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**THE DYNAMICS OF MEMORY AND IDENTITY**

**IN ABDULRAZAK GURNAH'S *PARADISE***

**A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Award of a Postgraduate Teacher's Diploma (DIPES II) in English**

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## ABSTRACT

This work, entitled “The Dynamics of Memory and Identity in Abdulrazak Gurnah’s *Paradise*”, investigates and analyses the intricacies involved in the concept of memory and identity. By so doing, it shows the effect of racism, slavery and colonialism on the collective psyche of the postcolonial subject as well as how the manner in which the mode of remembrance of these past events affect their sense of self. The work proceeds to explore the various means and strategies by which characters in the novel try to make sense of the past in order to redefine and achieve a meaningful sense of self. To achieve this, the work shows how political, economic and cultural forces can manipulate memory and how an unfaithful remembrance of the past can affect characters’ sense of self. The work also projects how characters in the novel manage to deconstruct faulty modes and outcomes of memory as a means of asserting the self. Finally, it discusses the means by which aspects of memory can be tackled among Cameroonian students in a bid to protect them from the pitfalls of unwholesome memory practices that lead to identity crises. In view of the above, the work is predicated on the contention that Abdulrazak Gurnah’s *Paradise* portrays how erroneous modes of remembrance enhance falsehood and identity crises. It also proved that the whole question of colonized/colonizer is a product of warped and refracted reconsideration of the issue of dispossession and that there are possibilities of re-engaging with the past productively in order to reconstruct a viable selfhood. Analysed against the backdrop of the Postcolonial Theory and the New Historicism, the work sums up that despite the corruption or adulteration of the postcolonial memory, there exist unexplored modes of remembering that could be explored in order to reconstruct a once-damaged sense of identity.

## RESUME

La présente étude intitulée, «Les dynamiques de la pensée et de l'identité dans *Paradise* d' Abdulrazah Gurnah», examine et analyse la complexité impliquée dans le concept de la pensée et de l'identité du texte à étudier dans le but de savoir si nous pouvons parler de l'identité dans l'ère postcoloniale sans mentionner les aspects de la pensée. Ses aspects dans le roman *Paradise* ont grandement influencé les écrits d' Abdulrazak Gurnah , ceci montre comment l'auteur est piégé par les expériences de l'ère postcoloniale et les souvenirs amers du passé et montre aussi comment il se bat pour redéfinir son identité et celui de Africains et se donner le sens de l'appartenance . Cette étude est basée sur un jumelage d'approches postcoloniales et une nouvelle historique. Ses approches ont été utilisées pour montrer l'évolution de la littérature africaine dans une quête commune et d' effacer les préjudices causés par le commerce des esclaves , le colonialisme et Eurocentrisme. Ce travail est reparti en une introduction, le chapitre 1 examine la façon dont les événements se sont déroulés dans le roman et présente aussi comment les forces politiques , économiques et culturelles peuvent manipuler la pensée, le chapitre deux explore les effets néfastes qu'un souvenir peut avoir sur les personnages, le chapitre trois présente comment les personnages de ce roman parviennent à détruire les modes et les résultats défectueux de la pensée afin de reconstruire leur identité individuelle . Le chapitre quatre présente les aspects pédagogiques et la dernière partie présente la conclusion.

## **DEDICATION**

To my son, Tyler Azinwi Nsofon Shwembom, and my wife, Mercy Ngum Ngwa

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## **CERTIFICATION**

This is to certify that this dissertation, entitled “The Dynamics of Memory and Identity in Abdulrazak Gurnah’s *Paradise*”; is written by Victor Shwembom, with the view of obtaining a Postgraduate Teacher’s Diploma, DIPES II in English.

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## INTRODUCTION

In a good deal of postcolonial writing, of which the works of Abdulrazak Gurnah form an integral part, characters' individual struggling for a sense of identity is an important theme. Inherent in these discussions on the construction of an essential and authentic postcolonial identity, is the role of history and memory. For as Heather Sofield argues in "Postcolonial Identity, Postcolonial Literature" it may be hard for an African to affirm such a sense of identity in a society which is obsessed with "whiteness" (par 6). This clearly underscores the role of history and memory in the construction and reconstruction of what might be termed an essentialist identity.

However, many sociologists, prominent among which are Pierre Nora and Maurice Halbwach, prefer to talk about the importance of memory rather than history in the construction of identity. Halbwach maintains that history is abstract totalizing, and "dead," while memory is particular, meaningful, and "lived" and Nora holds that history is loaded with many emotionally charged binaries such as good vs. bad, organic vs. artificial, living vs. dead, from below vs. from above (Sofield 6). From this, Sofield suggests that it is more useful to talk of *modes of remembering* since there are different ways or remembering identical events, since our memories of past events can vary to a great degree and since the past is not given but must be continually re-constructed and re-presented. Therefore, not only historical accounts, but also myth, religious memory, political history, trauma, family remembrance, or generational memory are different modes of referring to the past. Seen in this way, he (Sofield) concludes history is just another mode of cultural memory.

On this premise, John Locke's earlier view that an essential identity does not exist since identities have to be constructed and reconstructed by acts of memory and remembering becomes increasing significant (qtd Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning 6). This implies that identity is (re) constructed through a process of remembering who one was and by setting the past self in relation to the present self. This leads to the view which Locke shares with other prominent critics such as Thomas Reid and Joseph Butler and David Hume that memory is at the heart of the way most people think about personal identity and that it (memory) is equally at the centre of philosophical discussions of personal identity (Stanley B. Klein 2).



That said, it is worth noting that the tragedies that have beset most postcolonial peoples over the years and that has raised serious and difficult questions about their individual and collective identities have arisen largely because of their remembrance of their past and/or their inability to forget their lives of colonialism. Gurnah in his novel aptly represents facets of such experiences. He depicts characters whose lives bear stubborn hallmarks of such dynamics as they move from place to place in search of a more meaningful sense of self; characters whose sense of identity is questioned as they remember their past both as individuals and as of a people. One can see that Gurnah's characters through different geographical locations share the same memories of shame and guilt, finding it difficult to resolve the tensions inherent in their struggle to accept or conquer their past. In recent times, this struggle can better be illustrated in the South African experience – a part of the world which for decades was known as bastions of suffering and pain, as result of the apartheid regime. Even though Apartheid has been dismantled and it is inhabited today by seemingly free people, the haunting memories of what they have gone through makes it difficult for a peaceful and free environment to be reconstituted. It is on this note that one is pushed to ask the following questions:

- How does memory help in the construction of a sense of self in Gurnah's characters?
- What role does memory play in the characters perception of their identity?
- Is there a possibility for the characters to create a new identity out of an alternative mode of remembering the past?
- Finally, what are possibilities of avoiding memorised stereotyped identities in an ESL and EFL Classroom in Cameroon?

These questions find expression in the work.

This study investigates the dynamics of memory and the re-(construction) of identity against a postcolonial background. The study attempts to discuss how Gurnah's *Paradise* fictionalises various facets of memory by which the characters try to define and redefine their constantly shifting and liquid sense of self. The work focuses on experiences of shame, enslavement, pain, dispossession, loss and homelessness as well as the influence of myth, religion, artefacts, location and relationships as important aspects in the dynamics of memory and identity in the novel. The study also examines the kind of identity that Gurnah's characters finally develop and how they cope with such identities. It proceeds to show how the composite and multi-layered identities that Gurnah's characters manage to reconstruct illustrate the

relationship between identity and memory. Finally, the work suggests strategies on how the ESL classroom can be used as a medium of challenging inherited stereotypes and constructing a more wholesome sense of self.

This research focuses on Gurnah's *Paradise*. However, from time to time references are made to other literary and non-literary texts in order to better explain some points.

Gurnah's novel illustrate a very interesting dynamics between memory and identity. It shows that if selfhood can only be interpreted or understand against a backdrop of past experiences, then the way these experiences are remembered must be problematic. This is because the relationship between self and other has an important role to play in the construction of identity and when memory is not premeditated or remediated, it simply helps to foster inequalities and falsities. This is because for the most part, formerly colonised people have always remembered themselves or been conditioned or programmed to remember themselves as the other set beneath a superior and colonial self which is the source of knowledge, civilisation and development. As a result, postcolonial people struggle with feelings of otherness and total dependence. If forgetting is neither possible nor welcome, then there is need for an alternative mode of remembering the past in order to make possible the construction of a more meaningful sense of identity.

This work is based on the hypothetical contention that Abdulrazak Gurnah in *Paradise* manipulates memory to represent alienation, displacement and the quests to construct identity. It also proves that the whole question of colonized /coloniser is a product of warped and refracted reconsideration of a past of dispossession and marginalisation. For people who are in bondage, the ability to forget makes it impossible to survive the terror of the past, but also undermines the vital core of the self. Subsequently, there are possibilities of reconstructing a more viable and wholesome identity based on alternative modes of remembering past realities.

This research is significant in that Gurnah does not only raise the issue of the nature and impact of memory but goes a long way to show how dispossession can affect a people's memory and identity. Equally significant is the fact that the author shows how other elements outside history such as myths, objects, places, religious practices as well as the socio-political, and economic context affect the dynamics of memory and the question of identity. This work is important in that it helps illustrate the difference between history and race thereby showing the inadequacies of existing historical accounts in the construction and identification of postcolonial

people. It shows that history, which is just one mode of remembrance, must coalesce with other forms of remembrance to offer a complete and wholesome representation of the past which is prerequisite for the reconstruction of an authentic identity. Finally, the work is also important in that it projects why and how issues of memory and identity should be included in the literature in English classroom.

Memory and identity are key concepts to the understanding of this work. We shall therefore examine a working definition relevant to our analysis and hypothesis in relation to these terms. William James Booth, in a seminar presented a paper, entitled “Memory, Identity and Political Action”, in which he defines memory as “a living past; we tend to think of it as a sort of an exercise in nostalgia but what it really means in social terms is the past made present, modified, parts of it excluded, parts of it celebrated and an attempt to make the work in the present, (par 5). The definition above illustrates how one retrospectively looks at the past as very vital in the construction of the present. However, for the purpose of clarity, Salman Rushdie in *Imaginary Homelands* professes that his notion of memory is a postcolonial struggle: “the struggle of man against power... is the struggle of memory against forgetting” (226). According to Rushdie, memory is the only tool through which man (the dispossessed) can right the wrongs of certain societal issues.

Liz Fotino, a biologist, defines memory as the ability of humans to recall and conjure long-ago specific events from our lives. There are three main subdivisions of memory: the working memory which is stored in the prefrontal cortex, Long-term memory which is stored in the hippocampus and skill memory in the cerebellum. All of these types of memory have some contribution to our identity, as we build on them when creating new memories. In addition to providing us with information on how to act or respond to situations and how to behave socially, she concludes that the process of remembering has extreme identity-related abilities (par 1-2). Similarly, *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia* on its part views memory as the ability to access information in the mind relating to past events of experience. Theories of memory deal with cause of forgetting and the possibility that there maybe two or more distinct stores from which information are forgotten at different rate. This ties in with how Abdulrazak Gurnah’s characters struggle to forget their past but ironically this past is what makes them live. Like Rushdie, Gurnah perceives memory as a concept which the artist can use to re-describe the world. Re-describing the world is the necessary first step to changing it.

In this work, memory is used to mean the practice and/process of remembering past happenings and one's past experiences. It also subscribes to Booth's view that it is recalling the past in order to make or understand the present.

Identity is another term that is relevant in the understanding of this work. *The Harrap's Chambers English Dictionary* defines identity as a "state of being the same, sameness, individuality, personality" (796). Also, according to Timothy Insoll, the term identity occurred for the first time in *The Spelling and Explanatory Dictionary of the English Language* in 1786 and it was explained as sameness. In the dictionary from 1986, identity was defined as absolute sameness, individuality, personality. But definition of identity is often explained together with such terms as: gender, ethnicity, race and disability. He also observes that identity becomes particularly visible and significant at the moments of economic and political turning points. Similarly, *the Encyclopaedia Americana Vol. 14* defines identity as sameness distinguished from change or difference. This encyclopaedia classifies the term into personal identity and universal identity. Personal identity deals with the 'I' or the 'self', which remain same from year to year. It asks the question: "does identity lie in the body or in the mind"? As evident in this Encyclopaedia, Kant holds that to find an identical self we must go beyond the stream of consciousness to a self that has these successive ideas and feelings but falls outside their succession and is not strictly knowable. Talking about universal identity, the Encyclopaedia quotes Plato who holds that classes are united by possession of identical qualities, meaning that groups of people like Africans, the colonial masters, the black Americans and many others have similar identical qualities that can be used to project them as members of the same class.

In *Culture and Identity: The History, Theory, and Practice of Psychological Anthropology*, Charles Lindholm says identity is the answer to the question who am I? He adds that identity is self-knowledge which is confirmed by feelings, emotions, hopes, memories, plans, the acknowledgment of others, and spiritual experience and can also be disconfirmed by philosophical skepticism, delusions, spirit, possession, psychological disorders, and introspection (6).

In the SEMAS (Sharing European Memories at School) online paper, entitled "Memory and Identity: An Overview," the anonymous author states when studying identity from an historical perspective, we tend to focus on single issue questions. We focus on such aspects as sex, age, ethnicity and then we move straight from the past directly into Western and

contemporary categorizations: male/female, child/adult, heterosexual/homosexual; elite – not elite. In general, there is no trend to focus on a particular set of issues that connect such categories as gender, age, or status, without involving other aspects of identity like class, ethnicity, and sexuality. This appears as too complex and broad a topic. In *Cultural Theory: The Key Concepts*, Andrew Edgar and Peter Sedgwick allude to a number of writers to define identity. First, there is Descartes who considers identity as a sense of one's own existence that is not doubted and that is achieved by the ability to think. Second, there is George Herbert Mead who defines identity as a sense of self constructed through one's relations with others. He posits that "The self, and thus self-consciousness, rests rather upon the internalisation of the viewpoint of others. The 'I' becomes self-conscious only in so far as it can imagine how it is seen by others, and responds accordingly. The development of the self therefore depends upon the others it encounters" (167). Thirdly, he refers to psychoanalyst, Sigmund Freud who states that identity rests on the child's assimilation of external persons. The self is structured through the relationship of the ego, id and superego. While the id is the instinctive substrate of the self, and the superego, crucially, is the constraining moral consciousness that is internalised in the process of psychological development (168). Finally, they refer to structuralists and post-structuralists, Lacan, Althusser and Foucault who argue that for millions of marginal or oppressed groups identity is a sense of self negotiated from the identities that have been forced on them in the process of domination (170).

Identity is used in this work to refer to sense of sense we derive from our past, and present as well as our relations with others. It is the answer to the question *who am I?* Sometimes, it may be given, but most often it is negotiated, constructed and reconstructed.

Abdulrazak Gurnah is a fiction writer and academic. Although a permanent resident in the UK, he does not feel comfortable with the label of British, and considers himself as a postcolonial cosmopolitan who has never abandoned his sentimental ties with his native land. Abdulrazak Gurnah was born in the island Zanzibar where he received a British education. Many years later, this experience gave the author a valuable insight into the discourses of imperialism. The young Gurnah felt that his colonial education came into conflict with other autochthonous knowledge such as his Koranic schooling, or the prevailing oral tradition.

