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## THE TRAUMA OF IMPRISONMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF ABDULRAZAK GURNAH'S *BY THE SEA*

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### Abstract

Abdulrazak Gurnah's novel *By the Sea* is a reluctant description of the trauma of lowering rank in postcolonial Africa. Founded substantially between two nations-Zanzibar and Britain, it precipitates into awareness of the trauma of imprisonment as a bordering point of trouble and not belonging in postcolonial African civilizations. The work reviews the forces of separation bred by racism in nationalist converse, forces that act as the patrimonies of colonialism that limit the freedom of the tyrannized social Other. This composition supplements Michael Rothberg's notion of "traumatic literalism" with Paul Gilroy's conception of "camp intelligence". I argue that the new 's underpinning purpose is to bear responsible substantiation to nationalist racism in Zanzibar and Britain as a holdover of the same ideological structures that made colonialism and slavery possible. As a bystander of the trauma of postcolonial demotion, the diasporic Zanzibar author's description seeks to break free from the tangential and nonfictional restraints of a world patent by the ethnical division of subjectivities into "units of camps". The primary means by which this is shown to be is through a dialectical hassle between the heretofore opposing groups or testaments. The new use of migratory distancing from African history to meliorate the pain endured in that history and the close hassle between the two protagonists, Saleh Omar and Latif Mahmud, with protracted and vehement family histories, to investigate how a dialectical relationship can be advanced.

**Keywords:** Colonialism, Dialectic, Freedom, Geography, Nationalism, Trauma, Unbelonging.

Abdulrazak Gurnah's novel *By the Sea* achieves what many coincidental novels about migrancy and trauma acquire. It displays a model for rehabilitation from trauma and for the conciliation between defying manpower or people. It both recuperates the once 'in an archaeological expressway and makes that rehabilitation a step towards recovering from the injuries of colonizer and postcolonial trauma. Gurnah's path to this rehabilitation is dialectical. His representation of migrancy as both painful but also contains the seeds

of replay places him alongside whizzes like Stuart Hall (1990) and Salman Rushdie (1991), for whom exile and migrancy are more innovational than disastrous. This fashions the novel a significant conservatory to contemporary disputes about postcolonial trauma, and the metamorphoses between the initial trauma exponents of the 1990s and the after bones emphasizing the political. The textbook can be read as a circular demand that the separation of the psychoanalytic nonconformist path, which pacified the early trauma propositions,

from the postcolonial gregarious path, which came to the counterreaction, is to limiting. The benefactions bring into light the want to unmoor trauma inquiries from their Eurocentric harbors. still, not enough reflection has been given away to relegation as a birthright of painful history in postcolonial African societies. Under the supposition that the same ideological structures that made colonialism practicable still live, this composition argues that authoring relegation breaks the boundaries between once and present-day, making the disquiet of unbelonging ventilated in postcolonial literature privately interlink the postcolonial to the posttraumatic. In Gurnah's experience in exile, a rereading of the history first and foremost demonstrates to the lack of independence weighed by ethical politics as a heritage of social ascendancy. As he's determined by the overcritical imperative to free jotting from the impediment of ethical politics, his novel *By the Sea* can be read as one illustration of the redemptive narrative for which "literal responsibility" (Rothberg 2013) is of consummate significance.

It's therefore pivotal to relate to authoring as one expressway of "bearing substantiation" indeed if the pen is spatiotemporally at a distance from the events of the history. Abiding in England, Gurnah may have stated from a relative security vis-à-vis the spooking events that have spoiled the history of Zanzibar since the social hassle. still, his belonging to the posttraumatic, or postcolonial, cultivation implicates impost-generationally to bear responsible substantiation. Spending Zanzibarian postcolonial culture as an illustration, one seeks to explore that when writing about African diasporic subjectivity is antagonized with the consequences of dislocation as a post-traumatic consequence of colonialism, it associates traumatic pragmatism with morally appealing anxieties. Such accusations necessitate "the survivor, who attempts to document an un-documentable experience; the bystander, who feels impelled to bear an impossible witness to the extreme from a place of relative safety; and the latecomer or representative of the 'post-memory' generation, who... inherits the detritus" of a ferocity culturally temporary restraining order considerable (Rothberg 2000, 13).

A trauma-constructed reading argues that the novel begs answerable attesting through the predominant conception of the "implicated subject" (Rothberg). This question desires to carry witness to proceedings he is comprehensively detached from.

