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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**

**ISLAM IN A CROSS-BOUNDARY CONTEXT AND IDENTITY AS  
NARRATIVE: A NEW PERSPECTIVE TOWARDS ABDULRAZAK  
GURNAH'S BY THE SEA, DESERTION AND THE LAST GIFT**

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**SINIRLAR ÖTESİ BAĞLAMDA İSLAM VE BİR ÖYKÜ  
OLARAK KİMLİK: ABDULRAZAK GURNAH'IN  
DENİZİN KIYISINDA, TERKEDİŞ VE SON HEDİYE  
ROMANLARINA YENİ BİR BAKIŞ AÇISI  
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**Erdem AYBAY, Kayseri, 2024**

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**ABSTRACT**

This thesis attempts at analyzing Islam as a cross-boundary and homeless concept in Abdulrazak Gurnah's novels *By The Sea*, *Desertion* and *The Last Gift* through Bhabha's theories of hybridity and unfixity and Bakhtin's theories of polyphony and heteroglossia. The parallelism between these theories is that such parameters of identity as race, religion and nation are monologic and systemically are used to create binaries of subjects and non-subjects. However, at the heart of these theories lies the fact that there is always interaction and dialogue between these binaries and identity is unfixed. Setting out with Islam as a leading concept, Gurnah shows us how unfixed the boundaries of the self and other are. Therefore, as a dialogic writer, he narrates diasporic identities in a world whose boundaries are constantly realigned and investigates the characters' unfixed relationship with time and space as Muslims, a peripheral religion in a world dominated by the West. Yet, through creating alternative sites of encounter and enabling dialogue between 'I' and 'you', Gurnah subverts the oppressive norms of the West and deconstructs the idea that West is the space of European nation. Instead of simply focusing on the difficulties the oppressed undergo, he lets them speak in their own name as subjects and creates multi-voiced dialogues between East Africa and the West. Besides exploring and rewriting the extensions of colonial discourse, Gurnah moves his characters from the position of 'other' to subjects and reiterates the idea that subjectivity is not a stable but an on-going process that can neither be limited to race, religion, space or temporality.

**Keywords:** Islam, Colonialism, Hybridity, Polyphony, Subjectivity

**SINIRLAR ÖTESİ BAĞLAMDA İSLAM VE BİR ÖYKÜ OLARAK KİMLİK:  
ABDULRAZAK GURNAH'IN DENİZİN KIYISINDA, TERKEDİŞ VE SON  
HEDİYE ROMANLARINA YENİ BİR BAKIŞ AÇISI**

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**ÖZET**

Bu tez, Abdulrazak Gurnah'ın *Denizin Kıyısında*, *Terkediş* ve *Son Hediye* romanlarında sınırları aşan ve evsiz bir kavram olarak İslam'ı, Bhabha'nın melezlik ve esneklik teorileri ve Bakhtin'in polifoni ve heteroglossia teorileri aracılığıyla analiz etmeye çalışmaktadır. Bu teoriler arasındaki paralellik, ırk, din ve ulus gibi kimlik parametrelerinin monolojik olması ve bu parametrelerin sistematik olarak özne ve özne olmayan ikircikliğini yaratmak için kullanılmasıdır. Ancak bu teorilerin temelinde bu zıtlıklar arasında her zaman etkileşim ve diyalog olduğu ve kimliğin sabit olmadığı gerçeği yatmaktadır. Öncü bir kavram olarak İslam'dan yola çıkan Gurnah, bize özne ve öteki sınırlarının ne kadar esnek olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu nedenle, diasporik bir yazar olarak Gurnah sınırları sürekli yeniden çizilen bir dünyada diasporik kimlikleri anlatır ve Batı'nın egemen olduğu bir dünyada periferik bir dine mensup olan Müslüman karakterlerin zaman ve mekanla sabit olmayan ilişkisini araştırır. Yine de Gurnah, alternatif karşılaşma alanları yaratarak ve "ben" ile "sen" arasında diyalogu mümkün kılarak, Batı'nın baskıcı normlarını alt üst eder ve Batı'nın Avrupa ulusunun alanı olduğu fikrini yapıbozuma uğratar. Ezilenlerin maruz kaldıkları zorluklara odaklanmak yerine, onları özne olarak kendi adlarına konuşturur ve Doğu Afrika ile Batı arasında çok sesli diyaloglar kurar. Gurnah, kolonyal söylemin uzantılarını keşfetmenin ve yeniden yazmanın yanı sıra, karakterlerini 'öteki' konumundan öznelige taşır ve özneliğin istikrarlı değil, devam eden ve ırk, din, mekan veya zamansallıkla sınırlandırılmayan süregelen bir süreç olduğu fikrini yineler.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İslam, Kolonyalizm, Melezlik, Çokseslilik, Öznelik

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## INTRODUCTION

*“As the Black African writers have taught us, we must dance our word, for in human speech as in dance, lies an offering; to speak and to write is also to offer oneself to the other; it is to be reborn together”.*

*M. Rombaut*

This thesis aims at analyzing Islam as a cross-boundary and an unhomely concept in Abdulrazak Gurnah's novels *By The Sea*, *Desertion* and *The Last Gift*. Rereading these novels through Bhabha's theoretical lenses he provided in the *Location of Culture* and Bakhtin's dialogism which he specified in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* and *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin* would be noteworthy because these novels have not been studied within the context handled in this thesis, which traces how Islam- as an unhomely concept- is systematically used by the author to narrate identities in a world in which boundaries are constantly re-aligned and thus in flux and to investigate the characters' unfixed relationships with space as Muslims, as people belonging to a peripheric religion in a world dominated by the West. Because Islam has been treated as an 'other' in Europe and this negative treatment has solidified even more with the Rushdie affair in 1989 (See Chambers, 2019), Gurnah re-handles Islam as an element through which he can resist against dominant discourses backed up by totalizing and universalizing systems of thought. As Lavery (2021) states, Islam in Gurnah's work “becomes fleshed out as an alternate universalism to that of colonialism, one that both connects and divides” (p.109).

In today's world, the experience of colonialism, diaspora, forced migration, and the effort to protect one's cultural, religious identity holds an important place in understanding global dynamics, even if these determiners of identity are in constant flux. Particularly, African diaspora “has become a “buzzword” in academic and public discourses of cultural

globalization and the deterritorialization of people in the last decade or so” (Helff, 2009, p.68).

In the current ever-mobile world, the experiences underwent by the refugees and the experiences of people in the hosting countries who encounter totally different worlds brought together with the newcomer play a significant role in the synthesis of radically differing cultures, identities and selves.

It is a known fact that literature or in simpler terms the art or desire of narration has existed since the emergence of even primitive, unsophisticated human societies. Even if all narratives are not bound by language, a medium that embodies a certain type of narration has always existed, ranging from the cave paintings sometimes depicting a burial ritual to ones having religious undertones and connotations such as the icons on church walls or paintings like the “Last Supper” or “The Fall of the Icarus”. After saying that the existence of narration or the tendency to produce literature is coexistent with human history, it is not surprising that, Islam, spreading to such vast territories both during the prophethood of Muhammed and after, has been the topic of and affected literary output in various geographies. Taking this into account, the formative power of Islam on the African continent cannot be denied.

As Julien (1995) puts it, “Africa is a vast continent, consisting of more than fifty nations and several hundred languages and ethnic groups” (p. 295). This inevitably led to the formation of a cultural, geographic and political diversity at the background of African literature and the interactions of such a vast cultural accumulation with West is barely imaginable. This fact should also be taken into consideration while uttering that colonialism brought a totally new discourse to Africa including the sub-Saharan part. Julien makes yet another remark regarding the inherent diversity in the region by saying

*Centuries before European colonialism and the introduction of European languages, there were bards and storytellers, scribes, poets, and writers in languages such as Kiswahili and Amharic. Many of those traditions adapt and live on in various guises today, and the African writers draw on these indigenous oral and written traditions as well as those of Europe, the Americas, and Asia. (1995, p. 295)*

Both as a religion and a cultural element, Islam has taken its place in diverse manifestations of world literature in the form of either poetry or prose. Therefore, for one

to understand the subtle socio-historical background of a given literary work, appreciation of religion becomes significant. Particularly, for our purposes in this thesis, understanding the role of religion in shaping the social and political agenda of Gurnah's time and location is of utmost importance. The reason for this, which I will investigate more as the thesis moves on, is not so hard to uncover. In an era when people's identities are determined by their location, culture, language, gender and religion, the investigation into how religion interacts with identity turns into a question whose answers are of paramount importance.

Rather than confining the representation of Islam and Muslim identities to a diasporic writer's effort to remain in dialogue with his lost past and memory, I aim to situate Islam in a platform that is broader than the effort to assert identity or self-hood through religion. Firstly, as Chamber (2011) maintains in her book *British Muslim Fictions*, while the authors "assert the right to explore their religious background, they "equally disregard, satirize, challenge, and praise it" (p. 13). Apparently emblematic Muslim themes, such as the Qur'an, justice, djinns, and compassion do recur in many of the texts and interviews, but so do issues not widely associated with Islam, such as feminism, cosmopolitanism, and literary experimentalism. Considering that the literary form I will handle in this thesis is novel, which is Western in origin, the output produced by non-Western people dealing with their own histories, cultures, religions, traditions and languages bring with themselves an abundance of material through which we can analyse, meditate on and approach with fruitful lenses to an encounter between two oppositions, the West and the rest.

In Gurnah's *By The Sea*, *Desertion* and *The Last Gift*, each imbued with colourful interactions between the binaries of the colonizer and the colonized, religious identities represented by the author are closely bound to this binaristic frame. Within this frame, I will also handle the issues of Islam and identity, Islam as an identitarian religion, Islam and the national state and other aspects related to it based on theories developed by Bakhtin and Bhabha who emphasize the convergence between binaries, rather than a divergence. As Bhabha states throughout his seminal work *The Location of Culture*, it is impossible to talk of a stable identity in the face of colonialism and diaspora. The migrant is a by product of diverse histories and cultural interweavings; not only is his identity

hybridized and in-between but also undergoes “a process of displacement and disjunction that does not totalize experience” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 5).

Indeed, “there is no such thing as a ‘native country’ in Africa because colonialism and nationhood have had irreversible consequences for maps, culture, custom, and historical memory” (Mirmotahari, 2011, p. 2). From a post-colonial and religious perspective, we cannot talk of the singularity of identities. Considering the instability of space in the novels this thesis looks into, the role religion plays in the formation of identity is also fluid.

Bhabha (1994) states that “the move away from the singularities of ‘class’ or ‘gender’ as primary conceptual and organizational categories, resulted in an awareness of the subject positions” (p.1) and the parameters of identity in the modern world such as “race, gender, generation, institutional locale, sexual orientation” (Bhabha, 1984, p.1) have turned into slippery and destable phenomena in the postcolonial world. When we re-consider this Bhabhaian perspective on identity, we can claim a new position for Islam or Muslimness as a category. Even, religion becomes racialized or associated with nation and therefore subject to essentialization. In this case, the hybridized people undergo “racialized violence” (Bhabha, 2004, p. 2). Yet, dialectically, the violence exerted upon these people at the same time creates a space to be able to exert their difference and “the right to signify from the periphery of authorized power” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 2). Thus, Islam can be said to be acting as a means through which Gurnah’s East African characters assert their difference and realign their identities as complex and on-going ones.