As a teenager, he witnessed the 1964 Zanzibar uprising and the subsequent installing of a Marxist revolutionary regime, and this historical event would mark him for the rest of his life. Gurnah assures in one of his interviews that, 'It was a time of hardship and anxiety, of state terror and calculated humiliations, and at eighteen all I wanted was to find safety and fulfilment somewhere else' (26). In this light, he came to live in England amidst a moment of profound social upheaval and racial tension, epitomized by Enoch Powell's Rivers of Blood speech. He has never returned to live in Zanzibar.

Gurnah's early writing was motivated by the immense difference he felt on arriving in the UK. Marginality and the tryst between self-image and how society constructs stereotypical images of the other are his primary concerns. The young Gurnah wrote about his sense of being alien from a position of weakness and, four decades later, this sense of being an outsider has not left him. This prevailing sense of estrangement finds its way into the lives of many of his protagonists who are predominately male and lead half-lives; with one foot in the diasporic present and the other foot in the past. The author's own abandoning of Zanzibar and his recollections of those people left behind during Sheikh Abeid Karume's oppressive regime are channelled into much of his writing through the trope of shame. It is perhaps for this reason that the author displays a penchant towards poetic pessimism, which primarily focuses upon how vulnerable mankind is.

Writing as a means of remembering is a premise that Gurnah holds high and his permanent 'exile' in England has afforded the author with a distance from where these memories can be distilled. For Gurnah, writing is also about resistance against dominant discourses; it is a space where his early intuitions about his own difference and the nature of imperialism could mature into a coherent literary discourse. In his writing, Gurnah makes much use of juxtapositions as a means of creating dynamism, harshness, self-contempt register and sentimental optimism are conflicting narratives he uses to create paradox. Throughout his literary career, Gurnah's search for 'truthfulness' can be summed up as neither wishing to paint bleak pictures of 'outpost' of old empire, nor engage in a sentimentalism of homeland viewed from the comforts of exile.

In interpreting a work of art, a suitable theoretical framework is needed in order to put the work into perspective and ground or strengthen one's ideas and arguments against a sound academic background. Sarah Anyang Agbor in *Critical Perspectives on Commonwealth*

*Literature* quotes Jonathan Culler who argues that “contemporary (literary) theory is not just a set of competing approaches or methods of interpretation, but more importantly a broad challenge to common sense and an exploration of how meaning is created and human identity ...takes shape”. She goes further to quote the philosopher Richard Rorty who states that theory is “neither the evaluation of the relative merit of literary productions nor intellectual, nor history, nor philosophy, nor social prophecy but all these mingled together ...? (261).

In this light, New Historicism and Postcolonial theory are adopted as critical tools to facilitate our analysis. New Historicism developed during the 1980s largely in reaction to the text-based approach pursued by formalists and New Critics. New Historicists, like formalist critics acknowledge the importance of literary text, but they only analyze the text with an eye to history. They are both intertwined as they influence each other. Proponents and exponents to this theory include: Louis Montrose, Stephen Greenblatt and the French anthropologist Michel Foucault.

New Historicists, unlike older historical critics, believed that criticism should incorporate diverse discourses. These discourses include, amongst others, Post structuralism and Reader Response theory of the 1970s, Feminism, Cultural and Marxist criticism, which in the 1980s were all prominent. New historicist critics assume that works of literature both influence and are influenced by historical reality, and they share a great deal of referentiality, that is literature both refers and is referred to by things outside itself. Within the ranks of New Historicism, Literature is considered to be one of the social forces that contribute to the making of individuals and the society at large. New Historicists also believe that

Literature is historical which means in his exhibition that literature is not primarily the record of one mind’s attempt to solve certain formal problems... to understand it, therefore, it is through the culture and society that produce it... literature must be assimilated to history... history is a series of “ruptures” between ages and men. The historian is trapped in his own historicity.... (G. D. Myers *The Literary Project* 6)

It is in line with the above that New Historicists interpret that history is not viewed as the cause or the source of a work of art, instead, the relationship between history and literature is seen as dialectic: the literary text is interpreted as product and producer, end and source of history. Foucault refuses to see history as an evolutionary process, a continuous development toward the present. For Foucault, no historical event is tied into a vast web of economic, social and political

factors. He sees historians as historically “situated.” What Foucault really means here is that Historians cannot have a complete vision of the facts or thoughts of an era because they are removed from that period. Their judgments cannot therefore be objective. It is subjective because they see the past with the eye of the future. Like Karl Max, Foucault sees history in terms of power... not as a repressive force or a tool of conspiracy of what happens (Ross Murfin 242). In line with the above, we shall look at Gurnah’s work as a reflection of the past and at the same time a chronicle of the present.

New Historicism also looks at literature from the historical context. The theory tends to interrogate the relationship between history and literature, with its greatest advocate being Stephen Greenblatt, who coined the term in the introductory part of a special issue of the journal *Genre*. He once wrote that “history cannot be divorced from Textuality” (4). Therefore, new historicism involves a study of the historical period in which the work was written as it helps reveal the spirit of the age. Literature could never be interpreted to mean anything that history did not authorize. New Historicism rejects both traditional historicism and marginalization of literature. Thus, the new historicism approach to literature has to do with the re-conception of history and the historicity of literature. This approach is very relevant to the understanding of Gurnah’s text within the context of the history that produced him and the impact he has in re-enacting that identity, history, and memory. It also helps us understand the backdrop at which the two historical events (slavery and colonialism) in *Paradise* originate.

The second theory that is used in the analysis is the Postcolonial theory. The development of the Postcolonial theory has been influential in the development of literary criticism. This form of literary criticism sees literature as the product of colonial legacy and the being of its authors. It is a theoretical approach that came in to the limelight in the 1990s. The theory is closely related to postcolonial literature. This is for obvious reasons that the history of Postcolonial literature is a history of colonization while postcolonial theory is a method of textual analysis that focuses on the effects of colonization on the place, identity, and the contemporary ‘situation’ of the colonized peoples on the one hand and the way Europe constructed its ‘self’ in opposition to the ‘others’ thus creating a world of ‘centres’ and ‘margins’. This is because the base of postcolonial theory or literature is slavery and colonialism. Consequently, Postcolonial theory encloses everything about slavery and colonialism.



According to Lois Tyson, in Postcolonial theory “seeks to understand the operation - political, social, cultural, and psychological of anti-colonialist ideologies” (365). It is a theory that endeavours at its best to understand the forces that led to the colonized peoples’ internalization of the colonizers’ values and resistance that is put up to the assimilating nature of colonialism. John Lye, on his part in *Some issues in Postcolonial Theory* notes that “Postcolonial theory deals with the reading and writing in previously or currently colonized countries, or literature written in colonizing countries which deals with colonization or colonized people” (45). While looking at the phenomenon of colonialism, one could see the effects it had on the colonized peoples. Thus there is always the problem of cultural hybridity, mimicry, and the general quest for identity in it experienced by the colonized people. The imposition of the colonizers culture on the colonized people led to their loss of cultural identity. In an article, entitled “The Formation of Postcolonial Theory,” Lazare S. Rukundwa and Andries Gvan Aarde quote Ashcroft, who argues that postcolonial theory emerges “from the inability of European theory to deal effectively with the challenges and the varied cultural provenance of postcolonial writing” (1173). Due to the doctrine of the superiority of the European cultural values (Eurocentricism), the colonized people were left with a sense of alienation, leading to what W. E. B. Dubois calls “double consciousness” (*The Souls of Black Folks* P.9). The following major themes in postcolonial criticism include those enumerated by Lois Tyson’s *Critical Theory Today: A User’s Friendly Guide*:

The initial encounter with the colonizer and the disruption of indigenous culture... ordering and colonial oppression in all its forms, mimicry (the attempt of the colonized to imitate the dress, behaviour, speech, and life style of the colonizers); exile (the experience of being an ‘outsider’ in one’s own land or foreign wanderer in Britain), post-independence exuberance followed by disillusionment, the struggle for individual and collective cultural identity and the related themes of alienation, unhomeliness, double consciousness, and hybridity; and the need for continuity with a pre-colonial past and self-definition of the political future. These themes illustrate postcolonial criticism’s recognition of the close relationship between psychology and ideology or more specifically, between individual identity and cultural beliefs. (374)

Homi Bhabha, Edward Said, and Gareth Griffiths are some of the figures in postcolonial theory who have proposed ways by which postcolonial literature or texts can be viewed from a postcolonial point of view.

Ross Murfin views postcolonial theory as involving analysis of literary texts produced in countries and cultures that have come under the control of European colonial powers at some point in their history. Alternatively, we can refer to analysis of texts written about colonized places by writers' hailing from colonizing culture (294). Postcolonial theory according to Bill Ashcroft et al:

Involves discussion about experience of various kinds: migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, race, gender, place, and responses to the influential master discourses of imperial Europe such as history, philosophy, and linguistics, and the fundamental experiences of speaking and writing, by which all these come into being. (*The Postcolonial Studies Reader 2*)

One of the major concepts in postcolonial theory is the issue of hybridity. The formerly colonized people embraced “the multiple and often conflicting aspects of the blended cultures that is theirs and that is an indelible fact of history” (367). Hybridity is therefore a major concept in postcolonial theory as most postcolonial societies have encountered and adopted new cultures as part of their lives. John Lye in “Some Aspects of Postcolonial Theory,” points to the important place that hybridity has in Postcolonial theory. He states that hybridity is:

An important concept in postcolonial theory, referring to the integration (or, mingling) of cultural signs and practices from colonizing and the colonized cultures (‘integration’ may be too orderly a word to represent the variety of stratagems, desperate or cunning or good-willed, by which people adapt themselves to the necessities and the opportunities of more or less oppressive or invasive cultural impositions, live into alien cultural patterns through their own structures of understanding, thus producing something familiar but new). The assimilation and adaptation of cultural practices, the cross-fertilization of cultures, can be seen as positive, enriching, and dynamic, as well as oppressive. (905)

Hybridity therefore deals with issues like assimilation of new cultures or adaptation to the cultures that the immigrants come across. According to Nyoongah Mudrooroo, hybridity is a very important concept in the postcolonial theory which is commonly referred to as “The Creation of new trans-cultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization” (3).

There are many forms of hybridity: cultural, political, and linguistic. And within the languages, there can be evidence of linguistic cross-breeding and the use of loan words from either the language of the colonialist or the colonized. This is evident in Gurnah's text, for we see that Yusuf has become a hybrid because aside his identity as a boy from Kawa, he now adapts to the realities of coastal life where he now lives.

Again ethnicity and indigeneity are viewed as twin concepts in postcolonial literary studies. These concepts usually relate to belonging to a nation or country. Stuart Hall, in "New Ethnicities" brainstorms on the fact that "we all speak from a particular culture, particular place, particular history, and from a particular race". Literature therefore finds justification in history and from the society that produces it. Our treatment of Gurnah's *Paradise* situates the text in the above mentioned concepts. The situation of Yusuf in the novel is caused by the imperfect blending between the life Yusuf lives in Kawa and the situation he finds himself in the coast. Such a blending of two cultures has been seen to carry with its oppressive tendencies, causing characters to move towards consciousness. Their individual realities and search for identity ushers in a forum for them to better evaluate and understand their cultural standings.

New Historicism provides the historical and autobiographical background against which the text is written and also helps to interrogate various forms of remembrance especially history. Postcolonial theory, on its part, complements the historical background in its challenge of Eurocentric accounts but proceeds to unearth hitherto hidden aspects of Africa past.

In research endeavours like this, it is important to know the opinion of previous scholars who have written in relation to it in order to show how the work draws from and contributes to existing knowledge. Martin E. Amin states that, review of literature is important because it "identifies what the researcher takes to be key issues, crucial questions and obvious gaps in the current state of knowledge. It forms a foundation upon which all future works in this area will be built" (139). This section therefore aims at complementing as well as deviating from the views of previous critics with the aim of contributing to scholarship.

J. U. Jacobs in an article, entitled "Trading Places in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Paradise*" says the novel provides a narrative reversal and revision of Conrad's canonical text, *Heart of Darkness*, self-consciously returning its colonial gaze from a postcolonial position. The article begins with the contrived narrative optic of reversal in Conrad's novella, and proceeds to examine the similar narrative structure of privileged and obstructed sightlines, and gazes

knowingly and unknowingly returned, in *Paradise*, showing the inter-textual relationship between the two works. *Paradise* narratively re-maps Conrad's colonial route to an African "heart of darkness", but from the east coast of Africa westward, and both recreates and subverts the 'topography' of Conrad's work and reconfigures the darkness at its heart. Gurnah's narrative about the last of the great East African trading caravans retraces one of the major trading routes from the coast into the interior around the Great Lakes, which in the nineteenth century had become one of the axes of the slave trade. In his fictional transaction with *Heart of Darkness*, Gurnah shows in *Paradise* that the corruption of trade into subjection and enslavement pre-dates European colonization, and that in East Africa servitude and slavery have always been woven into the social fabric. This ties with the fact that despite the dawn of East African independence, the Africans have not forgotten the treatment given them as slaves.

J. A. Kearney in "Abdulrazak Gurnah and the 'Disabling Complexities of Parochial Realities'" agrees with Jacobs that Gurnah's paradise compares with Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in many ways. Just as *Heart of Darkness*, it exposes European rapacity and cruelty in Africa. He adds that

Compared to heart of darkness . . . especially in terms of why Aziz's second journey penetrates deeper and deeper. However, Gurnah steadily dispels any mystification of place, and consistently problematises ant straightforward distinction between the 'civilised,' and the 'savage,' through the readiness with which any group other than that of a particular speaker is labelled 'savage'. (50)

He further observes that the significance of the *Paradise* is that the author is able to show that the heart of darkness is not in the inland territories where Aziz is attacked, exploited and imprisoned, but it is in his own very house where he hides two wives. The elderly one has a shocking incurable disease on her face while the younger has been forcefull married to the rich merchant in order for her to stay in and look after her. The protagonist, Yusuf's decision to join the Germans despite their ruthlessness and cruelty, he concludes, is tantamount to joining a new form of slavery since the doors of the former slave master has been shut from him when he needed it most. this opens him up to a new and different identity. J. Hodapp in "Imagining Unmediated Early Swahili Narratives in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Paradise*" agrees with the previous critics who say Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Paradise* can be read as "writing back" to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and other European literary journeys set in Africa. He goes further to argue that the embedded presence of the previously unacknowledged early Swahili prose texts *Safari Yangu na*

*Bara Afrika* (My Journey Up-Country in Africa) and *Yangu ya Urusi na ya Siberia* (My Journey to Russia and Siberia) shifts the nexus of *Paradise's* literary genealogy. This article argues that *Paradise* at once creates for itself a localized self-referential African literary genealogy, not dependent on European canonical texts, and challenges genealogies of African literature that exclude these early Swahili tales. Gurnah's strategy in the novel imbues Swahili storytellers with interiority and agency denied by the European mediators who transcribed their stories. Rather than naively imagine unmediated access to late nineteenth-century Swahili storytellers, Gurnah embraces his fraught project as an English language mediator with postcolonial predispositions.