A closer inspection of Gurnah's inscription extends comprehension into the quasi-fictional overarching identification that features his writings. Grounded on the concept of "responsibility-in-complicity" which may be ensuing, Mark Sanders, for illustration, focuses on the part of the fiction writing epitomized by fictitious works and the unusual appearances that autobiography can structure. It emphasizes the distinct forms that are underhandedly expected since the work under scrutiny is a secondary depiction of the people, either fictional or real, with whom the writer categorizes overarching. His accountability "assumes a sympathetic identification that can be realized through narrative and through the projection of the 'little perpetrator' into quasi-fictional situations" (Sanders, 2).

Such an endangered outlook lures attention to Gurnah's encounter with the expatriate. At the age of 18 in 1969, after five years of Zanzibar's post-independence upheaval, he departed from the terrifying upheaval that mutilated the serenity of the tiny island where "Thousands were slaughtered, whole communities were expelled and many others imprisoned" (Gurnah). The discrimination on the bases of racism engaged especially at Arabs was to be presented later in Gurnah's novels like *Memory of Departure* trading with the phase of Zanzibar's independence; it attests to the animosity activated by nationalism, particularly regarding the people of Arab origin. Antagonism was then "unleashed by the removal of the common enemy, the British" and triggered "persecutions, imprisonments, murders, and regime of terror that followed" (Hand, 75). As a colonial inheritance, the divide-and-rule policy of the British colonial method consecutively supplied to the outermost events with its prominence of the dissection of the Zanzibar society on racial dregs, hence marshalling ethno-racial conflicts with its race policies.

Gurnah's sagacity of imprisonment in three-dimensional and conversational terms advances the

complexities of his writings as it frequently restores the permitted or restricted contradiction when discovering displacement. In fact, it is not unusual for his fiction to precise the sense of imprisonment in the middle of the colonial and nationalist “dystopic politics of exclusion” (Steiner, 124) that cause entrenched damages when epitomizing his idea of not belonging. As Tina Steiner put forth, from psychological character analysis to family subtleties, national politics of post-independence of East Africa and accounts of territory and dispersion, his work scrutinizes the acquaintances of micro-and macro-level formations bearing down on his characters, “...Offering counternarratives to myths of nation, land, and language, Gurnah’s fiction points out precisely the lack of freedom such discourses and politics produce.” (Steiner, 124-125)

Gurnah’s fiction on expatriates is consequently wedged among discourses indistinguishably troubled by racial boundaries. In fact, the failure of freedom establishes the mandatory theme in Gurnah’s fiction about the powers of departure that bother one’s identity as an isolated. Exodus for England was first connected with the assuring hope of freedom from impending maltreatment and the strict disadvantages of those who endeavored to escape. Inferior still, the early Gurnah came to aspect an indignant political backdrop: Enoch Powell’s language of stimulation gave voice to “fear and loathing” as the “influx” of East African Asians into Heathrow and Gatwick airports importuned every English citizen to the statute as a gate-keeper when “London dockers, the distress multitudes of the trade union movement, marched in support of Powell” (Gurnah 2001). His controversial speech asserted fostering the forces of neglecting and split-up between Britain and its ex-colonies out of the essential requisite to contradict its historical accountability for colonialism. Powell is of opinion that he “was predictably no supporter of overseas aid, and he was unyielding in rejecting the idea that collective historical guilt for colonialism imposed on Britain any obligation to sustain ‘open door’ policy” (Murphy, 368).

Surrounded by the longitudinal expressions that were legitimized by race and nationhood, military descriptions appeared to triumph as a

national showground separating ethnicities into alienated “units of camps” in the formulating. Paul Gilroy proposes an indication of British racial politics concentrated on migration and ethnic groups. He advantages to the disputes that “have regularly presented the illegitimate presence of blacks as an invasion” (Gilroy, 190). Surrounded by such an anxious milieu, he proposes perception into the rambling apparatuses that demarcate the “camp world” whose restricted space generates detaching geographical and ethnic margins. Such a representation facilitates the demonstration of how Gurnah is constricted by the politics of race as an African diasporic writer of Arab origin. In such a subject locus, quietness may be fashioned by what Gilroy mentions as “camp thinking” whose “distinctive rules and codes” (Gilroy, 189) pervade the informal sphere of administration and its elevation of “race” politics in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century. Gilroy’s confrontations below explain the concept: “I want to call the national and racial formations ... ‘camps’, a name that emphasizes their hierarchical and regimented qualities rather than any animate features. The organic dimension has been widely commented upon as an antidote it supplied to mechanized modernity and its dehumanizing effects. In some cases, the final stages in the transformation of the nation into an embattled confluence of ‘race’ and nation in the service of authoritarian ends... They are revolutionary complexes in which the utterly fantastic idea of transmuting heterogeneity into homogeneity can be organized and amplified outwards and inwards.” (Gilroy, 188)

In the novel *By the Sea*, consideration of being “between camps” factually and bombastically intensifies rather powerfully in Omar Saleh’s story of coming of age. Of impact is the emphasis on how his account of the campsite nurtures the requirement to discover the micro- and macro-politics of home and fitting in view of the disagreements between his as well as the second chronicler’s families over the possession of the challenged house. Such a deliberate rearranges the contradiction between the tremendous and everyday by blending the mundane of family disputes over home with the

acute ferocity of imprisonment granted the exclusionist politics of nationalism.