In addition, Islam is a good intermediary for Gurnah to explore the extensions of colonial discourse as regards Muslims and Islam. Gurnah’s effort in inserting Islam into his novels is also linked to restoration in the sense that “scholarship has grossly distorted Islam because it was generally hostile to Islam, was politically motivated, ahistorical, and essentialist, analyzing Islam from a logic that was deliberately external to it” (Bangura, 2000, p. 5).

This stance cannot be named as a “counterdiscursive move of replacing one frame of power with another” (Steiner, 2009, p. 2). Instead, it paves the way for “new constellations and allows us to imagine alternative subjectivities and relationships”

(Steiner, 2009, p. 2). In one sense, Gurnah, just like Rushdie does in the ‘Rosa Diamond’ section of *The Satanic Verses*, “deliberately enters in the process of dissemiNation – of meaning, time, peoples, cultural boundaries and historical traditions” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 239) to assert (cultural) difference in the fabric of the text, since these parameters of identity are functional in “discourses of control, servitude and assimilation and the monolingual” (Steiner, 2009, p. 4).

Islam is not an alien concept in Sub-Saharan Africa. Considering Islam as an inherent aspect of East Africa, Gurnah (2005) states that it

*had been the dominant religion on the coast of East Africa for centuries before the arrival of the Europeans, and that and Omani rule had inserted us into another narrative, that of belonging to the great house of Islam, and its great achievements were also ours. (p. 290)*

What is more, in a 2013 interview with Tina Steiner Gurnah utters the following statements and they are crucial for understanding why Islam holds such an extensive place in his novels. He states thus:

*I think that the way they understand the world is vitally informed by Islam, or Islamic culture. And I wasn't inventing that, this was a reflection of how of the world in which a lot of the coast, and not only just the coast, really probably further south and further north, were being told stories that were current and that were transmitted through belonging to Islamic culture. And it's that that's in motion. And trade. Trade, I would have said probably, but also the way in which scholarship is transmitted. As I said, these are not readers but this is how a religious scholar might visit and say this is this, this is what happens here, this is what happens there. In a way you might say this is something kind of medieval, but that would be to diminish it, in the way that the imperial narrative always diminishes other forms of knowing which are not archival or book based. But it is certainly a propagation of a way of knowing, the stories you tell about the world. What makes Islamic culture or the Indian Ocean exchange system important is that it actually forms the story of the world for people in those cultures. (qtd. in. Steiner, 2013, p. 163)*

Gurnah's approach to Islam is that it is a way of knowing the world, as well as being effective on the dynamics of trade on the coastal region. While humbly aspiring to understand how Islam and Muslim identities are represented and constructed by the diasporic author, this study will also trace the links between the writer's biography and his perceptions of being a Muslim in a Euro-centric and Christian world. Gurnah left Zanzibar, his homeland, while he was 18 years old and he chose to settle in England. The factor that led to his diaspora was the terror and unrest in his country and England was the place where he could feel safe. However, the source of his writing was not the actual

place where his identity as a Muslim African belonged to, but rather the source of his inspiration was an imaginary homeland, where he kept the memory of his racial, cultural and religious roots. Gurnah himself expresses this such:

*I realized that I was writing from memory, and how vivid and overwhelming that memory was, how far from the strangely weightless existence of my first years in England. That strangeness intensified the sense of a life left behind, of people casually and thoughtlessly abandoned, a place and a way of being lost to me forever, as it seemed at the time. When I began to write, it was that lost life that I wrote about, the lost place and what I remembered of it. [...]I found myself overcome for the first time by the bitterness and futility of the recent times we had lived through, by all that we had done to bring those times upon ourselves, and by what then seemed a strangely unreal life in England. (as cited in Galván, 2013, p.16)*

Islam is not only the name of a religion that emerged in the Arab peninsula in the 6<sup>th</sup> century and from there spread to the other parts of the world and that involves a set of moral and pious teachings by Prophet Muhammed based on the Quran, but at the same time it is a phenomenon that has closely interacted with history, culture, economics and politics since its existence onwards. As it does not have any geographical boundaries or is not confined to any nation, it is not unexpected that Islam and Muslim identities are so prevalent in literary works. Wherever the critic sets out to treat the written material as a document reflecting history, understanding the role of religion is as important as understanding several other dynamics such as race, gender, class struggles, identity and politics.

Some writers such as Wole Soyinka oppose the existence of Islam in Africa on grounds that it is not essentially African and therefore has no difference from Christianity which is the religion of the colonialist. To Mazrui,

*There are certain societies in Africa in which Islam as a cultural expression is virtually an indispensable attribute of their ethnic identity. The Hausa of West Africa and the Swahili of East Africa are cases in point. It is perhaps possible to have a Hausa or Swahili person who is not a Muslim in religious faith, but it is far less conceivable to have a Hausa/Swahili individual who is not Islamic in cultural practice. (as cited in Malak, 2005, p .46)*

In *British Muslim Fictions* Gurnah's own words related to the place of religion in Africa and his fiction call for close attention. Constantly focusing on the idea that blackness rather than Muslimness was the aspect that was abused by the European colonialist, he talks on the effect of Islamic themes and art forms saying

*My interest is not only in Islam as a religion, but also in the crucial role it plays in the culture of the coast of East Africa, the terrain I'm interested in writing about. When I explore people as Muslims, I'm not necessarily insisting that they are pious, law-abiding, believing, practising Muslims, but that their culture is Muslim. To accuse them of being colonized by religion over a thousand years, as Soyinka does, is unlikely without them having possessed Islam themselves for their own uses and ends. Again and again, I disagree with Soyinka and others who argue for some kind of authentic African position which requires suppression of other ways of being African. It seems to me that this way of speaking about Islam in Africa as a foreign, colonizing influence is almost a nineteenth-century discourse. The whole debate indicates how one colonial discourse attempts to supplant another. European colonialism established itself by asserting that Muslims were simply slavers, and it's somewhat surprising to hear the same discourse being picked up now by Africans. (as cited in Chambers, 2011, p.125)*

The 19<sup>th</sup> century discourse that saw Islam as suppressive and identified Africa as a colony of Islam is groundless. Since mobility highly increased from that time onwards, we need to analyze how the dualistic relation between religion and space becomes dissolved through the mobility that gained huge momentum from the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

The notion of diaspora, which is associated with the idea of sowing seeds and dispersing them makes us understand the writing by authors like Gurnah. Here we should also keep in mind that the term's close association with hybridity, which can be simply expressed as a combination or bringing together; bringing together of an imaginary root in the writer's mind or memory and the emergence of new hyphenated identities such as Afro-English or Latin-American. However, Bhabha (2004) approaches this issue from a wider perspective and abstains from "fixity or fetishism of identities" (p. 13) rooted in past. Instead, Bhabha (1994) contends that the intervention of the past in present "establishes a boundary: a bridge, where 'presencing' begins because it captures something of the estrangings sense of the relocation of the home and the world" and "unhomeliness is the condition of extra territorial and cross cultural initiations" (p. 13). So, it can be claimed that the place and all the cultural and religious artefacts it symbolizes do not shape the author totally but they act like a springboard visited often by the author. Thus, as Bhabha (1994) states, the borders between "home and world become confused" (p. 13). This becomes the main point of departure for the analyses of the novels herein since the characters in the novels develop complicated relationships with their homes and they belong neither to past nor to present and neither to here nor to there. They undergo a post-colonial condition in which religion becomes Bhabha's third space, a space to enunciate difference. Also as Clifford (1994) emphasizes in his article "Diasporas", "Association

with another nation, region, continent, or world force (such as Islam) gives added weight to claims against an oppressive national hegemony”(p. 310). Thus, we can also claim that Islam is functional in two ways in the novels handled in this thesis. Firstly, it acts as a means to articulate difference by problematizing hierarchies and classifications and secondly, when one identifies himself/herself as a Muslim, he/she gains more power to assert subjectivity.

Islam is unhomed in the western world. As Bhabha (1994) himself states, being unhomed is “not to be homeless, nor can the unhomely be easily accommodated in that familiar division of social life into private and public spheres”(p. 13). Based on this, it can be claimed that Gurnah approaches Islam with a political motive in his head and he consistently explores “Islam as a central, rather than an incidental, cultural framework” in his novels (Mirmotahari, 2011, p. 1). As a novelist who can bring various voices together in the fabric of the text, he allows the subaltern East African Muslim be heard. The Muslims in the Eastern part of Africa are subaltern because they are neither Arabs in origin nor they belong to the Western part of the peninsula which is called Maghreb. They are literally and figuratively outcast Muslims. Therefore, the issue of religion for Gurnah is very much functional to describe his characters’ habitual journey of in-betweenness. As will be re-iterated throughout this thesis, the reason behind Gurnah’s approaching Islam as a central issue firstly stems from his desire to refine the religion from (Arab and African) nationalism, since it is an artificial construct, and secondly reconstruct new transnational identities.

As Cornell (2007) also puts it using Fanon’s term ‘overdetermined’, Muslims are overdetermined in every corner of the West; they are overdetermined by the press, Hollywood, politicians and cultural critics (p. xi). Sunar’s argument that Islam is “a collective other of the West” (2017, p. 36) seems also apt in this sense. There is no need in the West, therefore, to make the presence of Islam be felt. As Cornell (2007) emphasizes, Islam “as an image” is hazardous and Islam should be expressed as “a narrative” (p. xi). This way the unhomed Muslim can better express himself, without being mitigated to the position of an ‘outcast’ or defined as being in the margin. When Islam turns into a narrative, the things that should be hidden becomes revealed and we can see “how rich and manifold the hidden can be under conditions of intimacy” (Bhabha,

1994, p. 10). This way Islam might act as an intermediary to retrieve one's past and to rebuild a history.

Most possibly, the 2021 Nobel prize winner Gurnah, also a postcolonial scholar himself, was already aware of the unhomed situation of Islam and that is why he used Islam to indicate how the 'unhomed' relocates himself/herself and the 'unhomeliness of Islam' has strategical importance in subverting the dualism between the oppressed diasporic subjectivities and the oppressor. This, in turn, gives the author to move his characters from the periphery to the centre, which best explains how he won the 2021 Nobel Award.

From reading Bhabha's *Location of Culture*, we deduce that nationalism was the overarching theme of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century "transnational histories of migrants, the colonized, or political refugees - these border and frontier conditions - may be the terrains of world literature" (Bhabha, 2004, p. 12), and such narratives form a counterdiscourse to West-centric histories of expansionism, colonialism, and trade, which tend to posit the West as the centre" (Nyman, 2009, p. 11). Basing his discussions on Goethe's concept of world literature, Bhabha also emphasizes the "cultural confusion wrought by terrible wars and mutual conflicts" which pave the way for intercultural dialogue. As regards this, Gurnah's words in an interview with Nasta support this claim.