On the issue of constructing new identities, Gareth Griffiths, in an article, entitled "Narrative, Identity, and Social Practice in Tanzania: Abdulrazak Gurnah's Ironic *Paradise*" says in late-Nineteenth-Century colonial texts, Tanzanian ethnic identities were frequently expressed through the discourse of race. He also states that these racial signifiers were often conflated with religious affiliations (e.g., by the simplistic conflation of Muslim and Arab identities). For him, identities were rarely as clearly defined as the colonial texts of the period suggest. Such identities also employed a taxonomy intended to reflect the roles of various groups within the economic and material practices of Tanzania. These roles reflected the trade networks of East Africa and the economic and social relations that obtained between the littoral and the interior. Slaving and ivory trading were predominant. Zanzibar itself was the most important source of cloves in the period and maintained extensive plantations of spices. Group relations established by the slavers and traders continued to influence later constructions of identity by European colonialists, and those of the accompanying Christian missions. Colonial texts dramatized contemporary social practice, casting different ethnic and religious groups in fixed and exclusive roles. These roles persist across the very diverse and seemingly contradictory social performances that have been enacted since on this complex multicultural regional stage. As a result, these historical characterizations have shaped in various ways the formation of modern ideas of identity and so are crucial to understanding how contemporary Tanzanian writers such as Abdulrazak Gurnah have represented ethnicity. These constructed identities by the Europeans act simply as a mask in order for them to go about their activities and gain more grounds in Africa, thus permitting them to take control. Griffiths in this article also shows how different identities were bestowed on the servitudes by their colonial masters.

Anita Masonin, on her part, wrote in an article, entitled “Of earthly delights: ‘Paradise’ - Abdulrazak Gurnah: Hamish Hamilton”, concurs with Kearney that Yusuf’s break-away from his master Yusuf at the end of the novel spells a change of his identity. She recounts the events in Yusuf’s life that makes him a subject who does not only doubt himself but lives under the false knowledge that his master is his uncle. Yusuf has been sold into slavery to pay his father’s debt. He lives in a dazzling but dangerous place civilized only by religion; savagery lurks below the surface and in the interior of the country, where the pagan peoples live tales are told of what lies beyond the known world: seas that freeze, a wall built by the giants Gog and Magog, the earthly paradise with its gate of fire. From time to time, ferocious and demanding alien figures move across the territory. They want everything and seem incomprehensible. They are known as ‘the Europeans’. When he is 17, Yusuf accompanies his master on an ambitious trading venture into the interior. The journey, an act of hubris, assumes epic proportions as sickness, wild animals and predatory local rulers take their toll. Yet as they reach what will be the scene of the expedition’s disaster, Yusuf, the dreamer, glimpses the fiery walls and turbulent waters that are said to guard paradise. Or perhaps paradise is the garden he has tended? As he returns to that garden, and his master’s house, he learns their unhappy secret. It contains a threat to him, but it frees him to make a desperate choice in a direction for which the book has subtly prepared us. Yusuf’s actions from this point demonstrate the crisis in him as he goes a long way to make a choice thus asserting himself.

The above view of mythic and historical dimensions of the text is mirrored by Douglas Killam and Alicia L. Kerfoot in *The Student Encyclopedia of African Literature* where they state that Gurnah’s *Paradise* which was shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 1994, fuses myth, story-telling traditions to tell the protagonist’s rites of passage.

Another critic, Valeria Luiselli in the *Kirkus Review* also handles the novels engagement with history (of slavery and colonialism). Even though, she disagrees with critics like Killam and Kerfoot who celebrate the novels by stating that “the novel is a disappointing second novel . . . it never quite gets off the ground, although the language is simple and appealing”. The setting is pre-colonial East Africa. At the age of 12, Yusuf is taken away from his home by Aziz, a rich merchant, in payment for a debt of his father's. What follows is a series of events and episodes: Yusuf works in Aziz's shop alongside Khalil, a friendly and talkative young man who tells Yusuf he is also working to pay off his father's debts, although his father is dead; Yusuf is suddenly

summoned to go on a journey "to the interior"; Yusuf is left in the care of a couple who work him very hard; Yusuf is collected again by Aziz for a long and difficult journey. During their travels many men grow ill, and there are the expected hardships of life on the road with a caravan. There is much talk of the encroaching Europeans and a good deal of sexual teasing of Yusuf, whose physical beauty makes him an object of desire. Because Yusuf is young and naive, and the narrative while in the third person cleaves close to his impressions. She thinks it's never exactly clear what's happening. Larger cultural issues, and the setting itself, are difficult to see through the forest of minutiae.

Just like the work reviewed above, this work explores the impact of religion, slavery and European colonial expansion on the natives especially on their identity. The work also attempts to read the story-telling traditions, rituals, events, artefacts and myths as modes through which the characters construct their identity. The work however deviates from them by showing how memory can also be problematic in the process of identity construction and how memory can be used to reconstruct a whole and productive sense of self. It also looks at how relevant this work can be in a Cameroonian literature in English classroom.

This work is divided into an Introduction, four chapters and a conclusion. The introduction handles the research problem, the research questions, purpose of the study, significance of the study, the hypothesis, the author's biography, theoretical frameworks and the review of related literature.

Chapter one, entitled the "Politics of Memory", examines how certain key events are remembered in the novel. It shows how political, economic and cultural forces can manipulate memory thereby thwarting the process of constructing an authentic self from memory. Chapter Two, captioned "Identity Crisis", explores the adverse effects that an unfaithful remembrance of the past has on the characters in the novel under study. Chapter Three, labelled "Towards Remaking the Past and Re-inventing the Self," attempts to show how characters in the novel manage to deconstruct faulty modes and outcomes of memory in order to reconstruct their selfhood. Lastly, Chapter Four, entitled "The Influence of Memory and Identity in the Literature in English classroom in Cameroon: a pedagogic outlook, looks at the pedagogic relevance of the work. The conclusion summarises the main arguments of the work, restates and analyses the hypotheses, offers the research findings, the works contribution to scholarship, recommendations and areas for further research.

## CHAPTER ONE

### POLITICS OF MEMORY

This chapter deals with the influence of hegemonic agency on memory – how memory or remembrance is interfered with or manipulated by the high and the mighty to suit their interests. Steven S. Volk in “The Politics of Memory and the Memory of Politics” expresses the problem thus:

We care deeply not only about how we remember those events, fearing time’s inevitable disintegrating effects, but also how those events are to be remembered . . . . We have come to appreciate how the battle over memory is a struggle over meaning, and that our ability to construct meaning about the past is deeply rooted in access to information and how we then make sense of it. (Par 16)

The excerpt shows that events are not always remembered correctly and this can have severe consequences on those who rely on memory to know who they really are. This is because “remembrances can differ markedly from the objective truth of the events as they happened. Memories are influenced by political and cultural forces. Government policies and social rules, as well as popular culture and social norms, influence the way events are remembered” (*Wikipedia* par 1-2).

Subsequently, the choice of New Historicism in the reading of historical evidence as presented by the characters is very important. The various characters in the novel seek to tell their stories by skipping back and forth in time to tell the story of their past through the agency of myth since most non-western historical narrative has a powerful mythic status. This helps to avoid resisting the “disabling complexities” of a people’s life (both past and present) in the interest of “collective truth”– a charge which Gurney himself accuses Ngugi of having committed in his early novels especially *Devil on the Cross* (qtd in Kearney 48). In view of the above, it becomes evident that the author relies heavily on the agency of memory to provide the psycho-social background to his novel in relation to the character’s struggle to define themselves. In *Paradise*, Gurnah makes use of the functions of memory in the process of living. The main focus here would be to provide a new perspective on the rules that govern the process of remembering as reflected in the novel. It is by correcting the wrongs of the past that an



individual undergoes rebirth. Some of the devices that enhance this process of memory as shown in *Paradise* are aspects such as flashback, the use of multiple voices which all play an important role in revealing some of the socio-political, economic and cultural realities in the society.

Through myth, the colonialists create an identity for the colonised that is aimed at impressing an inferiority complex in their minds. Despite the fact that the colonialists are the strangers on African soil, they have succeeded in making themselves the masters over the original inhabitants, thus bringing in the aspect of inequality. This can be seen during one of Aziz's journeys into the interior when he goes to trade with chief Chatu. Yusuf recounts thus:

‘The merchant and Chatu waited in the clearing for the European to wake. The big man is here now, Uncle Aziz taunted Chatu. He’ll make you eat shit, you thief. Chief Chatu asked Nyundo if he had ever seen Europeans before. He heard that they could eat metal.’ (169)

This excerpt shows that the white man uses myth to propagate inequalities. We realise from the excerpt that Chief Chatu who is supposed to be the supreme authority in his village is scared of the white man because of what he has heard about him and also because of the way the white man comes and imposes himself in his chieftdom. We are told that he comes in with his caravan and immediately sets up his tent in front of Chatu's residence. Chatu and Aziz, according to this excerpt have made themselves inferior to the white man, as he makes Chatu to eat shit. Chatu is equally informed of the new government which has silenced others and put them in chains. Despite his strength, he is afraid of the white man even without confronting him in a fight.

Remembering the past could be unwanted and events may be forgotten or wrongly remembered. These ties in with the opinion of Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning in, *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook* when they observe that

Thus, our memories (individual and collective) of past events can vary to a great degree. This holds true not only for *what* is remembered (facts, data), but also for *how* it is remembered, that is, for the quality and meaning the past assumes.

(7)

The excerpt illustrates that we cannot always rely on memory all the time since sometimes it can be very unreliable. This bears directly on Gurnah's novel *Paradise*, where the author says that Yusuf is still too young to really remember well. The protagonist later moves away from his parents with Uncle Aziz. The narrator tells us that, "his name was Yusuf, and he left his home suddenly during his twelfth year. He remembered it was the season of drought, when the everyday was the same like the last" (1). During his stay away with Uncle Aziz, he comes to realization that there are a lot of things hidden from him, like the fact of his being sold into slavery by his father. Yusuf like Khalil remembers a lot of things but most are vaguely recollected since most of the events occurred when he was still a child.

Furthermore, his wish is to let go the past, since it is painful. Although the characters struggle to forget their past, it is this haunting past that makes them forge ahead in order to assert themselves in the present dispensation. This exposes the ambivalent situation that these characters find themselves in, and this goes a long way to show that man is created by the history he lives through.

Gurnah also shows that there are different ways of remembering the past. In this light, Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning note:

. . . there are different modes of remembering identical past events. A war, for example, can be remembered as a mythic event ('the war as apocalypse'), as part of political history (the First World War as 'the great seminal catastrophe of the twentieth century'), as a traumatic experience ('the horror of the trenches, the shells, the barrage of gunfire,' etc.), as a part of family history ('the war my great-uncle served in'), as a focus of bitter contestation ('the war which was waged by the old generation, by the fascists, by men'). Myth, religious memory, political history, trauma, family remembrance, or generational memory are different modes of referring to the past. (10)

This gives us an insight in to how a people's memory may project them differently, depending on how they interpret what they remember, and also the different ways in which things are recollected. Sometimes the mode of remembrance is determined by more powerful political and socio-economic factors. In the novel, we see that Yusuf's mode of remembrance is different from Khalil's. For Yusuf, the myths he is told about gog and magog and the account of Khalil of how

he and Amina were sold off to Aziz as a means of paying off their father's debt as objects, help him to remember. For Khalil, it is the presence of his sister in that house that helps him to remember his past.

Moreover, the role of the past as the text shows has been to create inequalities, which have persisted to the present. Racism, slavery and colonialism are example of past experiences that created severe inequalities in Africa. In this wise, Gurnah uses memory in *Paradise* as an avenue to depict how these inequalities have led to wider issues of belonging and unbelonging, which affect the African identity both at home and in the diaspora. The characters in the novel are presented with two major problems: a painful past and an unwelcoming present which leave them with the problem of homelessness and the adulteration of cultural values. This can be seen when the protagonist in this novel Yusuf recounts that "...the Indian children threw sand and jeered at him when he tried to get near them. Golo golo they chanted at him, spitting in his direction." (6). This shows how his home is no longer his, as he is sent away by Indians from the land which is supposed to be his. This also evokes the aspect of racial segregation that is evident throughout the novel.

Memory is materialized through action and inaction. From this, one realises that Gurnah creates situations where his characters actions or inactions affect memory. Aziz gives Yusuf some preferential treatment from the time he is taken from his parents and throughout his stay with him. This action of Uncle Aziz helps Yusuf to believe that he is actually his Uncle as his parents make him to understand. We are made to understand that Yusuf is loved by Aziz, and it is easily noticed by all those around him. This is not because Uncle Aziz tells anyone about his love for the young man but because of his actions towards him.

It is true that his wife seems to lust over the boy but this is partly because she is demented. We are told at a point in time that what motivates Aziz to start taking Yusuf for his trips is because of the state of his wives health. Thus, the action of treating Yusuf preferentially and taking Yusuf away from his wife also causes him to believe that Aziz is indeed a father figure in his life despite Khalil's truth. Khalil keeps trying to force him to stop calling their master Uncle but to no avail. Even though Yusuf thinks that Khalil might be telling the truth he finds it difficult to believe it following his relation with Aziz.

Moreover, Aziz's inaction can be seen in the fact that he never actually tells anyone about who the young man is; he never really assigns him to any specific task despite the fact that he

has grown to the age of twenty-five. Sometimes he leaves him at home with no specific assignments, or with some relative like Hamid. This causes Yusuf to idle in the garden, fantasising about making his own garden of paradise. Other times he takes him along on business trips, and again, while on these trips Yusuf does nothing. This makes Yusuf to really believe that he is indeed an uncle to him. More so, as he claims he takes him along because he can no longer trust the people who are around him.

Through the use of multiple perspectives, the author shows how the *self* can sometimes impose his own narrative on the *other* in order to maintain his control or dominance of the latter. This subscribes to Michel Foucault's view in "Knowledge/Power" that although power is based on knowledge and makes use of knowledge, on the other hand, power reproduces knowledge by shaping it in accordance with its anonymous intentions (qtd in "New Connections" par 2). In this light, Lyotard believes that knowledge has become a commodity, and consequently a means of getting power. He sees knowledge as being communicated through narratives or stories or different ways of interpreting the world (ibid par 4). A typical example can be seen in the character of Khalil who tells Aziz that just as himself, he was given to Uncle Aziz to repay the debt his father owed him. As a result, he dissuades Yusuf from calling Aziz his uncle and regards himself a slave just as Khalil. It is worth noting that if Yusuf ceases to see himself as a nephew but as a slave, then he will tend to reconsider Khalil as an elder slave or a younger master who should be respected. The fact that we later on find out that Khalil actually is a brother-in-law of Aziz casts a lot of doubts over his earlier narrative. And the fact that Uncle Aziz does not punish Yusuf when the Mistress reports that he tried to rape her equally casts doubts on Khalil's narratives. We also see that Aziz never really treats Yusuf as a slave, he never carries goods as the paid porters, he is not happy when he associates with them and when the kings request to keep Yusuf, he refuses the first time and only accepts later because he had no alternative other than hand him to Chatu. He reports Yusuf's capture and is released and he takes him back home. During the next journey, he decides not to take Yusuf along anymore. This does not look like master-slave relations. But somehow, Khalil is trying to make Yusuf believe that he is a slave in order to have control over him. Here, Khalil recalls his childhood memories and struggles to reassert himself by making himself a master over Yusuf who is new. Khalil knowing that he is now in charge of the shop owned by Aziz feels that he is now a master to Yusuf. He

takes delight in making fun of him, and ordering him around as a means of asserting him. This brings in to the limelight the memory of slavery and slave trade.