The reminiscence effort of the two narratives of the past forefronts the recognition position of experience which aids as a podium for an accountable intervention of a Zanzibarian future that assurances pardon and settlement with the past. In larger overarching terms, they are of enormous implication in that they concentrate the past in commonly entwined historical and geographical reinforcements. Their position is to draw awareness to the colonial discourse and its inheritance within the post-independence environments of detention and racial prohibition. Fundamental to the treatise of the "camp world" is the essential to readjust the sufferer/executor clash. Thus, accountability is accentuated as the family hostilities divulge that both Zanzibarian diasporic narrators unintentionally interject into each other's demise.

Equally, *By the Sea* as an account can confirm the necessity to appendix the "real" in history with the decisive demonstration of the past. The novel advocates to investigating the world of overlapping histories as it determines the never-ending tussle with shattering the deterring margins of race. The question that ascends in the course is not simply legation on affording the "real" of the outermost, but rather allocates with the meaning of the past through reflective investigations of the undercurrents of the "concentrationary universe". The significance of the sea which statistics blatantly in Gurnah's fiction purposes to the hypothetical consideration of re-territorialized interplanetary of the colonial and post-independence race politics in Zanzibar. His works especially affiliate with Isabel Hofmeyr's locus to the Indian Ocean as a portion of the "transnational forms of analysis" in the conservatory which are befitting progressively "prominent" in the studies of existing cultures in that it "attracts attention, especially as a domain that bids possibilities for working rich possibilities beyond the templates of the nation-state" (Hofmeyr, 585).

In the gap between the organizations of the state, between England and Zanzibar, core and

margin, the intertwined accounts of Saleh Omar and Latif Mahmoud represent the contradictory subject-positions whose intention is to supplement and document the chronicle of the past beholding that their varieties lay the foundation for a multidisciplinary assessment spinning around Omar Saleh's imprisonment. These two men's struggle over family houses unbolts opportunities into the question of imposed or imprisoned silence which syndicates slavery, colonialism, and genocide as corresponding heirlooms.

In the beginning sheet of paper of the novel, Saleh copes with the complexities of memory description, a shattered account whose history is assumed to start in 1960. As anti-linearity traumatically disturbs the progression of the narrative, the two chronicles of the past can only be comprehensively entwined in the metropolitan area. The perseverance of the memory of imprisonment back home ambitions Saleh to understand the refugee camps suggested to him in England as territories of "detention". He finales up incarnate in a small and isolated flat in an English seaside settlement after having absconded a second imprisonment on the island where he was born. The posttraumatic consequences of imprisonment and loneliness thereby comprise the guiding dynamism for the voyaging of race and space.

When foremost landing at the airport in England, Saleh Omar professes that he cannot speak English and cites instead the terms "refugee" and "asylum-seeker" to rework the customs officer's distressing firmness to ensue in deporting him back to his country lest he would be restricted again. Aggravated by the narrative domineering to protect portions veiled in the narrative of the luggage uncovered to the immigration officer, Saleh Omar safeguards himself from probable imprisonment. As shelter seekers are a group of expatriate focusses that "becomes a liability which must be scrupulously policed" and hypothetically "captured", they "must... not betray any information that could be used against them in the asylum process" (Newns, 512). Of implication is also his pretentious counterfeit identity. His passport has been seized and, as such, he utilisations that of Rajab Shaaban Mahmud, an expired man and an outlying relative

whose wife Asha schemed Omar Saleh's imprisonment for eleven years. Saleh has been deceived by the double-crossing of Hussein, a Persian merchant who visits his flourishing furniture shop and to whom he loans a sum of money for which he will acquire the house of Rajab Shaaban as protection. The merchant never comes back from his travels and Saleh collects the recompense of the loan, the act for which he is alleged of fraudulence. Such an accusation is vindicated by his apparently "underserved" heritage of another house belonging to his stepmother, Shaaban's widowed aunt.