*Whereas before stories would be told about them, now their own stories have to be heard. [...] So 'the story of our times' can no longer be sealed in a controllable kind of narrative. The narrative has slipped out of the hands of those who had control of it before. These new stories unsettle previous understandings. [...] It also makes us realize how accessible other knowledges are. Whereas without those kinds of raised voices coming from other directions, things often seem unreachable, impossible to understand, or at least to understand in any kind of subtle or complex way. Then you read things by others which give you access – even if one's understanding is slight – to different ways of thinking and understanding. In that sense the world actually becomes a smaller place where we can make connections and which is more and more understandable. (as cited in Nasta, 2004, pp. 358-9)*

This is where the focus of this thesis emerges. By focusing on stories of "freak social and cultural displacements" (Bhabha, 2004, p. 12) and trying to make them heard, this thesis tries to understand transnationalism, de-racialized and unhomed Islam and it problematizes the fixed notions of home, nation, subjectivity and race. This questioning reveals that no culture and no subjectivity are distinct from one another and there are no uncontaminated, stable identities. Even if the refugee or the asylum seeker appears

unhomed and therefore without subjectivity at the first glance, the truth is that there is “the possibility of reconstructing home in other spaces by boosting transnational identities” (Nyman, 2009, p. 128).

Gurnah’s characters, then, can be said to be constructing liminal identities that become “ambiguous, neither here nor there, betwixt and between all fixed points of classification” (Turner, 1975, p. 232). This newly formed identities cannot be located within a binary or a fixed root. From a postcolonial perspective, these unhomely identities serve to de-romanticize nationalisms and reconstruct a person’s relationship to a given place.

Defying the idea of canons, theories and genres, David Damrosch (2014) defends in *World Literature in Theory* that the national models for approaching literary texts are outdated in an era of incessant mobility. To him, Eurocentric assumptions and theories as regards how a text should be written have lost significance. Though the novel as a genre and canon may be categorically European and Africa might have been regarded as an alien space in which culture primarily rests on orality, the unhomed subjects having their feet on each side of the threshold is well able to synthesize the language and theory of the west with their own culture and belief. Though this may still sound Eurocentric since the scaffold of writing is governed by Eurocentric patterns, it should also be kept in mind that it is worse when the histories and cultures of third world countries are left to their destinies. Leave being nominated as a candidate for European awards aside, would the circulation of these stories and histories in African languages be ever possible? If they were somehow noticed and translated into world languages, would translation achieve the same polyphony and dialogism that these authors could reflect?

Discussing the stance of Islam against colonialism and the perception regarding the relationship between Islam and postcolonialism, I discussed Gurnah as an in-between exile novelist. Even though he has no purposes of being a radical Islamist, writing opens up a space for him through which he acquires agency and make his people’s voices be heard. As I mentioned beforehand, his choice of novel as a genre is deliberate in that the novel as a form as also maintained by Bakhtin allows for dialogue and intermingling of sounds, blurring of binaries and distinctions. To Booker and Juraga (1995), “the novel must continually challenge predefined notions of what it should be. It is therefore an inherently antiauthoritarian genre” (p. 25). Within this context, we can claim that Gurnah

makes use of the novel genre deliberately to be able to subvert the hierarchy between the powerful and the powerless in the atmosphere of carnivalesque and dialogue created by migration and mobility. In this atmosphere each voice is kneaded thoroughly with one another and the author is also part of the dialogue, not the governor of it. Bakhtin (1999) writes the following concerning the voices in *Crime and Punishment* in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* to situate the decenteredness of dialogue:

*These voices are not self-enclosed or deaf to one another. They hear each other constantly, call back and forth to each other, and outside this dialogue of "conflicting truths" not a single essential act is realized, nor a single essential thought of the major characters.(p. 86)*

Africa, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa, is a geographically, politically and culturally active location and the intermingling of stories and voices is inevitable. Yet, what makes it difficult for us to trace these interminglings is the lack of written culture until the colonial ages. As Prinsloo (2013) also puts it, Africans are regarded as "primarily members of oral cultures" (p. 249). Africa's passage into the written form becomes possible with the coming of outsiders, ie. tradesman, religious missionaries etc. Hence, a considerable part of the culture in Africa remains unwritten and unsaved. Therefore, what is known as Africa and its connotations are already fictional. The reason I am emphasizing this point is to show that –though it might be fictional- the idea of Africa resists definition and essentialism. Africa is a fiction with no clear limits and writing. Africa metaphorically means hearing Africa palimpsestically. Though it may be thought that English is the language of the colonizer and writing is alien to Africa, the case is different. Writing animates the African spirit and allows us to see how Africa –known as the third world or black land- unites with the rest of the world while retaining its stories, habits, words and religion.

For Gurnah, then, writing Africa means releasing it from conviction to nationalist ideals and racialization of Islam. Gurnah show us that Islam is in no way the property of Arabic civilization. To Mirmotahari (2011), the effect of Arabs and Arabization on the Western part of Africa is obvious and "the Maghreb continues to be described as non-African because of the predominant language spoken there (Arabic) as well the ubiquity of Islam, from the eastern shores of the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea" (p. 8). Therefore, it can be claimed that now that Sub-Saharan Africa is not worth of representation and insertion into world history, it is the novelists springing from these genuine African lands who can

deconstruct the literal and metaphorical barrier of Sahara and represent it. Novelists like Gurnah can be said to be deconstructing these ideological boundaries of Eastern Africa and construct a genuine African identity that is not shaped by external factors but one that shapes and dialogizes itself. Like all the other labels such as gender and nation used to define people, Eastern Africa's isolation from world history due to being Muslim is indisputably discursive. For instance, Ahmed S. Bangura (2000) in the preface to his book *Islam and the West African Novel: The Politics of Representation* gives the example of Sembene Ousmane in whose works Islam is "a fatalistic religion, an opiate of the people, the explanation for the backwardness of African countries with a majority Muslim population" (p.vii).

Based On Edward Said's premises in *Orientalism*, Hourani (1991) also states that

*...orientalists have misunderstood the Orient, and in particular the Muslim Orient, out of prejudice or because they have tried to interpret it in terms of the wrong categories; and that their work has been too closely linked with the political interests of their countries.*  
(p. 63)

Fed up with the discourses of colonialism and nationalism, Gurnah sees Islam as a way out through which he can save his characters from an Arabized Islam and Westernized Christianity. The collocations 'Arabized Islam' and 'Westernized Christianity' are imbued with political undertones and indicates the polarization and politicization of two world religions. As opposed to this, Gurnah and the polyphonic structures of his novels interweave cultures and religions together and subvert the anti-Islamist discourse led by colonization.

Although the stance of various African writers like Soyinka towards Islam is hostile and they are after creating an African identity that is refined from Arabness and Islam, it should be kept in mind that most of the time hostility against Islam stems from the colonialism's bias against Islam, since Islam strongly opposes exploitation of the weak. Even more importantly, the authenticity of the Islamic faith in Africa has even been an issue, since Islam might have intermingled with indigenous cultures, rites and beliefs and become syncretic. Even though such a mixture or interaction might have taken place, it is inevitable and does not alter the status of Islam in the region as a world religion that aims at fostering peace and brotherhood. Bangura (2000) makes this situation more explicit by saying

*The view that Muslims in black Africa are particularly given to syncretic religious practices and that the Africans' conversion to Islam is superficial and incomplete are ideas that were developed in the politically motivated colonial scholarship on Islam. Recent scholarship on the subject has proved that such views are at best highly simplistic and condescending. (p. 31)*

Synthesizing the critical views on Islam, I arrive at the conclusion that Islam as an image has been distorted politically by the holders of colonial power. It has been turned into an image that is frightening and associated with terror. However, as an oppressed other, Islam transcends political, historical and cultural boundaries and reasserts itself as an identity marker of those who are in transit, on the crossroads of becoming. At the same time, the fact that Islam is unhomed also implies Islam is un-nationed. Thus, Islam's being unhomed serves a significant dialectical function in this study. Islam as an unhomed concept saves the littoral natives being convicted to Arabness and Islam politically acts as a tool of difference in the new settlement.

Having tried to explicate the extensions of the place of Islam in Gurnah's novels and in the larger context of Sub-Saharan Africa, I should state that there is not a single or monolithic manifestation and representation of Islam in the novels handled in this study. Sometimes Islam interacts or dialogizes with the indigenous culture, sometimes it represents the central culture of the 'other' and sometimes it becomes the tool to resist against colonialism. As Mirmotahari (2011) puts it

*Islam is many things— a propellant of history; a source of allegory; an anchor of identity and difference away from home; an invasive and oppressive system that marginalizes indigenous African customs and cultures; a cause of stagnation, status quo, and dictatorship; as well as a vehicle of temperance, magnanimity in face of adversity, subversion, and political agency. It is crucial, then, to allow the texts to "speak" as much as possible, to offer their own testimonies about Islam. I should be clear here that when I say that one ought to let the novels "speak," I am not making a naïve appeal to interpretive objectivity. A text will never speak for itself because it will always be lumbered by a critic's ideological baggage. Rather, I am insisting that readers recognize a novel's form, a repository of dissonant narratives, histories, and voices, which cannot sustain any absolute reading. (p.14)*

Based on Mirmotahari's approach to Islam in the *East African Novel* (2011), we can see that in Gurnah's novels at stake, Islam emerges as a power that is more than a religion. It permeates every level of identity and culture and shapes the collective consciousness of its people. As will be reiterated frequently throughout the study, Islam emerges as a factor that defines one's identity vis-a-vis the changing of the spirit of the time. Islam teaches its people how to behave, how to adjust their manners in the face of wars, cultural

encounters and displacement. Perhaps, this lies at the background as to why Gurnah makes use of Islam “to mobilise the umma as a discrepant idiom of political community in the face of a common ‘other’, the West” (Mandaville, 2001, p. 3) to create and narrate identities that “defy assimilation into conventional political discourses and practices... and challenge conventional modes of interpreting the world within specific territories” (Mandaville, 2001, p. 3). Therefore, the existence of Islam in Gurnah’s novels are closely kneaded with colonial encounters and diaspora and they neither participate in the Muslim community in general nor belong to the alien spaces. Even, it is possible to say that Islam stands as a counter-discourse to the enlightenment ideals of the West that segregates people under categories such as race, gender and ethnicity.

Even though the theoretical framework of this thesis seems to be the analysis of Islam as a cross-boundary phenomenon, religion and Islam are not generally directly mentioned in discussions of postcolonial phenomena, though they hold an important place in defining who one is. Therefore, I aim to analyse how the author deals with these subject matters in a complex social web of contingent notions, such as identity, homeland, religion, nation and race in relation to the author’s and his protagonists’ encounter with diverse forms of cultures, beliefs and traditions.