Social or cultural memory also determines or influences personal memory. Social memory appears, expands and vanishes as a result of both remembering and forgetting. In this wise, Adrian Velicu observes:

The manner in which a community relates to the past involves notions and actions such as connectivity, storage, retrieval, transmission, and interpretation. The material that undergoes wholly, or in part, this treatment consists of the values, accounts (of practices, norms), objects, sites, and ceremonies shared by the community. Indeed, sharing and transmission are particularly important in the process that coalesces in the cultural type of collective memory where past meanings and the way they shape tradition are prominent features. (1)

This implies that somewhat it is what the entire community remembers that shapes the memory of particular individuals. This cultural memory is constructed by objects, ceremonies, cultural practices and norms as well as the narratives such as myths and historical account preserved via several means of storage. In the novel, the garden reminds Yusuf of the garden of paradise where he is told, Muslim faithfuls will spend the afterlife. This reminds him of his Muslim upbringing. Islamic mythology is also used a means of disorientating the characters' memory. Although the myth of Gog and Magog is an underlying theme that runs throughout the novel, the reader is first introduced to it via Ma Ajuza:

So by the time Ma Ajuza came to hear the story, the game had turned into a carnage and slaughter out of which Yusuf had stepped triumphant, while his clown pranced beside him singing his praise-songs. Yusuf the Magnificent blessed of God, the new Dhul Qurnain, slayer of Gog and Magog! (41)

What is significant here is not the encounter in which Yusuf emerges triumphant as sung by Khalil but the mention of the myth of Gog and Magog by Khalil who is an important authority in Yusuf's life in the diaspora. For as Tamara K. H. observes mythology is a significant cultural aspect that Gurnah brilliantly weaves throughout the book. Gog and Magog is a legend referred

to in both the Hebrew Bible and the Qur'an. Gog is prince over the land of Magog and is required by God to lay siege against Israel. In Ezekiel 38:16, Gog's army invades Israel like a cloud covering the earth. However, Gog is also defeated by God, who then restores his covenant with his people of Israel. Tamara explicates that in the novel, Gog represents the German forces in the process of colonizing East Africa, while Magog is East Africa itself. Therefore, the defeat of Gog could be said to foreshadow the defeat of the Germans in WW I. This explains why Khalil refers to a German officer through a whisper in Yusuf's ear as Gog and Magog. Khalil is therefore the myth bearer who is trying to impart into Yusuf's memory his Muslim heritage thereby giving him a sense of an Islamic identity.

There are also consistent memory practices (to borrow Velicu's terms) such as customs and traditions which influence memory. This help to define one's identity because these practices repeated over time become associated to a people. For example the act of kissing Aziz' hand by Khalil and most of those who work under uncle Aziz show how much the adore him. Khalil even encourages Yusuf that he has to do same in order to show respect for Uncle Aziz. It could also be added from the foregoing idea that early marriages is also one of the consistent memory practices that the author uses in his novel. We notice that uncle Aziz is encouraged by one of his business partners that Yusuf has gotten to the age of getting married whereas he has not reach the age of 20. Another instance of early marriage is also brought out through the marriage of Aziz to Khalil's sister. We are made to understand that she is brought to Aziz at a very tender age. It is therefore evident that such practices are very normal to the African people as illustrated in the text.

Furthermore, political turning points also affect memory. This is because memory can be determined by big political events. The coming of the white man to Africa affected the memory of its people as it reduced the powers of those who were in control. The author paints a picture of how the colonised are treated and how they are forcefully recruited as soldiers. "... it seemed a long time before the askaris started to return, singing and shouting as they drove their captives ahead of them" (246). They have submitted to a different authority, and this has influenced their identity. While some of them are frightened of what may happen to them, others are happy, and even spend most of their time shouting friendly abuses to the askaris who just captured them.

Also, Yusuf's father can be considered as the first authority in his life, and when he transfers his allegiance to someone else, his identity is affected. Yusuf is taken away from his parents at the age of twelve but he continues to have fresh memories of his parents because according to him, he is very confident that one day he would be reunited to them. This can also

be seen in Khalil who faces the same situation like Yusuf. Even though he continues to talk about his parents he has come to self realization that he would never meet them again since they are dead. However he is still confident that one day he will be liberated by his master after completing the debt of his father.

It is important to note that remembering (or memory) is different from history. Remembering is a place of recollecting and reconstituting. It is constructed by acts of both remembering and forgetting. The past is never given but must be continually reconstructed and represented. Homi K. Bhabha quotes Fantz Fanon in the *Location of Cultures*, by throwing more light on the notion of memory. He posits that

Remembering is never a quiet act of introspection or retrospection. It is a painful remembering, a putting together of dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present. It is such a memory of the history of race and racism, colonialism and the questions of cultural identities that Fanon reveals with greater profundity and poetry than any other writer. (63)

From Bhabha's opinion, it could be deduced that though memory can be a painful experience it could also act as a therapeutic remedy to solve the present condition. This also goes a long way to show the link that exists between memory and identity. For as Sarah Anyang avers in, "Memory and Trauma in John Nkengasong's *Across the Mongolo*" the complex interaction between memory and identities is "one of the reoccurring themes as far as literary representation of memories are concerned" (187). Such a link between memory and identity is equally evident in *Paradise*. The characters in the novel recollect their past experiences as victims of suppression, slavery and slave trade as masterminded by the colonialist. A typical example is Khalil, who recounts his ordeal of how he and his sister end up with Aziz. Khalil evokes this regrettable episode in his life thus:

'...one day that devil Mohammed Abdallah came and took me and my sister away, and brought us here. We were to be rehani until Ba could repay his debt. He died very soon after that, my poor Ba, and Ma and my brothers went back to Arabia and left us here. They just went and left us.' (203)

Khalil presents a pathetic situation in which he is given into slavery by his parents to repay their debts owed to the Seyyid. He is taken away from his people and he is forced to learn a new language in order to please Aziz. Here, the characters plight does not only re-echo the assault of history (slave trade and slavery) on the integrity of the Africans but also the idea of dislocation.

Furthermore, memory can become a tool for questioning history and the search for the truth, which is sine quanon in perceiving and redefining selfhood. Abdulrazak Gurnah in *Paradise* does not only use memory as a technique of describing the world but equally as a postcolonial tool to question the version of truth as presented by the imperialists. Through the use of memory Gurnah deconstructs the civilizing mission of the imperialist in Africa and the hypocritical and exploitative nature of the colonialists. A glaring example is when Khalil recounts to Yusuf the story of how he got to the coast:

‘My Ba had a small shop in the village on the Mrima coast south of Bagamoyo...I don’t remember the seyid coming to see us before, but maybe I was too young. I know that one day I saw him. My Ba was speaking to him in a way I had never seen him speak to anyone before. Nothing was said to me when the seyid came again he spent two days ...after the two days the seyid left ...then one day that devil Mohammed Abdallah came and took me and my sister away, and brought us here. We were to be rehani until our Ba could repay his debt.’ (202-203)

The above quote raises some very important questions such as whether this type of slavery can in any way be compared to the transatlantic slavery and slave trade; whether slaves call their masters uncle and the latter did not care; and if slaves were allowed the freedom to enjoy leisure and manage businesses. This makes us to understand that sometimes hegemonic powers want us to remember in particular ways for particular reasons. Sometimes, the colonialists give us the impression that slavery started in Africa, whereas the kind of slavery that Abdulrazak Gurnah presents in this novel is different. The characters which are called slaves in this novel call their masters uncle like Yusuf. Slaves also manage their masters businesses like Khalil, which is not the case with transatlantic slavery. Slaves are also permitted to marry the daughters of their masters as shown *Paradise*. We are also told how uncle Aziz leaves Yusuf in the care of Hamid



while he goes to the interior for business. When he comes back, he is so concerned about the well being of Yusuf. He even goes to the extent of giving him money “a short while before he left, Uncle Aziz called him to one side and gave him a handful of money. ‘In case you need anything,’ he said. ‘I’ll be back through here next year. You have come through very well.’” (92). This treatment makes one to question history. This is because the type of slavery that Africans practiced before the coming of colonialism is different from what was introduced by the colonial encounter. Slaves were chained like prisoners, beaten and even killed ruthlessly by the whites. The colonialists treated slaves like objects. This aspect of memory brings out the truth about history, which is misinterpreted by the colonialist to suit them. Gurnah deconstructs the idea of the civilising mission as presented by the colonialists and show their hypocritical nature in his novel *Paradise*.

Salman Rushdie in one of his articles “Imaginary Homeland” professes that this notion of memory is a postcolonial struggle, “the struggle of man against powers... is the struggle of memory against forgetting” (18). Memory to him is seen as a tool which man can use to redress certain societal irregularities. This therefore means that memory is seen as a technique through which the artist can reconstruct the world. According to Rushdie, imaginative writing becomes the best way to free the mind of the colonized. He states that, “art is a passion of the mind, and the imagination works best when it is most free. Western writers have always felt free to be eclectic in their selection of theme, setting, form; western visual artist have in this century been happily raiding the visual storehouses of Africa, Asia, the Philippines. I am sure that we must grant ourselves an equal freedom” (19). Therefore, Africans must be allowed to explore memory in their march towards personal knowledge and of the future. Rushdie recalls the colonised writers to equally use the agency of memory and imagination as a means of asserting themselves through artistic creation in the post-colony and the rest of the world. This can be a means through which Africans can liberate themselves from colonial subjugation.

Memory is also a way of making sense of the past. It could be intentional or unintentional. Gurnah achieves this via flashback. Through the use of flashback he exposes the difficulties which Uncle Aziz and his crew face on their journey to the interior for trade purposes. He is faced with Bwana’s servant at the foot of the mountain who wants them to go away from there, where they intend to spend the night. After discussing with the man who comes

to send them away, he returns to their camp where Kalasinga comes up with a flashback about one of his meetings with the Bwana. He recounts that

Mzungu lives there... a European man from south, working for government. I fixed his generator for him. It was a big noisy bastard, very old machine. I told him I could arrange for a newer one but he did not like that. He said I wanted a bribe. A small commission, perhaps... what's wrong with that? This is the custom but he called me dirty coolie. Dirty coolie, thieving bastard. Then his dogs joined in. woo! Woo! Many dogs, big hairy ones with large teeth.(78)

This is a technique which Gurnah uses to expose some of the kind of experiences which they face during their journeys to the interior. He shows us the kind of people they meet, people of different characters with different temperaments. He also uses these as an opportunity to give the impression of what the white man thinks of Africans. He portrays Africans as people who are corrupt even when they offer their services to help. The Bwana gets angry when he is offered help so much such that he even insults Kalasinga and uses his dogs to scare him. Another instance in the novel where the author makes use of flashback can be seen when Khalil recounts to Yusuf who Amina is to him. He tells him that she is not his sister, and goes ahead to tell him how he got to know her.

The author also uses multiple points of view as a means of questioning existing one-sided versions of the truth. By giving voice to many characters, he is letting the subaltern speak, that is giving an occasion for speaking both to dominant party and to formerly silent or marginalised. One of the points of view which he uses that is important to this work is the first-person narrative point of view. Even though he is not very consistent in his use of this point of view as he switches from time to time to other points of view like the third person point of view. This technique, which the author uses, demonstrates elements in the novel which enhance memory. David Hertzberger in an article "Narrating the Past: History and the Novel of Memory in Post War Spain" points out that

The novel of memory portrays the individual self (most frequently, but not exclusively, through first-person narration) seeking definition by commingling the past and present in the process of remembering. This process may be

activated either voluntarily or involuntarily, but it turns consistently on a bimodal correlation: the self in search of definition; the definition of self perceived always within the flow of history. (37)

Hertzberger holds that in most novels of memory the personality of the character is often portrayed through the use of a first person narration which is often consistent. But that in the course of this portrayal the character's past juxtaposes with his present situation to make out meaning as time passes. The author's use of the first person narrative does not only show how the narrator's past haunts him but it also shows how he effectively authenticates his experience. He does this by recounting what he knows, infers or finds out as he talks to others. For example, when Khalil recounts the story of how he is given into slavery by his parents, he says at one point "I don't remember the Seyyid coming to see us before, but maybe I was too young. I know that one day I saw him" (202).

Stream of consciousness technique is another narrative strategy which is used by Gurnah to reveal the alternative versions of truths that the other possesses which is at variance to what the self presents. This is a technique by which an author presents the thoughts of a character in the manner in which they occur in his mind. Through this technique, the plight of the protagonist Yusuf is exposed. Yusuf revisits his inner self as a way of telling his story:

Then he rose and left. For a long time, he sat silently with himself, numbed by guilt that he had been unable to keep the memory of his parents fresh in his life. He wondered if his parents still thought of him, if they still lived, and he knew that he would rather not find out. He could not resist other memories in this state, and images of his abandonment came at him in a spate. They all condemned him for self neglect. Events had held his day and he had ... kept his eyes on the nearer horizon, choosing ignorance rather than futile knowledge of what lay ahead. There was nothing he could think of to do which would unshackle him from the bondage to the life he lived. (174)

By penetrating the characters mind, the author is able to show how Yusuf struggles with his past in order to construct an authentic self. Without it, it will seem as though he has completely

forgotten his past, and is trying to whole-heartedly fit into his new society. It also explains why he is opposed to the care-free way in which people at the coast live; for example, he never comes to the fact that a woman such as Ma Ajuza, who is even older than him, could be making advances at him. The stream of thought above shows that he is not able to get out of the pain and despair in which he finds himself.

The above analysis shows that *Paradise* can be considered as new historical fiction. Even though it brings out real events that happen in the past like slavery and slave trade, trade between the Arabs and the people at the interior, it also questions them. *Paradise* rather gives a fictional touch to history. This goes in line with Hayden White's opinion in, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical representation* when he states that

The affiliation of narrative historiography with literature and myth should provide no reason for embarrassment because the systems of meanings production shared by all three are distillates of the historical experience of a people, a group, a culture. (44-45)

White names this kind of fiction *narrative historiography*, which in his view is a genre or sub-genre which mixes literature, history and myth because in his view all three are subjective; they are constructed to suit particular purposes. Gurnah therefore employs several strategies in order such as multiple points of view, flashback and stream of consciousness to achieve this.

In sum, this chapter discussed the various forces which affect or manipulate memory to give characters a sense of identity. By so doing, it identified the role of hegemonic powers, the influence of societal memory, great political events, and mainstream historical accounts, amongst many others as factors that shape or misshape memory. Through these, the memories of the characters are manipulated to make them remember differently or even remember wrongly. The chapter also showed how via several literary strategies, Gurnah uses his novel to interrogate history and the act of interpretation itself. The next chapter demonstrates how truncated or manipulated versions of reality affect a sense of identity.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE QUESTION OF IDENTITY

Many critics such as Chinua Achebe, Michael Dash and Derek Walcott have questioned whether it is actually possible to find a sense of positive identity in a postcolonial state amid the feelings of loss and grievance that most colonial subjects grapple with. In this vein, Heather Sofield opines that the difficulty stems from the focus on “desperate protest against injustices of the past, thereby characterising identity in a retributive light” (“Postcolonial Identity” par 5). According to Dash in “Marvellous Realism: The Way out of Negritude,” the fundamental dialogue with history in which the postcolonial subject is involved makes it impossible for them to create an identity separable from local and national political history (qtd in Heather Sofield par 4). There is therefore the conflict between indigenous culture and foreign culture. The foreign culture in this context includes that of the Germans, who colonized Tanzania and that of the Arabs, who came into the territory for trading activities. These two foreign cultures affected the lives of the Tanzanians and many started questioning who they are. This chapter therefore examines the dilemma in which Gurnah’s characters find themselves after these multiple encounters and experiences.

