter three.

Drawing from Afruza Khanom (2013), silence has been presented "strategically" in the selected novels. It symbolises a "guilty pleasure" (Ferguson) that traumatise the characters. This has been established in *Paradise* through Yusuf who is traumatised because of neglecting his family. Hamid also feels the same for not exposing Yusuf to Islamic religion. In *Desertion*, it is evinced through Rashid who is not able to return home despite the pressure from Barbara Tuner. Also, through Amin who is not able to tell Rashid about his affair with Jamila.

In both *Paradise* and *Desertion*, home and exile are not valorized or vilified as adduced from the muteness of the characters. This is because the characters are caught in a liminal space of between home and exile as seen in Yusuf in *Paradise*. The same happens to

Rashid in *Desertion*. Yusuf one time thinks of home and another time he wants to go away to an unknown destination. Rashid wants to come home to Zanzibar but at the same time he wants to stay in England. Drawing from Ajulu-Okungu (2006), Gurnah “seems to present a new breed of writers who celebrate neither displacement nor homelessness” (37). Said (2000) observes that:

On the twentieth-century scale, exile is neither aesthetically nor humanistically comprehensible: at most the literature about exile objectifies an anguish and predicament most people rarely experience first hand; but to think of the exile informing this literature as beneficially humanistic is to banalize its mutilations, the losses it inflicts on those who suffer them, the muteness with which it responds to any attempt to understand it as “good for us.” (174)

According to Said it is not easy to understand what those who are in exile experience because characters who are there respond with muteness resulting from the predicament and anguish that exilic conditions pose as established in both novels in the second chapter of this study.

As established in chapter three, the idea of multiculturalism can never be actualised both at home and in exile. This is because of the racial differences that are etched in the minds of people whether black or white. Charlotte Delbo gives his testimony of Auschwitz thus:

Auschwitz is [so] deeply etched in my memory that I cannot forget one moment of it. – So you are living with Auschwitz? – No, I live next to it. Auschwitz is there, unalterable, precise but enveloped in the skin of memory, an impermeable skin that isolates it from my present self. Unlike the snake’s skin, the skin of memory does not renew itself. (2)

Through the Delbo testimony, it becomes clear how traumatised one can become after being subjected to racism because of the “deep-lying memory” responsible for trauma as opposed to “ordinary memory” (2).

The characters’ silence in both novels is indicative that displacement, slavery, otherness, trauma and alienation can befall characters both at home and exile. Ajulu-Okungu (2006) observes that “there is no difference between being in bondage in your region [as seen in Yusuf in *Paradise*] among people of your own race and abroad” as seen in *Desertion* through Rashid (36).

The silence of the characters can “tell a story” as revealed in the novels when the story is captured in writing. This is in agreement with Kaigai (2014) who observes that “silence is a valuable dynamic in the telling of a story” (138). In *Paradise* Aziz retells the history of Zanzibar to Yusuf. The same happens in *Desertion* where Tuner retells Pearce about slavery and British establishment in Zanzibar.

Silence is a sign of alienation as established in the two novels. In *Desertion*, Rashid and Amin write letters to each other. Farida writes a letter to his boyfriend Abbas in Mombasa. Rashid's father writes a letter to Rashid in England. This explains why diasporic characters write a lot in order to contend with the trauma that they feel. For example, Gurnah and Nurudin Farah have written a lot from memory because of being alienated from home. Salmon Rushdie (1991) observes that:

It may be that writers in my position, exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back... But if we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge – which gives rise to profound uncertainties – that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind. (10)

Because of the sense of loss (trauma) that exilic conditions pose on the characters they have to engage a lot in writing in order to create “imaginary homelands” as elaborated by Rushdie. The sense of home as an “imaginary homeland” is explored in chapter two in this study especially as manifested in *Desertion*.

5.2 Summary and Recommendations

The main focus of the study is the silence of Gurnah's fictional characters in order to establish what is symbolised by their silences. This study proposes that the silence in his other novels can be studied to establish their implication. This can be done in his earlier novels which have not received much critical attention.

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