Therefore, as the writer does not view Islam just like a radical Islamist does or as he is not a devout Muslim trying to disseminate the teachings of religion through his novels, Islam in Gurnah’s novels require a broader framework. This framework is indeed quite complicated to uncover, considering the geography that is being talked about. First of all, the location where the writer grew up until his teenage years is the ocean border, where we cannot talk about a cultural, traditional and religious uniformity. Literally, it might be a place where people with various identities intermingle; however, metaphorically thinking it is a place where there is trade and various kinds of social interactions among Jews, Christians, Arabs and Europeans. Thus, with this in mind, understanding the place of Islam in such an atmosphere requires a dialogic mindset through which we can understand how religion effected and itself got affected by the surrounding factors.

I also aim to deal with religion as part of social, political and cultural phenomena, rather than a practice that belongs to the spiritual realm. In the words of one another author,

Omari H. Kokole (1984), who sees Islam in the postcolonial period as “having a radicalizing effect since it was mobilized as an ideology against the status quo” states that “Islam has become part of those movements advocating a process of de-westernization and a return to indigenous cultures” (p. 3). To support this point and understand and explain better the existence of Islam in the continent, I will quote Bosworth Smith’s words which explain the influence of Islam on Black Africans: “Christian travelers, with every wish to think otherwise, have remarked that the Negro who accepts Muhammadanism acquires at once a sense of the dignity of human nature not commonly found even among those who have been brought to accept Christianity” (as cited in Ellis, 1911, p. 108).

If we return back to Islam and Gurnah, we have to recall that Gurnah left his homeland before he was twenty and his experience in writing started while he was in England, in one sense as an exile. This brings into focus two main aspects regarding Africa, Islam and memory. Firstly, the Africa he left had already been culturally devastated by colonialism. Therefore, it becomes almost impossible to talk of a native land the author belonged to before going on an exile. Secondly, he writes from imagination, from memory. Every fiction is a by-product of imagination and creativity and the Islam he knows is not a lived experience but a narration. Therefore, Gurnah’s fiction and effort to re-locate Islamic-African identity embody several question marks, as what we have is a reflection of the imagination as much as the memory allows. Gurnah’s characters “re-write, re-invent or re-member their past, whether through nostalgic tales or scraps from notebooks” and “are occupied in creating their own ‘imaginaries’, in piecing together integrated identity narratives of themselves to compensate for the deficient and fragmentary sense of self they experience as diasporic subjects” (Sell, 2012, p. 14).

The discussion of Islam in Gurnah’s novels can be said to be part of a larger context than postcoloniality. For instance, *Paradise* narrates a time when the European colonization had not yet begun. However, here arises the question as to whether East Africa had a truly unspoiled identity before the arrival of Europeans. In this precolonial period, there was the inevitable effect of Arabic culture that permeated throughout Africa. In post-colonial debates, particularly ones regarding identity and selfhood, there stands a point of departure from the native identity when the colonizer sets in. Still, “it is particularly important to examine authors from the subjugated Muslim community because, to repeat

Liz Stanley's acerbic feminist critique of the poststructuralists' death of the author thesis in a new context: 'you want to claim a self, to speak your oppression, to name oppressors' (Chambers, 2011, p. 16). In this context, Gurnah approaches Islam as a crucial component of his writing, since it is so much embedded in his characters' identity, culture and presence. The following words which exemplify how Islam is discursively negated and subjugated by the West seem apt in this respect.

*The term Islam as it is used today seems to mean one simple thing, but in fact is part fiction, part ideological label, part minimal designation of a religion called Islam. Today Islam is peculiarly traumatic news in the West. During the past few years, especially since events in Iran caught European and American attention so strongly, the media have therefore covered Islam: they have portrayed it, characterized it, analysed it, given instant courses on it, and consequently they have made it known. But this coverage is misleadingly full, and a great deal in this energetic coverage is based on far from objective material. In many instances Islam has licensed not only patent inaccuracy, but also expressions of unrestrained ethnocentrism, cultural, and even racial hatred, deep yet paradoxically free-floating hostility. (Said, 1997, p. 2)*

On the other hand, mentioning the multifacetedness of the issue of religion in Africa, Kokole (1984) maintains that "Islam was also a source of various ideas on how to combat colonialism and racism as well as the question of freedom from political association with Europe" (p. 7). Nevertheless, the place of religion in particularly the Eastern part of the continent was in constant flux, it was not always the means of social utopia native people had been dreaming of. Regarding this, Constantin (1993) states thus:

*Until the mid-nineteenth century, Islam was closely identified with Arab domination on the East African coast, which had resulted in kind of cultural hegemony. Islam was the ideology of the slave owners, and the attendant legal stratification (which was not restricted to a simple two tier-system submitting African slaves to Arab masters) resulted in a contradiction: because Islam was a decisive constituent of respectability(heshima), access to it was limited to the social elites(i.e. Arabs), whereas ordinary people living in the hinterland and slaves) were bound to the lower status of washenzi (savages) and consequently denied access to the sophisticated values of the world of Allah. Only a few washenzi, for various reasons, were educated in the rudiments of Islam, a process which contributed to the emergence of an intermediate group, which while attempting to separate from its African roots, was not admitted into Arab society. (pp.39-40)*

Constantin (1993) also maintains that these "Arab-Islamic values are still highly respected among traditional coastal peoples, but also among urban marginal groups who are disappointed with materialist Western and Marxist ideologies" (p. 40). Therefore, "a complex array of Muslim identities" emerge, whose boundaries cannot be drawn in a clear way (p. 40).

Besides the variety of religious identities even within the same religion, we have yet another fact concerning linguistic richness and diversity, making it somehow difficult to analyze culture from a single perspective. Despite the existence of literary works written in Skwahili, one of the native languages of the region and Gurnah's native tongue, Gurnah writes in English. This could bring into mind a question of originality and criticism may arise as to how we can locate the place of Islam from an author's writing who is an exile, does not write in the mother tongue but in the language of the colonizer, and writes not from within but as an outsider or a voyeur. Hence, the questions as to whether the identities he depicts have credibility and whether his writings can be seen as semi-historical documents despite their double fictionality arise. Though the answer to these questions is quite compelling and the text is just a text when not read, my personal stance is that works of fiction always carry parallelism to existent structures. Nevertheless, understanding these parallelisms require thorough analysis together with an extensive investigation into history. Yet, as Tina Steiner (2009) argues, Gurnah foregrounds "particular strategies of cultural translation which enable his migrant characters, even if only tentatively and never completely, to find pockets of connection, of new relationships that provide some sense of acceptance and stability" through writing in English (p. 4). As she further adds, "the ability to speak across languages and cultures questions notions of authentic original culture and identity and underscores the continuous (self-)translation and negotiation of identity in the face of shifting linguistic, cultural and geographical boundaries" (2009, p. 6).

Taking all these into consideration, this thesis humbly aspires to contribute to the discussion of Islam in one of African Anglophone writers. The issue of subjectivity, identity, diaspora and the native culture have been quite often discussed in the context of post-colonialism. Nevertheless, Islam as a cultural and political element that hinges upon identity has not been much investigated. With this purpose in mind, I wanted to analyse complex web of relations between transnationalism, culture, hegemony, identity, self-hood and language in relation to Islam in the novels I have chosen.

Mirmotahari (2011) discussed the issue of canons and national literatures in an interview he conducted with Gurnah in 2005 and he places Gurnah's ideas and words in his book and he writes "He (Gurnah) stated that there is no unifying principle around which a

distinctly East African or Eastern African literature could cohere, as attention to the formal and thematic differences between Ngugi and Gurnah's novels underscores" (p. 5). There is yet another important point Gurnah adds in the interview by saying: "The construction of the African canon itself was accomplished outside of Africa in North American, French and British universities" (as cited in Mirmotahari, 2011, p. 5).

Adding to this line of thought and multifacetedness of East African literature, Mirmotahari (2011) thinks the literature of the region "inhabits a distinct cultural map" by saying "The specificity of the Eastern African coast stems from more than Islam, as much of West and Central Africa, too, are Muslim. The region's proximity to Asia has spawned idiosyncratic identities, histories, conflicts and cultural products that cannot be found elsewhere on the continent" (p. 5). Indeed, Maghreb, which is the Northern part of Africa and which literally means the West of the Arab world, is more closely related to the Arab world and therefore the religious heritage it has. It is even in one sense the African extension of the Arab world. Thus, Islam in particularly these parts of Africa may be perceived as having political aspects. For an African having national feelings inside, Islam may signify Arabness and the passage of Arab influence to the region by means of religion. Yet, the danger may lie in the fact that while the authors may evade from this perceived Arabness in their writings, they may erroneously end up with the mimicry of the colonizer. This is also quite related to the fact that the cultural zones in East Africa is not haphazard; they are mostly the result of a complex interaction of trade, politics the European colonization and religion. Mazrui (1985) discusses how Islam interacted with these variables throughout the continent in his article "Religion and Political Culture in Africa" by saying:

*In the continent as a whole the distribution of Islam has taken the shape of an inverted crescent. Islam is strongest in North Africa, West Africa along the bulge of the continent, and in Eastern Africa including the Horn of the continent. Islam in the middle of the continent is relatively weak, and in Southern Africa it is very thin indeed. The nature of the European impact on Africa had something to do with the distribution of Islam. The spread of Islam in Eastern and Southern Africa, for example, was effectively arrested by the consequences of European colonization. If Islam spread north of the Sahara through conquest, so did Christianity spread south of the Sahara by the same means. If north of the Sahara Islam spread by the sword, south of the Sahara Christianity spread by the gun. (p. 818)*

Seeing that European colonization somehow controlled the spreading and effect of religion in the continent, it becomes hard to assert that religion in Africa and particularly East Africa was free from any external interference. The vast geography combined with the diversity of political, religious and governmental elements constitutes a landscape that challenges a perspective that is monolithic, explaining why each time we have to add a predicate-such as “West”, “Sub-saharan”- to the word Africa. Yet, from a historical perspective, even though the colonial rule began at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there were previous efforts by Europeans to harm the Islamic texture in the region. As Lapidus (2002) puts it, “European involvement in Africa goes back to the fifteenth century” and this involvement had the aim of “breaking the monopoly of Muslims” and “convert local people to Christianity” (p. 438).

Given that the topography, lifestyles and religions were quite diverse in the region, there arises the question as to whether the authors writing in the English language can truly reflect the African heritage while trying to conform to the rules of a non-native language. Even though a post-modernist stance would well appreciate or accept parodically the cultural and stylistic variety in this kind of literatures, one thing evident in African literature is the connection of authors to their cultural heritage and past.

The basis of my argument regarding the representation of Islam in Gurnah’s novels will be that Islam acts as a means of defense against the European Christianity. However, it is not pure and unspoiled. As mentioned before, Islam has a political aspect in Gurnah’s novels and gives ontological strength to the characters. Yet, within the broader spectrum of colonization and the dissolution or collapse of national and religious boundaries, Islam in Gurnah’s novels acquire a new identity which is mostly focused on arranging the social sphere and is an indispensable part of collective identity. Hence, religion in Gurnah’s novels is mostly handled as a socio-political element, rather than an individual phenomenon. Indeed, it should also be kept in mind that Islam is discursively established by the West as a cultural institutional phenomenon that gives the Orient a solid identity. Yet, while on the Western side Islam has such a notorious fame, in both Africa and Gurnah’s novels it is sometimes either the religion of Arabs that has acted as another means of colonization or it is sometimes the indigenous religion of Africans.