Displacement is one of the factors that expose the character’s in *Paradise* to a foreign culture, thus affecting their sense of self. Yusuf is displaced from his hometown Kawa to the rich and luxurious mansion of uncle Aziz in the coast. While in the coast Yusuf questions his new identity. He starts suffering from identity crisis on his arrival at Uncle Aziz’s house. He leaves his parents knowing that he is going to live with his uncle who has been very kind to him. When he arrives at uncle Aziz’s place, the latter stops him from getting in to the main house. This attitude shocks him. The omniscient narrator notes that

Uncle Aziz walked away towards the side of the house where Yusuf saw an open doorway in the long white-washed wall. He caught a glimpse of the garden through the doorway...when he started to follow, his uncle, without turning around, extended the palm of his hand from his body and held it stiffly out as he walked away. Yusuf had never seen the gesture before, but he felt it is

rebuke and knew it meant he was not to follow...he beckoned Yusuf and turned to walk back to the shop. (21)

This shows that in his new home, he is no longer the privilege son who has the right to sit in his father's living room, serve the guests and eat the leftovers. He does not even know who he is in this new home. It is a Khalil who tries to make him understand that the rich merchant is not his uncle but his slave master yet Yusuf does not accept this fact and keeps referring to him as uncle even though it is evident that he is not. This is because he is not really treated as a slave but at the same time he is not treated as a relative of Aziz. This leaves the young Yusuf confused. At one point, he is forbidden from socialising with common servants because his status is better and at another, he is forbidden from entering the house. This places him in a dilemma and he starts wondering who he is to the uncle.

Furthermore, through displacement characters wish to escape their past but they find that their past travels with them, hence confounding their attempts to forge a new identity for themselves. This is aptly demonstrated in Yvonne Vera's *Without a Name* where Masvita escapes to the city due to a couple of sexual abuses she suffers from two men in order to be free and recreate a more dignifying identity for herself free from the memory of pain and abuse. Unfortunately, she soon realises that she is pregnant from the past abusive relationship she had. This is a clear sign that her history has travelled with her. Identity as Sofield observes becomes a conflict between the past, present and future (par 6). Yusuf's illiteracy and his inability to read the Koran reminds him of his past. This is seen when he is left with Hamid and his family, who is appalled at the fact that the boy cannot read and he is immediately sent to an Islamic school. Before Hamid discovers this, he had been going to the mosque and coping well as he hums parts of the book that he does not know.

Social forces such as class distinction also affects character's sense of self in Abdulrazak Gurnah *Paradise*. In the novel, despite the fact that they are living under the same circumstances and under the care of uncle Aziz, Khalil who manages the business and whose sister is married to the rich merchant perceives himself superior to Yusuf. Yusuf who is not privy to the secret that lurks within Aziz's great household – that Khalil's younger sister, who is married to Aziz is inside – cannot make any sense of who he really is in that household. Though they are both Africans, with more or less the same culture, Khalil thinks that he is more privileged than Yusuf.

He refers to Yusuf as Kifa urongo, maluun, feeble-minded child. Postcolonial critics make us understand that within margins there are peripheries. Trinh T. Minh-ha in “No Master Territories” avers succinctly that there are margins within the centre and centres within the margin (216). This raises more questions to the colonised, who is trying with little success to understand his fragmented sense of identity than answers. This is evident in the text through Khalil’s attitude towards Yusuf. Khalil in this light opines thus:

‘This is my little brother, who has come to work for us,’ Khalil told the customers. ‘He looks so small and feeble because he’s just come from the wild lands, back there behind the hills. They only have cassava and weeds to eat there. That’s why he looks like living death... (22)

The use of little brother above is seemingly not a signifier of age difference or family relationship, but rather a signifier of difference and otherness. This shows that Yusuf is inferior because of his origin and physical appearance. This leaves him wondering about who he really is.

Furthermore, the encounter with King Chatu also helps to illustrate the point. Instead of doing profitable business, buying ivory from Chatu, Chatu attacks Aziz’s camp in the night, kills many men, and robs all the provisions and trade goods. Aziz, Yusuf, and a few others are lucky to escape. His sense of superiority seems to come from his attachment with the Germans who are considered as superior. He considers himself as superior and can commit crimes in his land with impunity. Without any explanation, the king request to keep Yusuf as prisoner for the time that Aziz and his caravan are in the land. Yusuf does not understand why most of the inland people are interested in him. This leads him to question his identity further.

It is worth noting that as far as social stratification is concerned Abdulrazak Gurnah creates three distinct classes. We have the cultured and civilized coastal city, unquestionably controlled by the Arab traders and the Swahili elite; the inland trading town and its people with their position between civilization and the wilderness, and the indefinite open space of lands, stretching from those outposts of civilization to the power centre of “savagery.” Lastly, there are the German colonialists who do not care about the Swahili elite or distinguish between coastal sophistication and inland barbarism, because to them all non-whites are savages. This therefore explains why all the other classes of native people try to define themselves by imposing their

authority over the less powerful. Uncle Aziz on his part wields a lot of power in the coast and in some savage towns where he has traders who are under him due to the fact that they owe him money. He manipulates them to his advantage and to their detriment.

Gurnah also seeks to expose identity crisis through the racist attitude portrayed by the colonialists in this novel. We realize that when Yusuf is about to leave Kawa for the coast with uncle Aziz they have to travel by train. We are given a situation whereby different types of flags are flown:

At the station Yusuf saw that in addition to the yellow flag with the angry black bird, there was also another flag with silver-edged black cross on it. They flew that when the chief German officers were travelling on the train. (17)

This introduces us to segregation in the society, considering the fact that the natives are not allowed to mix with the colonialist affects their sense of self in that such an attitude makes them less confident about themselves. Commenting on this Sofield says: “the difficulty in discovering identity in a post-colonial state can be attributable to a certain lack of self-confidence – either in an individual or a nation, [for] how can one hold on to one’s cultural legacy with pride if it appears to have no value or potential” (par 14). This is an indication that the Africans at some point in time are actually the ones promoting such racist tendencies as they are not confident about who they are as indicated by Sofield in the above extract. Chief Chatu in *Paradise* is unable to show his superiority over his land when he finds himself in the presence of the white man. He rather belittles himself by submitting to the colonialist, who dictates to him what he has to do with his prisoners.

From a new historicist standpoint, it becomes evident that Gurnah is a writer who has a lot to do with identity crisis. We can justify this from another novel of his, *Admiring Silence* in which he talks about identity crisis between Africans and their colonial masters.

Abdulrazak Gurnah in this novel seeks to give a sort of map of activities that took place in Tanzania during colonization. He also presents the major actors who took part in making Tanzanians to cede their original identity to the colonialist. Through Yusuf’s innocent,



uneducated eyes, glimpses of the presence of Germans, Indians and Arabs, are brought into the limelight.

Another factor that raises the question of identity in the text is what Dash calls a counter-culture of the imagination. He explicates it thus:

colonization did not make things of men, but in their own way the enslaved people might have in their own imagination so reordered their reality as to reach beyond the tangible and concrete and to acquire a new re-creative sensibility which could aid in the harsh battle for survival. (200)

This introduces the varying idea that exists among Postcolonial critics on the effects of colonialism to the identity and development of the Africans. To some, it is impossible to break away from the grip of colonialism, while others believe it is possible to move beyond it and create a new identity that is viable and productive to the African continent. In the text, we see that Yusuf is caught in the middle of these two conflicting views as he travels with Kalasinga and Aheikh. This clash is evident in the following conversation as reported by the omniscient narrator:

‘In India they have been ruling for centuries,’ Kalasinga said. ‘Here you are not civilized, how can they do the same? Even in South Africa, it is only the gold and the diamonds that make it worthwhile killing all the people there and taking the land. What is there here? They’ll argue and squabble, steal this and that, maybe fight one petty war after another, and when they become tired they’ll go home.’

‘You’re dreaming, my friend,’ Hussein said. ‘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. A skirmish or two with their weapons and the matter of possession is settled. Does that sound as if they’ve

come here for a visit? I tell you they're determined. They want the whole world.' (86-7)

This argument raises questions in Yusuf's mind on the possibility of being strong and independent African in the midst of all these forces.

Identity crisis can also stem from religious problems. Every group of people have a tradition by which they abide by. In the case of Gurnah's *Paradise*, the author presents a situation where the colonialist and Indians impose their religion on Africans. In the text, Yusuf is forced to read the Koran and even pray like a Muslim. Africans are stripped of their indigenous religion, and Islam and Christianity imposed on them. The narrator notes that:

A Lutheran pastor ... he told them who had sent him to the mountain to offer the people salvation for their souls. He announced to them that work was God's divine edict, to allow humans to atone their evil... The pastor forbade them more than one wife and persuaded them that their oath to the new God he had bought to them was more abiding than anything they owed to the ways of their fathers and mothers... The cattle herders now had another reason to despise the farming people whom they had preyed on for generations. (61-2)

This creates conflict as the new converts are looked upon by natives as bad people. In the same light, when Yusuf is left by uncle Aziz to stay with his business partner, Hamid Souleiman, he is forced to read the Koran and say the prayers too, which to him is boring:

'What do you mean? You can't read?' Hamid asked

'I didn't say that,' Yusuf protested. What he had said was that he had not finished reading the Koran before his parents sent him away to work for uncle Aziz. His mother had taught him the alphabet and had taught him to read the first three simple suras...

'Kimwana the boy doesn't know how to read the Koran!' Hamid said turning to her with a distraught look. 'He has no father and no mother, and does not even know the word of God!'(97-8)

This clearly introduces us into the web in which Africans are caught as other religions are imposed on them. Religion plays a great role to further confusing the natives' sense of belonging. Moreover, Yusuf studies the Koran with vigour and enthusiasm in the hope that it might help him find a new self but at the end he realises that it does him little or no good. This explains why he eventually loses interest and ends up learning mechanic in Kalasinga's garage.

Another issue worthy of note is the problem of language. Arabic in this text is considered to be a prestigious language, thus those who make use of it are regarded as superior. This is evident in the characters of Khalil and Hamid, who during their discussions with Uncle Aziz always try to make use of Arabic to impress him: "All this was music in Hamid's ear and in his desire to affirm his alliance with uncle Aziz he accented Arabic words" (91). A similar situation is seen with Khalil as he tries to use the superior Arabic to communicate with uncle Aziz. The omniscient narrator recounts that

He kissed uncle Aziz hand reverently and would have kissed it again and again if uncle Aziz had not pulled his hand away in the end. He said something irritably, and Khalil stood silently in front of him, his hands clasped together as he struggled to restrain himself from reaching for uncle Aziz's hand. They exchanged greetings and news in Arabic while Yusuf looked on. (21)

The fact that he uses Arabic only when he is speaking to his master and uses the native language when speaking to the others the dilemma in which he finds himself.

Yusuf on his part never actually shows much interest in learning Arabic, probably because he associates it with his subjugation. He has come to realise that the same person who has taken him as slave uses the language, and as such he sees no reason why he should adopt it. He is intelligent and is fast as acquiring the language but he never shows any enthusiasm in it. Like Ngugi wa Thiong'o in "The Language of African Literature," Yusuf seems to be asking himself: "how did we arrive at the acceptance of the 'fatalistic logic' of the unassailable position of English . . . in our culture? . . . how did we as African[s] . . . come to be too feeble towards the claims of our language on us and so aggressive in our claims on other languages, particularly the language of our colonisation?" (287) Ngugi goes on to contend that for him this language was the most important vehicle through that power fascinated and held the soul prisoner and that it was a bullet through which he was physically subjugated (ibid). This clearly explains Yusuf's

lack of zeal in the acquisition and use of this foreign language despite the advantages that it might bring to him in terms of closer ties with the prominent Uncle Aziz and esteem in the eyes of those around him.

One of the multifarious forces at work within the construction of identity is economic dependence that stems from the hybrid selves that arise as a result of colonialism. What usually arises from the experience of subjugation is a feeling of being neither indigenous nor western which leaves the subject in a vacuum and confuses his sense of self. Most often, he prefers to remain in the gaze of colonizer mimicking the colonial culture. Sankeet Kumar observes that the postcolonial subject occupy a hybrid space where they are significantly influenced by Western culture even while remaining rooted in their society (11). He refers to theorist such as Herbert Schiller and Toby Miller who studies the economic aspects of the global media institutions and argue that these institutions are imbricated within a hegemonic economic regime advantageous to certain regions as opposed to others and that within these dominant cultural contexts are embedded ideological strains that encourage life choices of consumerism and individualism (17-8). In the text, some of the freed people after working as slaves for a long time prefer to remain as slaves because of the impossibility of fitting back into their former societies. This is the case with the old man, Mzee Hamdani, who works in the Mistress' garden. He is a freed slave, who decides to stay with the family, even after slavery has been abolished. He only speaks once during the novel and his words fascinate Yusuf when he says, "they offered me freedom as a gift. She did [*the Mistress*]. Who told him she had it to offer? I know the freedom you are talking about. I had that freedom the moment I was born." (223). It raises an interesting point about whether or not one person can really own another person and that, somehow, freedom is not something that can be given. The old man decides to stay back because he can no more identify himself with his people. After all the years of working as a slave, he realizes that he has nowhere else to go but to stay behind and serve uncle Aziz. Similarly, at the end of the novel, the protagonist Yusuf and his friend Khalil watch from the safety of their boarded-up store, the *askaris*, who are led by just one German officer, round up young men they have hunted down in different quarters. They organize the captured men into two lines and then march away; as the column begins to disappear, Yusuf suddenly darts off and joins them. Yusuf, who has an opportunity to escape back to his home, would rather move from one form of subjugation to another, more so because his original home is lost to him and he can only find solace in what he

considers a more lively form, which has the potential of removing him from his life of monotony, mystery and dishonour.

In addition, Amina clearly explains her plight to Yusuf but refuses to escape with the latter to where she will find freedom and dignity. The narrator recounts their encounter thus:

‘...he said ‘will you leave him?’

She laughed softly and touched him on the cheek. I could tell you were a dreamer,’she said. ‘when I watched you in the garden I imagined you were a dreamer. I’d better return before she begins again. Keep away from her. Do you hear?’

‘Wait! How will I see you? Unless I come.’

‘No,’ she said. ‘What is there to see? I don't know.’(229)

This excerpt comes in to shed more light to the fact that some of the characters have the chance to free themselves from the chains of their masters, but prefer to stay in bondage because according to them, they know no other life is better than the one in which they find themselves.

In a similar manner, Khalil just like Amina and Mzee Hamdani prefers to stay with Uncle Aziz even after he is offered his freedom. When Khalil is taken from his parents with Amina, he is given the condition that he would serve as rehani until Amina reaches the age of marriage. When Aziz finally gets married to her, Khalil automatically becomes a free man and he is asked by his master to go if he wants. Khalil prefers not to go because he has pity for Amina and so prefers to stay back and serve her. He goes ahead to say the seyyid has taken everything from him, meaning that his only option is to stay there because he has no identity of his own.

Cultural memory plays an important role in identity construction. As Adrian Velicu states in “Cultural Memory between the National and the Transnational” states one derives cultural memory from the various means by which their community connects with the past. He states:

The manner in which a community relates to the past involves notions and actions such as connectivity, storage, retrieval, transmission, and interpretation.