The other Zanzibarian narrator, who has his place in the next generation, is Latif Mahmud, the descendant of Rajab Shaaban Mahmud, who, jointly with Saleh, labors to quantify together some of the misplaced splinters of each other's versions of the past. His equanimity as a poet and professor at the University of London has been disturbed by the second happenstance with Saleh, the man he blames for having occupied their house and property in the interlude before Zanzibar's independence. Latif's venture from home to study in socialist Eastern Germany in the 1970s terminated in his escaping to Western Germany and ultimately remains a refugee in England. Living in exile, he vents hybrid notions of deep dissatisfaction with family disputes towards the society he has passed on behind. The Zanzibarian men's disputing proportions of the anguished past carry witness to the novel's persistence in distorting the lines between sufferer and wrongdoer as both their families have somehow subsidised each other's distressing conditions back home.

So, in accumulation to his intimacy of imprisonment in Zanzibar, Saleh lodges in refugee or—what he asserts on occupation with a facility of melodrama- "detention" camps before relocating to a solitary and small house by the sea. He is continuously fascinated by maps that represent the dynamic force that chronicles his narrative, thereby wiggling to re-draw the terms of the forced provinces of his familiarity from the colonial to the post-colonial times. His preoccupation with maps focuses on the colonial and post-colonial reinforcements of modernity which has reallocated the world to turn around Europe as the center

(Ashcroft 2001, 132). In declining the epistemology presented by the single story of colonial mapmaking, the anti-linearity of the plot pursues to transport together a group of factors that have interjected to the situations of exile in these two narrators' accounts of the past. Retorting to the claims of extremity, the noticeable attempt at the statement of a traumatic event is not prefaced on pure imitative representation. Instead, it can be contrasted to that traumatic pragmatism "because it seeks both to construct access to a previously unknowable object and to instruct an audience on how to approach that object" (Rothberg 2000, 103). Continuously in need of padding the disparities of each other's versions in order to grasp the intricacy of the "real" in illustration, the narrators' traversing stories cover the generations between the colonial and the post-colonial in meticulous fashions. The encounter of the two characters in exile triggers the endeavour at overarching discovering the past or present historical apparatuses that control the camp world in order to endure witness the crossways of cultures.

The valid and invalid inclinations in the emplotment of trauma narratives, therefore, maintain two paradoxical but tantamount roles. One is moral and narratives for the nostalgia of the human associations of trauma, and the other is written in that it strives for justice and public appreciation. In the direction to be in course with the narrators' indirect confront with the outcomes, the issue of certification and documentation with the sufferers develops all the more persistent. Unambiguously the trauma accounts that reveal in the Lacanian concept of the "missed encounter" (Rothberg 2000, 138) with a number of the disturbing events whose traumas endure, Saleh's version of exile generates the issue of distance and juxtaposition to the foreground of his cross-examination of the past. In his case as a dislocated subject, he does not replicate the past in order to deliver a full-fledged account of the "real" proceedings but adequately accepts the separation enforced by imprisonment and exile. As such, he remarks on the traumatic significance of the past, "So then these are the events that befell. Many of them are difficult to speak of without drama, and

some of them fill me with anguish, but I crave to utter them, to display them as judgments of my time and of the puniness of our duplicitous lives. I will tell them briefly, for many of them are events I have tried hard not to live on, for fear of diminishing what little I have left with bitterness and helplessness. I have had many years to think about them and to weigh them in the scale of things, and in that respect, I have learned that it is as well to live quietly with my grazes and sprains when others have to bear intolerable cruelties." (Gurnah, 112)

As others have to tolerate the brutalities of chauvinism, Saleh's disturbing pragmatism is defined by his story embracing a morally controversial subject position as a beholding onlooker from the relative safety of exile. In circumstances of magnitude, there may be an endurance to bear countersign to the "real" events, but the requirement to document exposes the fact that there is also a compulsion to drive the narrative forward in mandate to provide a healthy judgment of the history of its time. The painful realism of the novel is echoed in selecting portions that fit into the agenda of revealing the past so that it "does not ignore the demand to confront the unfounded nature of writing, but it nevertheless attempts to advance new forms of 'documentary' and 'referential' discourse out of that very traumatic void" (Rothberg 2000, 96). In accumulation to permitting space within the disintegrated narrative to tackle mainly the "real" through historical and geographical substructures of the past, the advantage of the withdrawal of some sections of the untold story operates also to scale the undefeatable in the details that supervise to balance on his telling. Saleh, consequently, does not tell all the incidents in their literality but rather exposes the racial scaffolds that lie in the background of their incidence. The intrusion imposed on Saleh's involvement by unwarranted violence has thus shaped a hole in his meaning-making developments when representing the 'real' past; his as well as Latif's accounts stand together with each other to persistently effort to fill their narrative gaps.

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