## Overall Objectives

The primary concern of this thesis is that Islam in Africa is not a monolithic entity and rather it has been a hybridized form of native African culture, Arabic influence, littoral topography, trade and cultural affairs within the course of history, colonization and the European hegemony. The boundaries of Afro-Islamic identities are somehow blurred and in the formation of this identity, cultural and political impacts are intact, all of which require a thorough analysis. To corroborate these arguments, this study will attempt to trace how Islam as a religion and political element evolved within the region and what its final destination has been in the face of European colonization, diaspora and blurred cultural, national and political identities. Therefore, the further concern of this thesis will be to analyse Islam in Gurnah's *The Last Gift, By The Sea and Desertion* as a cross-boundary and trans-national concept.

Besides being affected by indigenous African religions or pagan practices, Islam's contact with Christianity even before the period of colonization is also significant. Taking into consideration that the vast geography does not allow a centred scaffold for the analysis of religion, the practices and the experience of Islam may vary from region to region. Even though this may have some political undertones such as depicting Africa still in a state of primitiveness, we cannot evade from the fact that Islam in Africa is different from the one that is in Saudi Arabia, lacking aspects such as jihad, a quest to struggle merely for the sake of religion. Another aspect regarding the issue is that Islam and Africa, in the European gaze, are the means through which people living there can be marginalized and subjugated as they are not 'Christian' and 'European'.

To show this, the thesis will attempt at conducting a critical analysis in the three novels based on the quests of protagonists to exist in a realm where they are metaphorically muted and how they define their existence and selves through religion and Africanness in the face of the European colonization. Besides, it will also track how the colonizer unconsciously mimics and begins to resemble the colonized, thereby showing that binaries created upon artificial oppositions begin to dissolve and become distorted. And also, depending on this, it will try to show how the project of European colonization drifts into vanity as it cannot eradicate and wipe out other identities but instead even turn into a self-annihilating project.

Secondly, the thesis will handle heteroglossia or varied speechness in the novels to show how the protagonists evaluate, conceptualize and experience the world within the context of a fluid relationship with the Christian-European colonist. As Bakhtin (1981) believes that novel feeds on “the coexistence and conflict of multiple languages and voices –i.e. the speaker, the author, the narrator- and as he defines heteroglossia as “another’s speech in another’s language, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way” (p. 324). To prove these arguments of hybridity, ambivalence and heteroglossia (multi-voicedness/speechedness), the languages used by the characters will be studied closely in order to compare and contrast these languages both within the same novel and the selected ones.

Moreover, this thesis will be a critical study on Islam’s relation with the social and critical variables of the era, trying to shed light on what place religion had in the ‘becoming’ and subjecthood of Africans in the novels and in the same vein, the thesis will try to understand how the colonizer may abuse the phenomenon of religion with the purpose of asserting superiority over the colonized.

#### Research Methods

To explain and better analyse how religion interacts with the spirit of the time, Bhabha’s and Bakhtin’s theories supporting the existence of multi-layered and multi-faceted interactions will be used. This is why my research methods will be based on the textual analysis of the primary sources. Besides, I will try to support my arguments with several secondary sources that deal with the dissolution of Europe as colonization took place and the religion(s) of native people. Moreover, it will consist of, interpreting and comparing/contrasting the primary sources. I will try to reach some hypothetical results to clarify Islam’s position within the dialectics between colonization and decolonization and the newly emerging hybrid culture while I approach critically to the struggles of Africans to sustain their identities amidst a bombardment of influences. In doing this, I will come to and fro between post-colonialism, post-modernism and existentialism. To be able to look at the issue of religion in the novels in a platform of fiction from various possible angles, I will trace a dialectical method of analysis, attempting at an understanding of the causes, effects and prospects of fluid identities. Thus the chosen novels will be analysed in accordance with theoretical findings.

## Limitations and Delimitations of the Research

This thesis aims to show the necessity to trace the perception, reception and representation of Islam in an Anglophone novelist's selected novels, which are *By The Sea*, *Desertion* and *The Last Gift*. It attempts to show the necessity of recognizing the fact that Islam in Africa needs to be analysed particularly in two ways. Firstly, it should be taken into account as an extension of Arab influence on the continent and hence turns into a means for the Arab world to culturally exploit the continent. Secondly, the purpose beneath unfolding the diverse layers regarding the issue of religion aims to contribute to the complex course of events that gained another dimension with the 9/11 and tries to seek answer to the question as to what extent religion can be discursively instrumentalized as a means of terror and then be turned into or made evolved into a constituent of negative, namely terrorist identity. Therefore, while seeking answers to these questions, the thesis will uncover hostilities against and intimacies towards the religion and how it has evolved to be an indispensable part of world's political agenda. It attempts to find reasonable explanations for these problems by approaching critically using the hybridity of Bhabha and heteroglossia of Bakhtin in the selected novels.

Yet, the major limitation of this comparative/contrastive study is surely the requirement to restrict the number of Gurnah's novels. Though there are surely many other novelists and countless novels dealing with Islam and the encounter between Islam and the West, the scope of this thesis would not suffice to mention of them all. Moreover, so as not to get distracted and have a focused and coherent argument, I have chosen to work on the three novels by the same author in which religion in East Africa has been handled in a way to support my claims.

A second limitation is that the vast geography of the continent hosts so innumerable cultural religious and political varieties that the evolution of religion and its encounter with the West does not proceed in a way that is generalizable. Though this may pose some challenges for my thesis, the reason why I decided to focus on East Africa is that its contact with the West has been considerably different from other regions of the continent and it has been more African in terms of its identity, language and politics than either Northern or West Africa.

## Significance

Consideration of religious approaches is important for any society and its prosperity. Recent incidents have contributed to the association of Muslims with terrorism and Islam as a religion of violence. Moreover, the representation of Islam and Muslims has become critical at the contemporary stage. The reason behind this hostility against Islam in the world rests on the negativities imposed on Muslims with terrorist attacks in different parts of Western regions.

This thesis is a product of infinite clashes among various social phenomena and ideas of thinkers like Bhabha and Bakhtin. The thesis may seem to be carrying traces of previous works or ideas may convey similarity to those of critics. However, this thesis synthesizes all those thoughts and adds novel discussions and ideas to the general framework. Hence, this thesis may be good guide for readers to make them aware of Islam's functionality in the dissolution of the West and Western binaries in the process of colonization. The characters in the selected novels either lean their backs on Islam as the main constituent of their identity or they may sometimes even oppose it and somewhat converge towards Christianity since they see Islam as closely bound up with Arab culture. This case also brings into mind the question of how much of our identities are adopted and how much of our identities are imposed? Besides, the question of up to what extent history shapes our identities is another issue. While seeking answers to these questions, this thesis will enable readers to perceive diverse aspects of the issue of religion and how the individuals either utilize it towards their existential quests or evade from it. This study suggests that representation of Islam in Gurnah's novels is mostly an existential issue and Islam is in fact neither an extension of Arab culture nor a hedgehog of some different religions. Though these latter claims may have some validity, they don't have much strategical importance for the general argument of this thesis.

Moreover, the study suggests that phenomena such as nation and religion are the by-products of discourse and the meaning discourse confers upon them may be more powerful than their inherent and intrinsic meanings. The readers of this thesis will realize that this kind of notions are not restricted to closed systems of thought that do not accept any change. Rather, they are reformed and recreated through discourse, each time

acquiring new meanings. Thence, this thesis will arrive at the conclusion that the so-called “Muslim identity” is not stable but fluid and prone to change.

This thesis also intends to negotiate the concept of religion and identity among various social circles in Turkey. As far as I have reviewed, there are not many studies in Turkey that deal with what fluidities ‘Islamic identity’ has undergone in relation to the changing world and the global perception against Islam as a religion of terrorism.

Besides, the perception of secularity in Turkey may imply hostility against Islam and for the secularists Islam may imply backwardness and in their minds it is equated and associated with radical terrorist groups known worldwide such as El-Qaida and Hezbollah. Even though nationalism has played a strong role for people in Turkey to define their identities, religion as a means of representation is as complex and multi-faceted as in East Africa. The current government’s religious-liberationist policies have surely contributed to the redefinition and re-making of the concept of religion in Turkey. Yet, we still have to realize that religion emerges a powerful concept in defining politics, economics, foreign trade, diplomacy and international relations of a given region each time differently and in unprecedented ways. In an era in which the Western world still does not want to give up its dualistic way of thinking and tries to dominate and exploit nations and regions however it likes, Islam will protect its ever-lasting place in the discussions of countries’, people’s and nations’ ontological quests.

In a broader perspective, this study is significant as it will indicate the interactions of Islam with the Western discourse and the impacts of cross-boundary encounters on British Muslims and other Muslims as well. Besides, the study will also try to find out the answer to how history is interrelated with identity and how the space in our minds rather than the physical space contributes to our being.

#### Definition of terms

Alterity: The word literally means being other or different. However, it is not used interchangeably with the word ‘other’ and it implies an ‘other’ that has been created by the imperial consciousness. However, the word alterity gives the colonial other an opportunity to establish dialogue with the imperial/colonial power, as -unlike otherness-

alterity focuses on apartness rather than opposition and the acceptance of difference. If the author can truly appreciate this difference, then it means that the precondition of dialogue has taken place.

Ambivalence: Though the term first emerged in psychoanalytic and implies coming back and forth between two options or attraction towards or repulsion from something or someone. To Young (1995), "In making ambivalence the constitutive heart of his analyses, Bhabha has in effect performed a political reversal at a conceptual level in which the periphery...has become the equivocal, indefinite, indeterminate ambivalence that characterizes the centre" (p. 153). Ambivalence is a heavy blow in Western dualistic history which starts with the Cartesian "I think; therefore, I am". So how can this thinking subject perceive the other or the other's mind? This becomes a seminal question in post-colonial thought. Thence, ambivalence as a concept or theory is a step forward in blurring the stark opposition between the binaries. Instead of compliant subjects, ambivalence creates subjects that simply mock the colonizer, thereby disrupting his authority.

Appropriation: In line with the discussions of ambivalence, hybridity and alterity, appropriation refers to the taking over of modes of thought and linguistic patterns by the colonial society, through which it can articulate its social, political and cultural identity. If we remember Spivak's subaltern and take into consideration that the subaltern cannot be heard through his/her native language, then using the colonizer's language and modes of thought to assert identity becomes meaningful. Though appropriation may include various cultural aspects, it is mostly related to speech and language in order for the colonized subject to integrate his/her experience into dominant discourses.

Creolization: Creolization is another term that describes a newly formed society that has been formed by European colonialism. These societies are interracial and intermixed. These intermixed and ethnically diverse societies are new societies with new identities.