The material that undergoes wholly, or in part, this treatment consists of the

values, accounts (of practices, norms), objects, sites, and ceremonies shared by the community. (1)

This implies that when one is cut off from his community and is unable to remember the past due to the absence of the materials listed above, they are bound to be serious questions about their identity. For as Charles Leadbeater avers in his essay “The Disremembered” identity and memory come a psychological connectedness and continuity maintained inside our heads. He adds that selfhood hinges on our ability to order memory, and connect a set of experiences to form a coherent autobiography of who we were and how we became the person we are now (par 5). When this fails due to dementia or forgetfulness, it becomes difficult to identify who we really are. In the case of *Paradise*, characters cannot remember because they were cut off from their homelands when they were still too young and as a result they cannot remember well and more so because they exist no objects, rituals, sites or ceremonies that can help them to remember. The result is an identity crisis, which they struggle throughout their lives to resolve. Khalil, Yusuf and Amina are all displaced from where they consider home at a very young ages and they cannot really remember what home really was. As a result, their identity is lost, thus leading to identity crisis as they, from time to time, have to adapt to a new style of living which is not the same like that which they had in their previous homes. Amina recounts her ordeal to Yusuf thus:

‘We are not brother and sister. Hasn’t he told you?... I was adopted into the family. So we grew up like brother and sister. I don’t remember anything about my father... we were taken in our sleep and we walked a few days’

‘Do you remember your home... where it is, I mean? He asked

‘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’ve got my life, at least. But I only know I have it because of its emptiness, because of what I’m denied. He, the seyyid, he likes to say that most of the occupants of heaven are the poor and most of the occupants of Hell are women. If there is hell on earth, it is here.’(227-8)

It is important to note that despite all the wealth of her new home she still refers to it as hell. This is probably because while she continues to live in this house, she has no sense of belonging, and as a result, she feels empty and lost.

However, Gurnah shows that prioritising the past over relationships, which is another source of identity construction, can be detrimental to the quest for an authentic self. For, as Achebe observes in “Named for Victoria, Queen of England,” postcolonial people live at the crossroads of cultures due to their colonial past. The crossroads, he goes further to state, “does have a certain dangerous potency: dangerous because one might perish there wrestling with multiple-headed spirits, but also one might be luck and return . . . with the boon of prophetic vision” (191). In the text, even though Yusuf’s father is married to his mother and lives with them, he had a family before getting married to his present wife. He was deeply in love with his former wife but because she was an Arab and of honourable descent he was not accepted by her family. This can be seen when the author says:

Yusuf’s father had married her against the wishes of her proud parents, who had not thought him grand enough for them. For although he carried a good name, anyone with eyes could see that his mother must have been a savage and that he himself was not blessed with prosperity... Yusuf’s father made secret assignations with the young woman and stole her away. (14)

Yusuf therefore marries this Arab woman in order to assert his Arab identity at the expense of the native identity. His wife’s family never accepts him as an authentic Arab because of his mother’s descent. However, Yusuf’s father never comes to terms with the fact of his mixed descent and foolishly sends his wife with gifts to go and make peace with her family. Whenever, he is angry he insults Yusuf’s mother as a savage women who is nothing compared to his first wife, thereby straining their relationship. He even confuses Yusuf when he forbids him from playing with the children of the neighbourhood, which the latter identifies with. The narrator tells us that his father does not like him playing around with some of the kids. Many a time, he is sent away by his father when he meets him playing with them. His father constantly reminds him that:

‘We are surrounded by savages, ‘he said. ‘Washenzi, 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 loafers and children of loafers, and they'll neglect you and let the wild dogs eat you....' Yusuf's father preferred him to play with the children of the Indian storekeeper who lived in the neighbourhood, except that the Indian children threw sand and jeered at him when he tried to get near them. 'golo golo,' they chanted at him spitting in his direction. (6)

Yusuf's father has clearly not understood his identity as a native-Arab who can never be fully accepted by the pure Arabs because of his native blood. As a result, he forces Yusuf to play with Indians who clearly considers him as native. The result is that Yusuf tends to question his real identity.

In sum, this chapter has examined the various factors that places characters in a dilemma as far as the issue of the identity is concerned. The novel discusses displacement, hybridity, poverty, cultural memory, language, religion and unwholesome human relations as main factors that introduce the sense of belonging to an individual. A combination of these factors leads to the conclusion that experiences of domination and subjugation brought about by slavery and colonialism in the society of the novel are responsible for this serious identity crisis. The next chapter handles aspects of remaking the past and reinventing the self.



## CHAPTER THREE

### TOWARDS REMAKING THE PAST AND REINVENTING THE SELF

This chapter examines how a fruitful engagement with memory can be one of the most effective ways through which the past can be re-membered or reconstructed in order to reinvent the self. Abdulrazak Gurnah in this novel *Paradise* gets into the minds of his characters exposes their sorrow, confusion and anxieties and proceeds to show how these characters grapple with these feelings, as a means of understanding who they are within the prevalent socio-economic and political environments in which they find themselves. The chapter also probes into how Gurnah's characters engage with memory as a leeway to rebuilding their formerly shattered sense of identity.

Gurnah in his writing shows that in order to reconstruct one's identity one must be mentally or psychologically connected to his roots or homeland. His works are greatly inspired by his own experience as an African migrant in 1960s Britain. He recounts in an interview granted to literary critic and consultant Vijay Nair Gurna that he is aware how different he is from the British people, and has experienced a great deal of stigma as a result of his status. At first, he used to react to it but with age he stopped doing that probably because he has learnt to accept the fact that he is foreigner in this country and will never be treated otherwise. In order therefore to construct his real identity, he must somewhere reconnect with his fatherland, which lives in him despite his long stay in Britain. He says:

As for, where I come from, Zanzibar, Africa, I think about it every day, several times a day. Places don't live just where they are, they live within you. So I think of all that - Life is what you make of it. Some of it is good. Some of it is bad. But you have made a choice and that is what life is. (Par 26)

This shows that Gurnah because he is from Zanzibar, Zanzibar lives in him and there is no way he can construct an authentic identity of himself by neglecting this important fact of his life. Gurnah in a similar vein presents to the reader his protagonist Yusuf who has no friends and is constantly displaced from place to place. He is taken away from his parents, at a tender age to his uncle, the business man. Despite all this, he never completely acculturates to coastal people. He speaks and acts as the highland people from where he hails. He does not forget his inland village

where he comes from. He remains as conservative as his people. He does not speak Arab as the coastal people and does not engage in some of the practices that are common in the coast such as sexual relations with older women or with other men.

From all indications, Yusuf regrets the fact that he has stopped thinking about his home and parents and feels bad about himself. He realises that without this past he can never reconstruct a true sense of self. The narrator recounts the incident thus:

Then he rose and left. For a long time, he sat silently with himself, numbed by guilt that he had been unable to keep the memory of his parents fresh in his life. He wondered if his parents still thought of him, if they still lived, and he knew that he would rather not find out. He could not resist other memories in this state, and images of his abandonment came at him in a spate. They all condemned him for self neglect. Events had held his day and he had ...kept his eyes on the nearer horizon, choosing ignorance rather than futile knowledge of what lay ahead. There was nothing he could think of to do which would unshackle him from the bondage to the life he lived. (174)

This excerpt shows how he struggles with his memories and his present state. He is not quite comfortable in the state in which he is and so says that he just has to pretend to be ignorant of what is going on around him. However, he waits for an opportunity to act.

Moreover, identity can also be reinvented by making the right choices that will lead to freedom. Yusuf thus projects his predicament and reconstructs his identity through the choice he makes at the end of the novel. In "Yusuf's Choice: East African Agency during the German Colonial Period in Abdulrazak Gurnah's Novel *Paradise*" Nina Berman writes:

Yusuf's choice, which, as we come to understand in the course of the novel, is a deliberate choice, challenges us to consider the reasons motivating the young man to voluntarily join the German army. The novel unfolds in the context of the caravan trade, which was one of the most important institutions structuring the multilayered East African social, political, cultural, and economic space at the time. By drawing on scholarship about the caravan trade, slavery, and the

ethnic and religious constitution of East African society, the analysis shows that Gurnah's thoughtful text successfully captures the social space that was disrupted by German colonialism. (51)

The choice mentioned above is significant because it is this choice that ends the novel. The narrator says that Yusuf suddenly darts off and joins the German army. Other youths are being rounded off and forcefully conscripted into the German army. Yusuf and his friend Khalil are safely hidden in the confines of Aziz's home. However, Yusuf decides to leap forward and freely offer himself to the Germans. As the excerpt shows above, the natives resist the Germans because they have captured their social space but for Yusuf it is rather Uncle Yusuf and the coastal society that has captured his personal space. He does not express himself freely and he is constantly being molested by the sexual advances of Ma Ajuza who is old enough to be his mother, and from other men who keep on striking his thigh when they pass around him. Yusuf therefore makes a choice to free and to be able to protect himself.

It is worth noting that this decision seems rash because of what Nathaniel Mathews describes as "the moral dilemma through which Yusuf will shape an independent destiny for himself (par 4). However, it is a wise choice because by wilfully offering himself, he is definitely going to enjoy favours and might just have the freedom to one day revisit his homeland and his people. Without this vital connection, Yusuf realises that he is lost.

A very glaring example is that of President Barack Obama of the United States of America. Right at the age of twenty in 1987, he visited Kenya, the land of his father's birth. Obama, though an American citizen believes that he could never reinvent himself without embracing or understanding his African heritage despite the poverty and diseases often used to stigmatise Africa. He recounts the importance that this visit had on his sense of identity in his autobiographical novel *Dreams from my Father* thus:

The rush of anticipation had drained away, and I smiled with the memory of the homecoming I had once imagined for myself, clouds lifting, old demons fleeing, the earth trembling as ancestors rose up in celebration. Instead I felt tired and abandoned. I was about to search for telephone when a security guard reappeared with a strikingly beautiful woman, dark, slender, close to six feet tall,

dressed in a British Airways uniform. She introduced herself as Miss Omoro and explained that my bag had probably been sent to Johannesburg by mistake ...

“You wouldn’t be related to Dr Obama, by any chance?” she asked.

“Well, yes - he was my father.”

Miss Omoro smiled sympathetically. “I’m very sorry about his passing. Your father was a close friend of my family’s. He would often come to our house when I was a child.”

....

This had never happened before, I realised; not in Hawaii, not in Indonesia, not in L.A or in New York or Chicago. For the first time in my life, I felt the comfort, the firmness of identity that a name might provide, how it could carry an entire history in other people’s memories, so that they might nod and say knowingly, “Oh, you are so and so’s son.” No one here in Kenya would ask how to spell my name, or mangle it with an unfamiliar tongue. My name belonged and so I belonged, drawn into a web of relationships, alliances, and grudges that I did not yet understand.

Yusuf like Obama realises that for him to understand himself he needs to return to his ancestral homeland. Among many things he needs to talk with his parents to understand why he was “pawned” to uncle Aziz. He also thinks that his only chance of seeing them again is by working with the *askaris*, the native soldiers working in the service of the German.

Gurnah also shows that identity can also be made through deep retrospection. For the past needs to be remade in order to have a correct and authentic sense of self. Note should be taken of the fact that the past cannot be remade without feeling uncomfortable about the present state of affairs. As earlier mentioned, Yusuf in this text who is the protagonist tries to remake the past through the memories he has of his parents. He gets to realize that he is faced with a situation of different experiences which he has while he lives with his parents, which is in Kawa and that which he has had while he is with Uncle Aziz in the coast. This helps him to kind of construct a new identity of himself. He is not quite comfortable in the state in which he is and so he says that he just has to pretend to be ignorant of what is going on around him.

Besides, Khalil in a bid to remake the past and reinvent the self also makes use of retrospection presented in the novel via flashback to talk about his past experiences, especially when he was with his parents. He presents a situation which gives us the understanding why he has fully accepted his present. He has realised that his past is missing because his parents have died and the rest of his family have left for Saudi Arabia, abandoning him and his sister to Uncle Aziz. Thus he realises that with his sister married to Aziz and with no knowledge of his relatives, there is no life outside the house of Aziz. His situation is different from Yusuf's who believes he can still one day return to his people. This can be seen when he recounts the story of his parents and how he got to know Uncle Aziz:

“My Ba had a small shop in the village on the Mrima coast south of Bagamoyo...it was a poor life and my brother sometimes went away to find work on the boat. I don't remember the seyyid coming to see us before, but maybe I was too young. I know that one day I saw him. My Ba was speaking to him in a way I had never seen him speak to anyone before. Nothing was said to me when the seyyid came again he spent two days ...after the two days the seyyid left ...then one day that devil Mohammed Abdallah came and took me and my sister away, and brought us here. We were to be rehani until our Ba could repay his debt... my sister married the seyyid last year. So now he's also my brother as well as your uncle, and we're one happy family in a garden of paradise...

‘So you are free to go, Yusuf said’

‘Go where? I have nowhere to go,’ Khalil said calmly. And my sister is still here.” (202-203)

This shows that through retrospection of his family situation, he has realized that he is stuck with Uncle Aziz because his sister is now part of the family and is living there in pain so he has no choice but to accept to stay there. He also says that his past life was in abject poverty and so by deciding to stay in the Seyyid's house it can be regarded as a move to run away from his former poor situation to a new state in life.

Gurnah's *Paradise* also shows that it is only by adapting to a new hybrid identity that one can reinvent themselves especially in a society that is exposed to foreign dominant cultures. This means that one has to be rapidly hybridised in order to fit in. It is in this wise that Kumar observes that the postcolonial subject occupy a hybrid space where they are significantly influenced by Western culture even while remaining rooted in their society (17). The postcolonial must recognize their hybridity and adapt in order to avoid stigma. In the novel under study, it is observed that when Yusuf is first brought in by Uncle Aziz, Khalil mocks him. Khalil calls him all sorts of derogatory names. He tells those who are at the shop with him that Yusuf would be fed differently from the way he has been fed before so that he can put up some weight. This is done by Khalil because to him he now considers that he is no longer that savage he was when he was brought to uncle Aziz. According to him, he considers that he is more civilized than Yusuf because he now has a new identity. The new identity can be associated with the new culture he has acquired while staying at the coast with Uncle Aziz. We can therefore say that Khalil is a hybrid as he now possesses both the African culture which he grows up in and that of the colonizers and the Arabs who live at the coast.

Moreover, Khalil on his part tries to redefine his identity by making possible efforts to identify himself with the superior Arabic culture. He does everything possible to discuss with Uncle Aziz in Arabic despite the fact that he does not know how to express himself appropriately in this language. This is as a result of the fact that he thinks about the prestige that comes with speaking Arabic, partly accounted for by the conflating of Islam and Arabic traditions in his society. In "Narrative, Identity, and Social Practice in Tanzania: Abdulrazak Gurnah's Ironic *Paradise*," Gareth Griffiths explains that

In late-nineteenth-century colonial texts, Tanzanian ethnic identities were frequently expressed through the discourse of race. These racial signifiers were often conflated with religious affiliations (e.g., by the simplistic conflation of Muslim and Arab identities). In reality, identities were rarely as clearly defined as the colonial texts of the period suggest. Such hidden identities also employed a taxonomy intended to reflect the roles of various groups within the economic and material practices of Tanzania. The roles reflected the trade networks of east

Africa and the economic relations obtained between the littoral and the interior.

(par 1)

This therefore shows how he has reinvented himself by finding pleasure in the things that give him a different identity. For him, escapism is the best means of reinventing himself. He can therefore be said to have a multi-layered or fluid identity.

Abdulrazak Gurnah in his text *Paradise* also goes ahead to show that in order for one to reinvent the self, he must revisit the past. This is because as earlier mentioned, sometimes the past is wrongly remembered or misunderstood. Yusuf's memory tells him that Aziz is his uncle but Khalil makes him to understand that he is not his uncle but his slave master. By so doing, Yusuf is made to understand that he is not who he is. He is a mere slave. This is brought out when Khalil says:

'He ain't your uncle,' Khalil said sharply, and Yusuf winced in expectation of another blow. After a moment Khalil laughed softly, then reached out a hand from under the sheet to clout Yusuf round the ear. 'You'd better learn that quickly, Zuma. It's important for you. He doesn't like little beggars like you calling him uncle, uncle, uncle. He likes you to kiss his hand and call him seyyid. And in case you don't know what that means, it means master. Do you hear me, kipumbu we, you little testicle? Seyyid, you call him that. Seyyid!'(25)

Yusuf gets to accept the new identity of being a servant, and we are told that throughout the novel he calls him uncle only once again. This self realization makes him to abandon Aziz for the German army since after the Mistress's accusation his future is very uncertain. He decides to make a choice for himself because he thinks that the Germans are a better evil. This can also be considered as a way in which Yusuf decides to reinvent himself because he thinks that his past experiences are not the best.

Gurnah in *Paradise* does not only present Yusuf to his readers as an individual but he presents him as a microcosm of the African people, and the difficulty they go through in the process of reconstructing a meaningful sense of self. Gurnah tries to reconcile his past, his history and his ancestry and tries to create a vision for himself and for his race. He somehow

calls for his people to accept the new identity that is introduced on them because they are faced with a situation where they are already hybrids.

Resignation is yet another means through which characters in *Paradise* reinvent themselves. Amina, Uncle Aziz's second wife, is found in a situation where she tries to satisfy her needs by finding a new home which will be a source of happiness but she does not. She suffers from trauma from the time when she is still too young. She does not know her parents; neither does she know where she comes from. She gets to the Seyyid's mansion but despite all the riches and servants she has around her she still does not find happiness. She finally comes to term that she just needs to accept the situation in which she finds herself, thus accepting her fate. She does not know her parents and she is already married to the most powerful and wealthy man in the region. Accepting to escape with Yusuf as he suggests is doomed since she knows better that with the network that Aziz has built, finding them will be easy. Her situation is even worse because her past is a void – she has never known her real parents. She was adopted and later sold into slavery. We read about her situation thus:

‘Why do you and Khalil look so unlike? And you speak differently ... for a brother and sister. Almost as if you're speaking different languages.’

‘We are not brother and sister. Hasn't he told you? ... I was adopted into the family. So we grew up like brother and sister. I don't remember anything about my father... we were taken in our sleep and we walked a few days’

‘Do you remember your home... where it is, I mean? He asked

‘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've got my life, at least. But I only know I have it because of its emptiness, because of what I'm denied. He, the seyyid, he likes to say that most of the occupants of heaven are the poor and most of the occupants of Hell are women. If there is hell on earth, it is here. I used to watch you work in the garden... I used to imagine that the shade and the water and the earth helped you ease the pain of what had been stolen from you. I envied you and thought that one day you would catch sight of me at the door and



force me to come out too. Come out and play, I imagined you saying. But ...did you want to ask any Other question? Then I must go. ' 'Yes' he said. 'Will you leave him?'

She laughed softly and touched him on the cheek. 'I could tell you were a dreamer,' she said. 'When I watched you in the garden I imagined you were a dreamer . I'd better return before she begins again. Keep away from her. Do you hear?'

'Wait! How will I see you? Unless I come.'

'No,' she said. What is there to see? I don't know.' (227-8)

This excerpt brings in to limelight the situation of Amina who has gone through thick and thin. When she thinks that she has found a friend whom she can play with, he is suddenly taken away. She therefore concludes that she has to accept her situation because there is nothing she can do about it. She laughs at Yusuf when he wants to know if she would leave Uncle Aziz. Her response shows that she is not ready to leave him. By doing this, she makes the readers to understand that she has accepted to stay in bondage at the Seyyids house.

Moreover, the Africans also redefine themselves by accepting the culture of the white man. The Lutheran pastor, we are told about, introduces his religion to the Africans and they abide by it. They get married to one wife and they do not only end at getting married to one wife but they also go ahead to adopt his system of agriculture that is using a plough to farm. By so doing, Africans are adopting a new identity as they abandon that which they are brought up in. This is therefore one of the ways in which Gurnah's characters decide to reinvent themselves.

We also have the Indians who have decided to do business at the coast and some of them are also doing business in the interior. They have stayed for so long in Tanzania that they have adopted some of the cultures and traditions of the people of Tanzania. This too can be considered as a reinvention of the self. We find Hamid and Hussein in one of their discussions condemning the colonial masters for the things they are doing. They relate it to their experiences in India and conclude that the colonial masters are just being exploitative as they would move away as soon as they have achieved what they set out to get from the natives.

The political and economic situation also necessitates a reinvention of the self. In the past, the tribal chiefs or kings such as Chatu asserted themselves as the dominant force in the area. They could raid, attack, capture and enslave people at will but with the coming of the Germans they are forced to surrender their authority. The fact that the Africans are losing their grip on power is also an indication that their lives have changed and hence must be redefined for them in order to survive in the new dispensation. We can make mention of the fact that the chiefs in the interior are now unable to get the gifts which they usually got from the merchants who usually passed through their territories to do business. This is because of a law passed by the colonial masters. By respecting the colonial masters, it shows that they simply have lost their identity and reinvented a new one to suit the colonialists. This can be further justified with the case of Chatu who decides to molest the seyyid and his men for a day seizing their goods and beating up his men. All this comes to an end the moment the Germans appear, and passes an order that the captives should be released. This therefore means that the presence of the German comes with changes to the Africans. Chatu is therefore given a different identity by the whites as he no longer has full power and authority like he used to have before the arrival of the Whiteman. This can therefore be related to the fact that Chatu's identity has been redefined for him.

In addition to the above mentioned points, the savages are also given a new identity by imposing certain cultures on them. This can be seen when Khalil explains to Yusuf that he should be a good boy and respect the seyyid else he would be forced to learn Arabic. This is a way in which the Africans are given a new identity by the colonial master just like Khalil has been reinvented by the fact that he gives more value to Arabic than he does Swahili which is his mother tongue.

This chapter has examined how characters redefine themselves in the midst of the prevalent socio-economic and political circumstances of the time. This reassertion of the self cannot be achieved without re-examining the self, self-consciousness and very solid and harmonious sense of belonging through a recapitulation of the past. It is only on such bases that hope and optimism for the attainment of a vision and dream for the future can be made a reality. Also, some characters redefine themselves by accepting the fate in which they find themselves. While others make different choices, others are forced to take a new identity, and others get theirs by displacing from one place to the other, which most at times lead to dislocation and

subsequently a new identity. The redefinition of the self helps Africans to recover their happiness, and for some, it helps them to forge ahead. It should be noted that for Africans to disentangle themselves from their suppressors, they need to have a sense of belonging, position and rights individually, and collectively as a community with a common spirit of harmony and fraternity. They need this spirit to achieve their long lasting dreams. The next chapter is going to examine the pedagogic relevance of the text under study.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE INFLUENCE OF MEMORY AND IDENTITY IN THE LITERATURE IN ENGLISH CLASSROOM IN CAMEROON: A PEDAGOGIC OUTLOOK

This chapter focuses on the pedagogic perspective of the text under study. This chapter also looks at whether or not this text is appropriate for learners in Cameroonian secondary schools. The chapter further explores the didactic relevance of the text under study that is how instructional and informative it is. In literature, the term didactic refers to any forms of literary texts which have instructive and factual information. They are most often moral, religious and ethical lessons to be learned from didactic literary text. For as Paul Redding avers “art is an objective medium in which a community collectively reflects upon itself, and the art of historical peoples is to be understood in as the attempt to bring before the consciousnesses of its members the totality of what is” (par 79). In this light, the novel under study can be considered a mirror through which the Cameroonian society can view itself and reflect on important cultural, economic and political issues that affect it. The novel is factual because it is based on real aspects that can be related to the life of most Cameroonian students and therefore inspire critical thinking. According to Gillian Lazar:

Literature provides a wonderful source for eliciting strong emotional responses from our students. Using literature in the classroom is a fruitful way of involving the learners as a whole person and provides excellent opportunities for the learners to express their personal opinions, reactions and feelings. (3)

This extract brings out the importance of engaging the reader’s entire faculties in the reading experience. It involves emotions and personal opinions and does not have a fixed manner of interpretation. In response to a literary text, learners should be able therefore to freely express themselves and their ideas.

In view of the above therefore, a useful way of studying this text in a Cameroonian classroom is by introducing the students to one of the most important themes that it exposes, such as the interface of memory and identity. This is important because of the multicultural nature of most Cameroonian classroom. As a result of this, they have varied personalities, cultures and identities. Therefore, an active engagement of these learners in discussions on memory and identity could elicit the most interesting and thought provoking viewpoints which could help in the reconceptualisation or review of existing forms of knowledge. Peculiar issues

raised in *Paradise* by Abdulrazak Gurnah such as discrimination, racism, corruption, patriarchy, marginalization, slavery and exploitation which plague the Cameroonian society could also be elicited from the discussion on memory and identity

Furthermore, any approach in teaching literature that falls short of exploring the ethical or educational dimension of literature falls short of the national objectives and expectations. It is true that philosophers such as Emmanuel Kant had advocated the idea of art for art sake, but Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel who was greatly influenced by Kant rejected the notion. The difference is that Hegel was writing in a time of intense development of ideas about the arts while Kant had treated aesthetic experience largely in relation to the experience of the beauty of nature (Redding par 78) largely because he wrote in an era of limited reflection in the field.

According to “The Literature Scheme of Work for Anglophone Secondary and High schools”, there are general objectives for teaching literature in Anglophone secondary and high schools. The objectives include:

- To use traditional literature as a foundation for the understanding and appreciation of literary devices and values and to serve as a stepping stone for the understanding and appreciation of English and other literatures. And ultimately to serve as a stimulus in developing and sharpening the student’ critical and creative faculties as well as to enable them to do their own creative writing.
- To cultivate the love for reading and motivate students to understand and enjoy literature as entertainment.
- Establish the relationship between texts and the learner’ experiences, opinion and feelings.
- To establish the mutual relationship between literature and language studies.
- To also provides exposure to target language.
- As a means of re-enforcing and consolidating acquired vocabulary and structure in authentic realistic, creative, diversified and varied setting.
- To facilitate literary skills acquisition and confidence in students, through self-discovery methods in developing their opinion in sensible reading and class discussion.

- To develop the learners imaginative powers and creative abilities through the cultivation of an enquiring mind as a basis for further intellectual development and mastery of creative writing skills.
- To enable students to gain greater insight into human society and themselves, and thereby develop greater understanding of others as individuals and members of other cultural groups, and also to enable them to create a relationship between literature and life.

The above mentioned objectives apply to the three genres of literature that is poetry, prose and drama. But our main focus here would be on prose.

Considering the nature of the text, we would limit ourselves to the high school where the students would be able to better understand the text. We realize that the text fits squarely into the level prescribed and it also suits the objectives mentioned above. This is because the text will expose learners to some literary values and also to increase their sense of creativity and literary analysis. The prose of Abdulrazak Gurnah will also serve as a source of entertainment as well as learning to the students. This is principally because of the narrative strategies and literary devices as well its exposure of some of the abiding concerns prevalent in the Cameroonian society today. The learners would be motivated to read and learn about societal issues and other cultures, especially the Zanzibari culture which is exposed in this text. Learners' knowledge of societal issues will increase since they will learn how to relate literature to society since the writer points to the society and the personal life.

Also, in *Literature and Language Teaching*, Gillian Lazar quotes Ngugi wa Thiong'o who decries the fact that Kenyan school children are confronted "with a distorted image of themselves and of their history as reflected in European imperialist literature" (225). This is not different from what is experienced by Cameroonian school children. They are confused on who they really are. The Cameroonian society is made up of Francophones and Anglophones, who most often find themselves in the same class. They are unable to simply identify themselves as one, but rather fight amongst themselves claiming to be of different and superior backgrounds. This is as a result of the fact that with the coming of the colonialists and the separation of the territory between the French and the British, they indirectly took away the common identity which they shared, and gave them new identities thus setting them against each other. People of the same ethnic descent refuse to accept their relationship with their fellow brothers because they have adopted the new identities given them by the colonialists. They forget to acknowledge the

fact that before the coming of the white, they were one and so need to remain as brothers. We therefore see how through colonization and European imperialist literature, the colonialists have succeeded in distorting the image which is supposed to be. Given that these are issues that can tear a nation apart and cause serious conflicts, there is need for them to be addressed and the classroom can actually be a very important starting point.

Ngugi in the quote above also calls for a greater engagement with literature since mainstream historical accounts fail to give a true representation of the past. In other words, he calls on Africans to do more reading of African literature as it is through it that students would become broadly aware of social, political and historical issues which form the background of most African novels.

In a classroom setting in Cameroon, is filled with many students who identify with the characters in *Paradise*. Some of them do not remember their parents well or completely just as Yusuf and Khalil; some of them have had different parent figures in their lives; some live with uncles and aunts due to poverty, incarceration or death of their biological parents. Some come from mixed backgrounds, with parents from different sides of Anglophone - francophone divide. These are all factors that clearly show how they suffer from identity crisis and that they themselves are struggling to reconstruct their identity amid false and inaccurate accounts of their past.

When reading a literary text, we are also interested in what Brumfit has described as metaphorical or symbolic meanings which 'illuminate our sense of awareness' (qtd in Lazar 27). By so doing, the student is able to identify certain peculiar themes and relate them to his or her own personal life or the society in which he lives.

Furthermore, this novel should be read by learners in Cameroonians as it highlights a lot of societal ills such as bribery, corruption, poverty, tribalism, racial segregation, dislocation, slavery and slave trade which exist in our society. Yusuf and Khalil in the novel under study are sent into slavery by their parents without telling them the truth about where and why they are going with uncle Aziz. All this is done as a result of the fact that they are poor and cannot repay the debts which they owe Aziz. So their only way out is to give their children to go and work for Aziz until this debt is repaid. This situation is very common in the Cameroonian society where a lot of parents because of poverty send their young innocent children to go to the cities and work as servants for rich people who at times treat them very badly. Thus traumatizing the children

and therefore making them to try to reconstruct a new identity for themselves after losing that which they had while with their parents, and becoming fed up with that which they have with their masters just like Yusuf in the text tries to do. By reading this text, it may help to expose some realities like the new form of slavery which has just been mentioned. By sensitizing people about such ills, some suitable solution might be found to these problems and equal opportunities given to everyone. Parents should also be advised to give their children the liberty to decide what they want, as the memories of their parents' actions may affect them in life.

The fact that the language in the novel *Paradise* by Abdulrazak Gurnah is mature and easy to understand, it will permit the students to enjoy and fully understand the storyline and be able to talk about it in relation to their own personal experiences. This will enhance reading since most students usually abandon or gloss over books that are too difficult for them.