Dialogic Principle/Dialogue: Bakhtin's principle of dialogue emerges as a term that is opposed to monologism that characterizes traditional writing. The author dominates the whole field in monologism and shapes all consciousness according to his desire and may omit whatever is deemed unnecessary. However, the dialogic principle allows multiple

consciousnesses, beliefs, ways of thought and life coexist in the same text. While monologism implies being the ultimate, dialogism allows varieties and diversities to exist and constitutes an open system that can renew itself and re-exist. The importance of the dialogic principle for the post-colonial context is that it gives voice to minorities and “others”. Furthermore, as it makes minorities heard, it opens space for them for actualizing and realizing their identities.

**Diaspora:** Diaspora is by definition moving people from their homelands and it is so much typical of colonization. Diaspora is an important term for particularly in the case of East Africa as most slaves there were sold to various colonies. The issue of diaspora involves a complicated set of cultural, social and economic issues. Though slavery was made illegal at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it left its place to a synonymous practice called indentured labor and colonized people had to undergo diasporas to meet the labor requirement of huge plantations.

**Hybridity:** While ambivalence refers to the constant repulsion and attraction among two opposing poles, hybridity may be understood as the colonizer’s getting closer or resembling the colonized. Ambivalence and hybridity taken together, the course of the colonial discourse becomes metaphorically upside down due to these two. Hybridity paves way for the destabilization of the power of the colonizer and the colonized subject is not the complicit, passive being anymore.

**Heteroglossia:** This implies the merging or coming together of diverse voices and consciousness to form a text. Novel as a form arranges differences in such a way that they both preserve their self-hood and interact with one another at the same time. The author’s function in composing the novel is bringing together these many voices in one platform in which the power does not lay at a fixed point but rather oscillates and the doors of language gets opened to voices of difference.

**Othering:** Coined by Spivak, this term denotes the process in which the imperial subject creates its “others”. The subject produces and asserts itself as the superior and the owner of empire through this process. However, to Spivak, “othering is a dialectical process because the colonizing Other is established at the same time as its colonized others are produced as subjects (as cited in Aschcroft et al. 2003, p. 167).

**Palimpsest:** Palimpsest was a kind of parchment. Writing on this kind of parchment would only be possible after erasing what had previously been written. When applied to post-colonial thought, palimpsest rejects monologue and instead paves the way for dialogue in which words, ideas and thoughts are interweaved to one another, each time creating subtle and different meanings. One another striking feature of the term is that it emphasizes the power of past while talking about identity. No identity is totally new; it emerges as the totality of inscriptions made on the self.

**Liminality:** This word literally means threshold and in post-colonial theory, it refers to the in-between space where changes may take place. In one sense, it is a transcultural space where there are constant cultural interactions. Bhabha states that “this interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy”. The liminal space also acts as an equilibrium and eliminates distinctions such as black and white or the powerful and the weak. Liminal space makes existence meaningful through discontinuities and differences.

**Subaltern:** The term literally connotes inferiority and in the political science it refers to groups in society who have to abide by the rule of the hegemony. In other words, the subaltern is a group that is comprised by politically immobile people as they are constantly oppressed and suppressed. Spivak adapted the term for postcolonial discussions. To Spivak, rather than an essentialist approach towards these people, their differences should be appreciated. Indeed, in the postcolonial discourse, through appropriation the ideological representation of subaltern diminishes in power and as the binary of ruling empire and the marginal subaltern is deconstructed, subaltern assumes a new identity and therefore can speak.

**Polyphony:** The term literally means multiple voices. It implies that a work contains many voices and cannot be reduced into a single voice. Moreover, the existence of the author’s own voice cannot suppress the existence of polyphony in a text. Each voice is unique and contributes to the narrative. Polyphony also enriches the text in such a way that it opens the authority of the text not to one single person but multiple voices and consciousnesses.

## Literature Review

Islam as a marker of identity has attracted the attention of the academic world even more widely since the 9/11 and Islamophobia has been a stronger discourse since then. There are surely so many dimensions of the issue of being a Muslim in the modern world ranging from political, social to cultural and economic aspects. The main point reiterated in this thesis is that despite the existence of Islamophobia in the western world and the fact that it has been associated with the back-ward-uncivilized Arab world and terrorism, Gurnah re-handles Islam on a broader platform and shows that Islam is a dialogic religion that has interacted hugely with the cultural and historical reality of the East African littoral. As a homeless religion, Islam transcends the boundaries of the national state and allows Gurnah's characters to reassert themselves and their histories in other spaces.

While preparing this study, there were some studies that contributed significantly to the formation of my discussions. Of these, *Islam in the Eastern African Novel* by Emad Mirmotahari is a comprehensive study discussing the place of Islam in the East African context in some of Abdulrazak Gurnah, Nuruddin Farah and M. G. Vassanji's novels. He emphasizes that Islam in these author's novels form a central and cultural framework and therefore the critic needs to approach these literary works beyond the lenses of national and continental paradigms. Taking into consideration the vast geography of the East African coast and the commercial and cultural transactions taking place there, Mirmotahari discusses that the advent of Islam in the region contributed to the emergence of a rich cultural and literary heritage, as opposed to the widespread colonialist opinion that Islam acted as a means for Arabs to exploit the African lands. Despite having benefited considerably from Mirmotahari's discussions, I focused on Gurnah and his three novels in my study. What's more, I handled Islam as a trans-national religion which acted as a means of difference for Gurnah's characters to assert their subjectivities.

Another important study that led me throughout my study was "Writing "Wider Worlds": The Role of Relation in Abdulrazak Gurnah's Fiction Author(s)" by Tina Steiner (2010). The most striking aspect of this study was that it helped me to re-contextualize the idea of nationalism in Gurnah's novels. Steiner (2010) sees nationalism as a backdrop against the heterogeneity of the East African coastal regions and emphasizes that Gurnah establishes various relations at trans-historical and temporal settings avoiding ethnic and

national boundaries as markers of identity. Tina Steiner's discussions backed up mine in that I also defended throughout my thesis that Gurnah is a dialogic writer and he subverts the monolithic and eurocentric assumptions of identity. Though Tina Steiner does not mainly focus on Islam or religion as instruments ensuring relation, her emphasis on Gurnah as an author who tries to redefine Africa and African identity far from either Western subjugatory or African nationalist rhetoric was quite leading for the general body of my work. I synthesized her opinions with Bakhtin's dialogism and Bhabha's unfixity to come up with some new ideas.

Particularly after Gurnah took the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2021, there was a considerable media coverage of him and his writings attracted more attention in the academic circles and postcolonial studies. There have been countless studies analyzing Gurnah's novels from various angles such as gender, identity, migration, narration, displacement and exile. Most of the studies on Gurnah are ones conducted within a postcolonial framework. Marco Neil Ruberto (2009) wrote a doctoral thesis named "Itinerant Narratives: Travel, Identity and Literary Form in Abdulrazak Gurnah's Fiction" in which he analyzes Gurnah's oeuvre within the context of travel and identity. He discusses how the experience of exile, the recent history of East Africa and the quest for African nationalism inform Gurnah's novels. Ruberto (2009) also analyzes Gurnah's oeuvre in terms of narrative qualities. There are not direct links between this study and mine, since I focus on religion as an identity marker that transgresses spatial boundaries. Still, this study questions the fixity of notions such as history and identity, which I also have tried to analyze. However, my claim is that Islam is strategically used by Gurnah to deconstruct the robustness of these colonial terms such as race and identity. Ruberto (2009) also focuses on the theme of subject formation in dislocated people and defends that dislocation is not necessarily a cause of identity loss. Instead, travel and dislocation allows the subject to construct new identities. I also have parallel claims with Ruberto in that Gurnah's characters are liminal ones that are in constant transit. Islam is not the main focus of Ruberto's thesis and wherever he mentions of Islam, he sees it mainly as a cultural impact on East African littoral, whereas I handled Islam as a means which helped Gurnah's characters to assert their difference in a hostile environment that characterizes itself with Christianity.

Another doctoral thesis written on Gurnah's works is *Hospitality, Multiculturalism And Narrative Agency In Abdulrazak Gurnah's By The Sea, The Last Gift And Gravel Heart* by Laya Soleymanzadeh (2021). In this thesis Soleymanzadeh analyzes the concepts of hospitality and multiculturalism in the three novels. She defends the existence of asymmetric power relations in multicultural settings and therefore the fixity of identities and narrative agency cannot be talked of. She also maintains that dominant and powerful discourses create stereotypes and hinder the diasporic people's ability to make their stories be heard. Yet, so long as they have narrative agency, they can subvert their positions as subalterns and re-negotiate their identities. Soleymanzadeh's study differs from mine in context, focus and scope; however, the common aspect of her study with mine is that the diasporic identities cannot be fixed and these people have the capacity to assert their identities in hospitable places and additionally, she resists the idea of a homeland as the determiner of identity.

One another study that broadened my horizons as regards the relation between identity and diaspora within the context of postcolonial studies was Jopi Nyman's *Home, Identity, and Mobility in Contemporary Diasporic Fiction* (2009). In this book, Nyman (2009) discusses the diaspora in contemporary diasporic fiction. Besides exposing and elaborating on the notion of home and how it is reconstructed in an era of incessant transnational mobility, this book brings together various discussions as to how migrants construct their identities in other spaces. The book's main focus is on how these transnational migrant identities subvert and buttress the formerly monolithic and uniform discourses on identity and includes discussions on various authors such as Jamal Mahjoub, Ana Castillo, Benjamin Zephaniah and Diana Abu-Jaber. There is also a chapter entitled " 'Home', and Diaspora in the Refugee Novels by Benjamin Zephaniah, Abdulrazak Gurnah, and Caryl Phillips". In this particular chapter, the author defends the possibility of establishing home in other spaces, which supports my thesis that the space where one is born is not necessarily a marker of his/her identity. The idea of a refugee is a political construct that has negative connotations and refugees are thought to change their homes with no particular and clear reasons. Considered as illegal immigrants, refugees are totally subjugated and marginalized. Despite these considerations, Nyman

emphasizes the liminality of these identities and adds that these people have shared histories and memories rather than shared nationalist myths. Nyman's discussions in this context shed further light on my study. Yet, his analyses focus on refugee identity and diaspora and does not handle Islam as a factor that facilitates the characters' liminal positions. What is more, I handled Islam as a transnational and therefore homeless religion which liberates identity from eurocentric paradigms.

There are many other studies, papers and doctoral theses written on Gurnah's oeuvre and they deal with Gurnah's writings mostly through postcolonial theories and analyze Gurnah's characters as unhomed and liminal ones. Although each one of them has differing perspectives towards Gurnah's oeuvre, I did not come across any study that particularly deals with the place of religion in these works. Islam is an indispensable element of Gurnah's writings; yet, most critics approach Islam as a cultural component of East African life. Some argue that Islam is a religion of peace and brotherhood and therefore brought social stability to the land, while some others argue that it is an extension of Arab dominance on the land. However, my claim in this study radically differs from all these arguments in that I consider Islam as a religion of dialogue that enables the subjugated characters' voice be heard and belonging to the community of Islam in the Christian West gives these people a sense of identity and root through which they can recuperate their being.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

*It is as if everything would be all right if we recited one more  
line*

*Before we can take two steps, they captivate us*

*Thus enslaved we become and are once more fusilladed*

*Indeed everyday from morning till dusk we are fusilladed*

*In all the pieces of land in the world*

*Including Africa (Cemal Süreya/Üvercinka)*

The Turkish modernist poet Cemal Süreya mentions of the detachedness of Africa in his poem quoted above, by saying “including Africa” at the end of each stanza of *Üvercinka*. While referring to this detachedness, he also reiterates the idea that we cannot be a whole without Africa. The word ‘kara’ which is used to refer to ‘land’ also means black in English. Based on this pun, the author addresses the black/Africa in our souls, and without it we would be lacking both in terms our identities, histories and presences.

Most of the time a literary work has an ideological and a political aspect. If we are especially dealing with Africa, then it becomes inevitable that Africa, both as a littoral place and as a vast geography that hosts cultural, religious and political diversities, has much to offer us regarding the political power of literature to convey a message and its function to present the reader with a panoramic vision of voices, ideas and contexts. I had mentioned beforehand that dislocation, and the sense of being taken away from one’s own cultural roots pervade in the African literature on a wide scale. Characters dislocated either in their own land or literally exiled to European countries enrich the texts with a lively and continuous stream of events through which we can construct a better platform

to look into history based on the multi-sided interactions between the centre and the periphery, I and the other, and identity and loss.

Even though displacement as a theme dominates Gurnah's novels and Gurnah writes based on imagination and remembrance, it should be kept in mind that this strengthens the dynamic nature of his novels by ensuring continuity and opening up space for polyphony. If Gurnah were not an exile novelist who tried to represent the identities of his characters in confinement, that is while he was still in Africa and located there, would he still be able to produce such texts embellished with richness of plot and character?

This situation also leads to the emergence of a variety of viewpoints and even though the writer writes from memory and seems to be the central figure or the authority of his writing, the fact is that the author turns into or acts as a narrator whose job is to retell a wide array of events from the view of his characters. This narration is not always bound up with the effects of colonialism on each individual character, as Gurnah is skilful in narrating history as if he was directing a film, unseen in the lines. Chambers (2011) states that "A key feature of the body of what may be controversially termed "Muslim writing" in Britain is that writers are often not overly concerned with (neo)-colonialism and "the West", but rather with establishing connections and filiations which go beyond this' (p. 220).

Based on this, it would be reasonable to claim that Gurnah handles the African heritage in a broader framework than oppression and subjugation. Rather, he is a writer that tells how the characters survive the pathos that history impinges on them. "I drew the curtains with my face turned away, and then stood staring into the sink, trembling uncontrollably, feeble after all, overcome by memories which never seem to dim, overcome with pity for myself and for so many others who had been too feeble after all to resist the puniness and raggedness of our souls"(Gurnah, 2001, p. 193) A quotation from the novel *By The Sea* well explains the connection between history and memory and shows us that Gurnah is not so much preoccupied with how colonialism devastates their culture, language and identity. Instead, in a world in which it is impossible to escape from the entanglement of various voices and none is the authority anymore, everyone speaks his/her language, independent from such grand narratives as colonialism, nationhood, state and independence.

While presenting the reader with multitude forms of voices and languages, Gurnah systematically shows us how the Eurocentric or logocentric patterns of power dissolve and lose their validities in the face of an ambivalent interaction and relationship between two poles. In Gurnah's novels, we have a transnational Indian Ocean and British world. Perhaps, this is the point which makes Gurnah's work much suitable to the discussions of hybridity, mimicry and unhomeliness. Even though the scope of this thesis is confined to the representation of Islam and Muslim identities, a careful and thorough analysis is required as these two terms- Islam and religion- may have other associations and be instrumentalized in unpredictable ways. As Fitzgerald (2011) mentions in *Discourse of Civility and Barbarity*, "religion is a modern invention which authorises and naturalises a form of Euro-American secular nationality. In turn, this supposed position of secular rationality constructs and authorises its "other", religion and religions.(qtd.in Chambers, p. 7). Therefore, in a similar line with Fitzgerald's thought, this thesis tries to find out the transformative aspects of Islam and religion in the post-colonial African and Anglophone discourses. As Gurnah is a writer who is Muslim but not Islamist, which implies that Gurnah belongs to a community that does not abuse religion as a frame of identity to marginalize non-believers, the issue of the representation of religion thus becomes quite a matter of subjectivity, one's own being and a part of culture. Or, in Chamber's (2011) words, Islam is handled by Gurnah not as an element of "civilization" but as an element of "religion" (p. 6). Taking these aspects into consideration, this chapter will focus on a theoretical framework through which I can illustrate the complexity of the presence of Islam in the novels to be analyzed and the meaning of being a Muslim in the colonial and post-colonial settings.

Before elaborating on the theoretical framework of this study, I see benefit in discussing the importance of the 'Rushdie affair', which is significant for how Muslims are perceived in the colonial world. Conflicting views against Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* and particularly the hostile stances of radical Islamists against the book re-created the pervading thought that Muslims are barbaristic, uncivilized and terrorists. Discussing whether the content of the novel was blasphemous or whether all the incidents were orientalist projections exceeds the scope of this thesis. However, one thing was indisputably true. Media treatment of the Rushdie affair, as quoted by Peach and Vertovec (1997), "created or bolstered an image of a homogenous Muslim population which posed a challenge both to

nationalist ideologies of Britishness and the liberal notions surrounding modernity, freedom and human rights” (p. 6). Bhabha (2004) also partly criticizes Rushdie for “opening up a space of discursive contestation that places the authority of the Koran within a perspective of historical and cultural relativism” (p. 323). Yet, Bhabha (2004) evaluates this issue differently and thinking that the reactions against the novel lead to implacable antagonism, he states as regards whether the novel is blasphemy or not by saying

*Blasphemy goes beyond the severance of tradition and replaces its claim to a purity of origins with a poetics of relocation and reinscription. Rushdie repeatedly uses the word ‘blasphemy’ in the migrant sections of the book to indicate a theatrical form of the staging of cross-genre, cross-cultural identities. Blasphemy is not merely a misrepresentation of the sacred by the secular; it is a moment when the subject-matter or the content of a cultural tradition is being overwhelmed, or alienated, in the act of translation. Into the asserted authenticity or continuity of tradition, ‘secular’ blasphemy releases a temporality that reveals the contingencies, even the incommensurabilities, involved in the process of social transformation. (p. 323)*

This thesis concerns itself with Islam as a trans-national religion based on the theories of an eminent postcolonial theorist, Bhabha and the Russian formalist Bakhtin. The reasons why I wanted to form the theoretical basis of my thesis on these theorists can be named as follows. Firstly, there is an intimate interaction between post-colonialism and Islam. The literature that is concerned with Africa and colonialism tries to unravel aspects of colonialism in people’s lives. However, these aspects are not clear-cut and sometimes even blurred as a result of reciprocal exchanges between the binaries of the colonizer and the colonized. Therefore, Bhabha’s theories of unhomeliness, hybridity and mimicry will help to strengthen my framework.

Indeed, there are other postcolonial theorists such as Fanon and Said. Fanon is also much against colonialism and the severe effects it creates. He simply calls for justice and liberty for the colonized and he thinks liberation from the colonizer could be possible if the colonized is firstly liberated spiritually and psychologically. In other words, he defends that colonialism enslaves people’s spirits more than it does their bodies. Edward Said’s writings on colonialism are mostly associated with the cultural aspects of colonialism. Still, Fanon (1963) emphasizes the importance of religion in unifying people against the colonized and gaining their freedom. He says in the *Wretched of the Earth* that “the struggle for national liberty (in the Arab world) has been accompanied by a cultural

phenomenon known by the awakening of Islam” (p. 213). Based on the quotation above, we can say that fanon utilizes religion as a means to empower the colonized.

Secondly, the diversity of practices related to Islam, geographies and identities stirred up in this discourse are multiple and the issues of slavery, racism and interpersonal relations are organized in also diverse ways by religion, while on the other hand this multiplicity of aspects are prone to be molded by colonialism. Therefore, Bakhtin’s theories of carnivalesque, polyphony, heteroglossia and dialogic narration may help to locate Muslim perspectives amongst multiplicity and resist the essentialist, stereotyped Muslim identity. Perhaps, here is the most important contribution of Bakhtin’s theory to my discussion. Along with Bhabha’s theories that are in favour of multiplicity and in-betweenness, Bakhtin’s theories help to deconstruct and essentialized, clear-cut binary of Muslims and non-Muslims. Utilizing Bakhtin’s dialogic approach provides us with a range of languages that appear as they are in natural forms, thereby creating spaces for us to the points of repulsion and attraction.

Despite the claims that postcolonialist discourse and postcolonialist thinkers perpetuate Western epistemology, they can still be utilized as lenses to understand the African heritage. Nevertheless, the Western logocentric secular cultural background of these writers should not pose a hurdle for using their theories to understand Islam in Gurnah’s novels. Citing Benedict Robinson (2007), “in a sense Europe has always refused to treat Islam as a religion at all, preferring to inscribe it into theories of racial, political and cultural difference, and thereby refusing to acknowledge Islam’s own claims to universality while at the same time it is always the same across vast reaches of time and space (p. 5).

### **1.1. Bhabha and Islam: Thinking ‘Beyond the Originary and Initial Subjectivities’**

The process of ‘othering’ is closely interrelated to stereotyping and essentializing identities. In his article “The Other Question: The Stereotype and Colonial Discourse”, Bhabha (1994) writes on how stereotyping is utilized in the colonial discourse in an effort to protect its position and represent itself as the powerful one, while at the same time preserving the discourse that supports its superiority and the inferiority of the colonized. In the article, he states that

*An important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of 'fixity' in the ideological construction of otherness. Fixity, as the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition. (1994, p. 66).*

This thesis tries to show that Africa as a cultural and geographical location and its people defy essentialist approaches and Bhabha's theories of hybridity, mimicry and ambivalence might help us to understand the complex interweavings of history and culture, social and political agency and the significance of national affiliation in defining one's identity.

Hybridity as a term is common in post-colonial discussions referring to the diversity of cultures and ways of life. Hybridity denies the pure essentialist aspect of any given idea, religion or culture, as it bases its main arguments on the interaction between binaries, rather than a dualistic hierarchy between the two. The historical traditions that define third world countries as subordinate and holistic are in fact a fallacy. In Bhabha's thinking, cultures and nations are only performances and narrative constructions emerging as a result of dialogic processes in the interstices.

*It is in the emergence of the interstices-the overlap and displacement of domains of difference-that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated. . . . Terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively. The representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of pre-given ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation. (Bhabha, 1994, p. 2)*

As well as being an attempt to deconstruct Western way of binary thinking in which one item is regarded as being superior to the other one, the term hybridity presupposes that mimicry occurs between two opposite poles and we cannot mention of originary subjectivities, since they have undergone change. What is more, to Bhabha, the colonizer is ambivalent in his attitude towards the people he colonizes and within a certain period of time, some of his attitude and manners somehow begin to resemble those of the colonized. Not only this but also the fact that an 'other' has been textually created also poses questions regarding the ultimate power of the colonized.