It is equally important for learners to have some knowledge on style. Style is the author's manner of conveying his message to his readers. Style is an umbrella term under which we have structural devices, figures of speech and sound devices. Narrative techniques can be further divided into narrative point of view and narrative techniques. Figures of speech or sense devices on its part include aspects like hyperbole, irony, and sound devices include rhythm, rhyme amongst others. The text under study is just perfect for students in Cameroonian high schools as the author makes perfect use of a wide range of these devices in the text.

Abdulrazak Gurnah in *Paradise* makes use of different points of view in this novel. The author makes use of the first person narrative point of view and also makes use of the omniscient narrator. An instance where the author makes use of the omniscient narrator is at the beginning of the novel "The boy first. His name was Yusuf, and he left his home suddenly during his twelfth year" (1). He also makes use of many narrative techniques, like flashback, contrast, repetition, and monologue amongst many other stylistic devices. His use of flashback in the text can be associated to the characters memory and his quest for a new identity. The learners should not only be taught these stylistic devices but also its effectiveness in the text. The teacher needs to focus on the use of these stylistic devices and its effectiveness, as the author uses them to send his message across.

Note should also be taken of the fact that as far as the teaching of literature is concerned, it is necessary for the class to be given a background study of the novel. Especially the author's background, the period when the text was written, and some key events that took place when the



text was written, in order to understand the novel. This will facilitate work for the teacher who would be able to better explain the text to the learners. Discussing the topic of this work will require that the teacher explains to the students how the problem of memory and identity came about in the Tanzanian society. He would need to explain the different ways in which the characters in this novel through their memory tried to construct or reconstruct their identities, by possibly relating it to real life situations in the society.

One of the aims of teaching literature to students is for them to have new potentials and experiences. Every literary work needs to be carefully examined before taken as a text to be taught in secondary and high school. The content of the literary work and the method of teaching it should be the main concern of those doing the selection. The content of Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Paradise* is quite interesting and enjoyable because they touch a lot of societal issues which raise the anxiety of the students and therefore encourages class discussions and arguments. High school learners in Cameroon are made up of students who fall between the ages of sixteen to nineteen years, and who already have a sense of reasoning that permits them to understand and even argue for or against societal issues like slavery and slave trade, corruption, cultural conflict, racism, identity crises.

The teacher on his part can encourage the student's participation in the lesson through the methods and activities which he chooses to use. Gillian Lazar proposes some methods through which literature can be taught. He gives three different approaches which are; a language based approach, literature as content, and literature for personal enrichment. He also thinks these methods can equally be used with many other activities for better understanding. He divides these activities into three groups: pre-reading activities, while-reading activities and post-reading activities. He then introduces activities like pair work, role play, and group discussions. These activities give all the students the opportunity to participate including the timid students. It helps in building self confidence in the students as they are able to freely express their ideas. Role play is usually in activities where learners act as if they were one of the characters in the novel. All these help to bring out the learners points of view as concerns the text. At this point, the study will suggest a lesson plan on the teaching of themes in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Paradise*.

## A SAMPLE LESSON PLAN

NAME OF TEACHER: VICTOR SHWEMBOM

SCHHOOOL: G.B.H.S. ETOUG EBE

CLASS: LOWERSIXTHS

NUMBER ON ROLE: 60

AVERAGE AGE: 18

SUBJECT: LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

DURATION: 1 hour

TIME: 10:00-11

TEACHING AIDS: CHALKBOARD, DUSTER, AND COURSE BOOK.

TEXT: *Paradise* by Abdulrazak Gurnah (prose)

LESSON: THEMES

PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE: students have read the text and they know what themes are and how themes contribute to plot development, style and character traits.

LESSON OBJECTIVES: By the end of this lesson students should be able to identify themes from the text and relate it to their society, and show how it helps it the development of other literary aspects like plot, characterization and style.

STAGE	SUBJECT MATTER	TEACHER'S ACTIVITIES	STUDENTS ACTIVITIES	RATIONAL	TIME
INTRODUCTION	<p>WARM UP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is the text talking about?</li> </ul> <p>Gurnah highlights some of the problems faced by postcolonial Africa. He shows how the Africans battle with the new identity imposed on them. He shows this through some of his characters like Yusuf and Khalil who through their past try to reconstruct a new identity for themselves.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What are some of the main ideas which are raised in the text?</li> </ul> <p>The main ideas raised are identity crises, slavery and slave trade, racism, exploitation, trade, love amongst others.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do these ideas discussed in the novel reflect our society? If yes, how?</li> </ul>	<p>Teacher asks students oral questions about the text in general</p> <p>Teacher calls up students at random to answer.</p>	<p>Students put up their hands and answer the questions asked by the teacher.</p> <p>Others add to what has been said.</p>	<p>This is to remind the students of what they had discussed earlier</p> <p>Also to draw the students attention to the lesson of the day.</p>	5 minutes

	Yes they do. In our society we have identity crises because we speak several different languages				
PRESENTATION	<p>Our focus today would be on themes. What can we say a theme is?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is the main idea or an underlying meaning of a literary work that may be stated directly or indirectly.</li> </ul> <p>So from what we have read of this text, what are some of the main ideas that run throughout the text?</p> <p>One of the main themes that we find in the text is the urge to trade. We realize that throughout the novel uncle Aziz goes to interior tribes to trade. His trade in the interior leads to the acquisition of new experiences. These experiences help Yusuf to understand who Aziz is and thus brings out some aspects of his character and that of Aziz. For example Aziz is happy only when trade is good which is what gives his life meaning. It also helps</p>	<p>The teacher introduces the lesson for the day.</p> <p>Teacher asks oral questions to students still in line with the lesson of the day.</p> <p>Teacher calls up students to answer the questions he asked.</p> <p>Teacher comes in</p>	<p>Students take note of the lesson of the day.</p> <p>Students put up their hands to answer the questions asked by the teacher.</p> <p>Students give responses orally to the different questions asked by the teacher.</p>	<p>This stage will enable students to bring out some of the prominent themes in the novel and relate to real life situations.</p> <p>It will also enhance understanding on the part of the students.</p> <p>It is also to encourage classroom interaction and full</p>	25minutes

	<p>to foster the plot as a lot of action of the novel centers around Aziz’s trading expeditions.</p> <p>It is worth mentioning that this urge for trade is what makes Aziz to take Yusuf to the coast where he is exposed to civilization which comes along with some ills like indiscriminate sex with older women. This is portrayed in our society where women now prefer to dress up in cloths that expose their bodies all in the name of civilization.</p> <p>Through the characters of Mzee Hamdani, khalil, Yusuf, Amina we have the theme of slavery in the novel. They are claimed to be owned by their masters. Mzee Hamdani responds to one of Yusuf’s questions that: “They offered me freedom. She did. Who told her that they had it to offer?” (223). This except simply gives us a moral lesson, as it teaches us that freedom is not something that can be given or taken. We all have our freedom.</p>	<p>to explain where the students don’t understand.</p> <p>The teacher moderates while the students discuss the lesson for the day.</p> <p>The teacher explains the interrelations that exist between themes and other aspects of literature like style.</p>	<p>Students listen attentively while the teacher explains.</p> <p>Students discuss amongst themselves on issues concerning the lesson of the day, bringing out pertinent points.</p> <p>Students jot down very important points mentioned by</p>	<p>participation of students to avoid the lesson from being teacher centered.</p>	
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	<p>To add to the point mentioned, slavery is one of the main reasons why a lot of Africans and Caribbean's have identity crises.</p> <p>Desire and brutality is another prominent theme in the novel. Brutality and romance are interwoven throughout the novel. This is because Yusuf is described as being very handsome and the desire of both men and women. His mistress even feels that if he is allowed to have sex with her she would be cured of her mysterious illness. Contrary to that, we find Mohammed Abdalla who uses his strength to manage the porters. This brings out an aspect of style which is irony. The title of the book is ironical because it sort of describes hell on earth. Yusuf enjoys the garden but experiences hell in the jungle.</p> <p>The plight of the characters also raises the theme of identity crises. Some of them don't even know who their parents are,</p>	<p>Teacher from time to time writes down important points on the board as he deems if fit.</p>	<p>their mates or by the teacher.</p> <p>Students attempt to situate and substantiate their points with evidence from the text.</p>		
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	<p>like Amina who is taken away from her parents at a very tender age, and others don't have anywhere to go to if they are released by their masters. This poses a problem even in the society in which we live. A lot of people are taken away from their parents and cannot even remember who their parents are or what they look like.</p>				
PRACTICE	<p>Task</p> <p>In groups of four, discuss with evidence from the text the theme of migration and the urge of trade and show how it can be compared to what happens in the society in which you live.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yusuf moving around with uncle Aziz.</li> <li>- Khalil taken from the interior with Amina to come and live in the coast with Aziz.</li> <li>- the trading expedition led by Aziz who move from one place to the other to trade.</li> <li>- It can be related to our society in that a lot of people migrate from the interior parts of our country to the coast in search</li> </ul>	<p>Teacher puts up task on the board</p> <p>Teacher moves around the class to make sure the students work in groups as assigned.</p> <p>Teacher stops students and correct the exercise.</p>	<p>Students form groups of 4 and a secretary is appointed.</p> <p>Students discuss their ideas and jot down important points.</p> <p>Students stop writing and correct the exercise with the</p>	<p>This is to encourage group work.</p> <p>To ensure that students are doing what is required of them.</p> <p>To clarify the students' doubts and promote their reading skills.</p>	15 minutes

	of greener pasture.		teacher. By reading out their answers		
EVALUATION	<p>In your exercise books, bring out the theme of superstition and racism with concrete examples from the text and say how it helps in the development of plot, character traits, style etc in the novel.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The fact that the Europeans have been presented as people with supernatural powers</li> <li>- They change the rules set by the different African chiefs in favor of their own roles.</li> <li>- Treatment given to the Africans by the Indians who see themselves as intermediaries.</li> <li>- the myth of gog and magog which Yusuf is told about</li> <li>-The believe that Aziz mad wife has that if she sleeps with Yusuf she would be cured.</li> <li>- The charm given to Amina by her foster parents that it would protect er.</li> </ul>	<p>Teacher instructs students to work individually</p> <p>Teacher goes round to make sure the students are work and corrects a few books.</p> <p>Teacher corrects the exercise with the students.</p>	<p>Students copy the questions and work individually.</p> <p>Students read out their answers to the hearing of their mate.</p> <p>Students take down corrections given by the teacher.</p>	<p>To assess individual's level of understanding</p> <p>To check if the lesson objectives have been achieved.</p>	15minutes



In conclusion, this chapter has discussed how the text under study can be of importance to Cameroonian students of the high school. It is hoped that at the end of a prose class, students should emerge with great imaginative and creative skills and responses, be able to infer main ideas, make judgments relating prose to life and personal experiences, draw conclusions, show good mastery of grammar, style and punctuation in the English language, classify genre and be able to relate background material to the text of which the text under study is appropriate to make all this possible. Acquiring these skills would permit the students to cope not only with the school syllabus but also with any material out of the school program.

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study has been to investigate the relationship that exists between a people's sense of the past and the reconstruction of their identity. Premised against the view that Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Paradise* manipulates memory to represent alienation, displacement and the quests to construct identity. It also proved that the whole question of colonized/colonizer is a product of warped and refracted reconsideration of the issue of dispossession and that there are possibilities of re-engaging with the past productively in order to reconstruct a more viable selfhood. Important questions that arose were; how does memory help in the construction of a sense of self in Gurnah's characters? What role does memory play in the characters perception of their identity? Is there a possibility for the characters to create a new identity out of an alternative mode of remembering the past? And finally, what are possibilities of avoiding memorised stereotyped identities in a Literature in English Classroom in Cameroon?

Based on the Postcolonial theory, New historicism and the Evolution of Literature and Language Approaches and Methods in teaching, this study proved that a writer is inspired to write most of the time out of experience. The work was divided into 4 chapters, with an introduction and a conclusion. Chapter one explored the different ways in which memory is usually manipulated and the adverse affect it might have on the construction of personal as well as group identity. Chapter two examined the questions of identity that arise as a result of faulty and inaccurate versions of past experiences and shows how Gurnah's characters grapple with them. It also focused on the fact that not all what is remembered is good enough for the reconstruction of one's self. Chapter three demonstrated how memory can be deconstructed and reconstructed in order to redefine the self. This is in the sense that what the characters are made to think of themselves at times is not necessarily who they are. Consequently, it is important for them to deconstruct in order to reconstruct a better identity. And lastly, chapter four looks at the pedagogic relevance of the text under study. It looked at some of the methods through which this text could be taught in a Cameroonian classroom. It analyzed how well the text suits the objectives of literature in English teaching in Cameroon. It equally went further to show issues of memory and identity can be handled in the text considering its multicultural background.

This work arrived at a number of interesting findings. Gurnah's *Paradise* depicts some important factors such as cultural memory, enslavement, dislocation, peer pressure, dominant ideologies, and landmark political events which are fundamental in shaping the memory of an individual. The arguments raised in this study, showed that memory plays a very important role in the reconstruction of a new identity or in the (re)construction of the self. We realized from this study that every individual's ability to fail or succeed in life is shaped by the memories that the individual had during his childhood and also during adolescence. Memories, whether good or bad affect people differently as we have seen in this work. Some people are able to cope with some practices which are unacceptable in life by suppressing them, even though most of these bad aspects might occasionally resurface to haunt them. While some people struggle to leap forward, others remain in their unacceptable memories remain defeated, with no plan to progress. Hence, we found out that via a fruitful contestation with memory, a formerly colonized, enslaved or oppressed individual can reconcile with history and society, thereby creating a new identity for himself.

The work looked at a number of things concerning how memory works in the shaping of one's identity. It looked at how dislocation hinders characters from becoming who they thought they would be. As a result, they are obliged to get into the search for a new identity. Gurnah's characters migrate from one place to the other, thus opening their minds to a lot of new things as concerns culture and tradition, religion, economy amongst many others. This is somehow related to the life of the author who also migrated from his motherland to Britain. This really hindered him from becoming the person he would have been if he had stayed in Zanzibar. This therefore means that he somehow expresses his personal experiences in his writings. The analysis also showed that Gurnah's crisis of identity, to an extent, is resolved as characters by the end fit themselves into a group which makes them more comfortable.

The work is a continuation of the ongoing debate on the link between memory and history with focus on Gurnah's *Paradise*. It explores the ways in which memory is disconfigured in Gurnah's *Paradise*, its effects on individual as well as collective psyches, and shows how various character engage memory in order to arrive at a better understanding of who they are. It analyses the two-sided role of nature in processes of identity construction. In other words, it shows how memory can also be problematic in the process of identity construction and how it can be used to reconstruct a whole and productive sense of identity. It also explores the need and

possibility of including *Paradise* in a literature in English in the multicultural classrooms as a means of resolving issues to contemporary multicultural classroom in the post colonies.

This work recommends that educational institutions should desist from imposing inaccurate historical accounts for the sake of cheap political gain. The school curricular should involve subjects or courses that enable students to investigate rather than consume wholesome historical accounts found in official book list.

In the field of research, it is hoped that this work could stimulate research in related areas such as the interface between personal and collective memory in Gurnah's *Paradise*, the silent voice of the other in Gurnah's novel, and the second and third sexes in Gurnah's *Paradise*. It could also handle history, identity and trauma in Gurnah's *Paradise* and Nkengasong's *Across the Mongolo*.

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## **DISSERTATIONS**

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