Bhabha highlights the discontinuity of the English history during the time of its encounter with different races, beliefs, traditions and peoples. For Bhabha, this issue has serious political connotations as logocentrism is not the domain of authority and power anymore. Rather, it is fragmented and somehow decomposed, since the interstitial perspective has replaced “the polarity of a prefigurative self-generating nation ‘in itself’ and extrinsic other nations” with the notion of cultural liminality within the nation” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 148). This way, people in a given region are no longer “historical ‘objects’ of a nationalist pedagogy” but move towards being “subjects of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary [national] presence” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 145). When this is the case, the “linear narrative of the nation” (Bhabha, 1994, p.142) loses significance since there exists no holism in culture and community. This is particularly important for the discussion of Islam in my thesis. Because Islam has traditionally been associated with Arabness and Islamophobia has been long related to Arabs and therefore Islam has been racialized, Bhabha’s theory helps us to cleanse Islam from national and racial underpinnings and to look through it in a different context.

#### **1.1.1. The Unhomeliness of Islam in the Western Context**

In this chapter I want to analyze Bhabha’s concept of unhomeliness and relate it to Islam and diasporic muslim identities. In the *Location of Culture*, while introducing the concept of unhomeliness Bhabha mentions Franz Fanon (1994) who “recognizes the crucial importance, for subordinated peoples of asserting their indigenous cultural traditions and retrieving their repressed histories” (p. 13). However, as tradition and history are narratives and are fluid, it is impossible to retrieve them, since they are also in constant evolution and sticking onto the indigenous roots is a “celebratory romance of the past” and “fetishism of identities” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 13). Instead, the hybrid transnational subject is now unhomed, his/her home and world being relocated. In Bhabha’s (1994) own terms, “to be unhomed is not to be homeless, nor can the ‘unhomely’ be easily accommodated in that familiar division of social life into private and public spheres” (p. 9) and unhomeliness is inherent in rites of “extraterritorial and cross-cultural initiation” (p. 9). Now that unhomeliness is different from being homeless, it is a borderline or liminal space where new subjectivities can be constructed and where the fixed categories

of identity, particularly nation, are dispersed and barriers of difference begin to melt down.

Defying the concepts as regards fixed categories of identity of such as nation and race, Bhabha provides us with a useful theoretical framework to divorce Islam from Arabness. As Islam has been racialized and Islamophobia and Islamic terrorism has been intimately linked to Arabs, Bhabha's theory of hybridity allows us to see Islam in its own context, freed from its racial and political underpinnings that have existed from the colonial period up to now. Despite the fact that Islam is spread over many cultures, geographies and ethnicities, Runnymede Trust report of 1997, which stated that "Islamophobia is created analogously to xenophobia" (Abbas, 2011, p. 85) lists some common features of Islamophobia thus:

*Muslim cultures are seen as monolithic; Islamic cultures are substantially different from other cultures; Islam is perceived as implacably threatening; Islam's adherents use their faith to political or military advantage; Muslim criticism of Western cultures and societies is rejected out of hand; the fear of Islam is mixed with racist hostility to immigration; and Islamophobia is assumed to be natural and unproblematic. (Abbas, 2011, pp. 85-6)*

Given the negative bias of the Western culture against Islam that has persisted for years, Bhabha's theory of unhomeliness allows us to deconstruct the view that Islam is monolithic and alien. Rather, under conditions of intimacy and contact, "the unhomely or the hidden can be manifold and rich" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 10). Indeed, unhomeliness implies things that should remain "secret and hidden" but "has come to light" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 10).

Considering that Islam connotes terrorism in the West but at the same time makes its presence felt, we can evaluate this as a moment of encountering the uncanny and the unfolding of the repressed. Bhabha (1994) gives the example of feminism and patriarchy to better explicate the issue of unhomeliness and how it politically functions to disturb the "symmetry of private and public" which "results in re-drawing the domestic space as the space of the normalizing, pastoralizing, and individuating techniques of modern power and police" (p. 11). Besides, since Gurnah is an exile himself and being a Muslim is part of his identity, he reconstructs home elsewhere and a narrative of diaspora, allowing the "basis of our judgement" undergo "a radical revision" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 11), in which the ambivalent diasporic subject is "caught in-between a 'nativist', even

nationalist, atavism and a postcolonial metropolitan assimilation”(Bhabha, 2004, p. 321). The diaporic subject is neither the one nor the other. He is in-between, his subjectivity is split and in constant undulation.

Also, as I reiterated previously, in the modern secular West Islam is tightly linked to Arabness and Bhabha helps us to understand the roots of the discourses negating Islam as an Arabic religion. To Bhabha (1994), the discourse created on binaristic grounds

*is an apparatus that turns on the recognition and disavowal of racial/cultural/historical differences. Its predominant strategic function is the creation of a space for a ‘subject peoples’ through the production of knowledges in terms of which surveillance is exercised and a complex form of pleasure/unpleasure is incited. It seeks authorization for its strategies by the production of knowledges of colonizer and colonized which are stereotypical but antithetically evaluated. The objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction. (p. 70)*

Thus, while Gurnah’s characters re-construct their identities and histories, Islam becomes de-nationalized and de-racialized. Moreover, the idea of Islamic ummah, i.e. that Islam cannot be confined to any ethnicity or nation, runs parallel to the idea of Islam as an unhomed religion, that is neither bound up by space nor temporality. As Hand (2010) states

*In Islamic thought, color or race differences are regarded as invalid identity markers. The notion of the umma, or community of Muslims, albeit more of a philosophical idea than a clearcut category, renders political frontiers superfluous and, as such, clashes with Western understandings of nation-states or Anderson’s “imagined communities.”<sup>18</sup> In this sense, theoretically, a Muslim from Mombasa will identify more fully with a fellow Muslim from as far away as Indonesia rather than a Kenyan Christian, although they will share the same passport. In the case of Zanzibar, despite the shared religion, Zanzibari identity has been wrought out of Islamic cultural modes together with ethnically constructed and class-based divisions.(p. 86)*

In addition, the unhomedness of Islam helps the author to criticize “the alleged purity of the nation-state by showing how Europe is rather a site of hybridity and transnational connections than one of uniformity and fixed identifications”(Nyman, 2009, p. 2). At the same time, “transmutations and translations of indigenous traditions in their opposition to colonial authority demonstrate how the desire of the signifier, the indeterminacy of intertextuality, can be deeply engaged in the postcolonial struggle against dominant relations of power and knowledge” (Bhabha, 2004, p. 48).

Yet, in a complicated pattern, while Islam and the idea of a religious/cultural community (ummah) might be functional in deconstructing the alleged fixity of Europe as a nation, on the other hand they are still an emblem of hostility and alienation. As Santezzo (2013) states, “the support provided to the refugee by the international Islamic ummah is offset by religious alienation since embracing Islam means highlighting one’s differences from the Christian national sphere” (p. 9). This persisting clash between Islam and the Western civilization can be seen as an interaction that involves unconscious adoption of “many foreign ideas and ways which Goethe sees as significant for world literature to emerge. From a post-colonial perspective, then, “the border and frontier conditions” (Bhabha, 1994, p.12) created by migrants, exile and diaspora reveal to us how the oppressed ‘other’ and ‘Islamophobia’ are only discursive constructs and the fact that they are mobile and ever-floating. Besides, as an unhomed concept, the resonance of Islam “can be heard distinctly, if erratically, in fictions that negotiate the powers of cultural difference in a range of transhistorical sites” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 9) marking “deeper historical displacement” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 13).

#### **1.1.2. The West and the Rest?: Where to Locate Islamic Culture and Identity**

Considering the long pervading bias of the West against Islam and the transformation of Islam into a drastic discursive phobia makes it difficult and subtle to locate Islam in the multicultural texture of the West. Santesso argues that in the West there is currently “a tendency to homogenise Muslim identity as fundamentally and inevitably “radical” (Santesso, 2013, p. 9). Based on Bhabha’s theories, this part of the thesis seeks an answer to whether Islamic culture can be located in the Third Space, which Bhabha (2004) says “constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity” (p. 55) or “a place and a time that exists in-between the violent and the violated, the accused and the accuser, allegation and admission” (Bhabha, 2009, p. x).

Islam and Europe are seemingly “two opposite spheres of identity markers” (Rettenbacher, 2017, p. 96). Even, it should be added that “Historically, Europe’s identity emerged partially as a response to the proximity and threat of the Islamic world” (Alsayyad, 2002, p.19), In a sense, they are binaries. However, “in a realm of fuzzy and fluid borders the way we see ourselves is directly related to the way we see others and

vice versa” (Rettenbacher, 2017, p. 96), since “the present era becomes more and more characterized by hyphenization, hybridity, syncretization, creolization, and diaspora cultures” (Nezar, 2011, p. 20).

If the contemporary era is the era of non-hierarchy, deterritorialization, diaspora and hyphenization, then this implies that Islam – though a non-Western concept- can be relocated into the Western space. If the idea of the West as a nation has no currency anymore and Islam has a spirit of community that unifies and combines, then it becomes easier to discuss Islam within a European context and understand how its ‘unhomed’ status creates identities that are aligned differently. Indeed, it is inevitable that there are mutual interactions between Islam and the West.

The concern of this thesis is to deconstruct and question the validity of identity markers such as race, nation and place. These are terms that gained value in the 18th century Europe; therefore, the notions of place and nation are highly Eurocentric.

Even if diaspora is not an issue in the three novels, forms of displacement and replacement are running themes. In each novel there is somewhat a reconstruction of subject and this problematizes “the issues of home, belonging, and nation (Nyman, 2009, p. 22). Thus, now that there is heterogeneity and diversity at the root of cultural encounters, locating Islam through deconstruction of stereotypes and essentialisms is not impossible. If no identity is stable, then the identity associated with Islam is not stable, either. It can be reconstructed and rewritten at a place that is beyond the binaries, the third space. Bhabha (1994) explicates the theoretical framework to be able to locate Islam into the Western context or the possibility for this giving the example of liberatory people who initiate the productive instability of revolutionary cultural change” (p. 55). These people are

*themselves the bearers of a hybrid identity. They are caught in the discontinuous time of translation and negotiation, in the sense in which I have been attempting to recast these words. In the moment of liberatory struggle, the Algerian people destroy the continuities and constancies of the nationalist tradition which provided a safeguard against colonial cultural imposition. They are now free to negotiate and translate their cultural identities in a discontinuous intertextual temporality of cultural difference. The native intellectual who identifies the people with the true national culture will be disappointed. The people are now the very principle of ‘dialectical reorganization’ and they construct their culture from the national text translated into modern Western forms of information technology, language, dress. (Bhabha, 1994, p. 55)*

Even if the stereotyped identity (racialized Muslim identity) is assumed to be rigid and unchanging and unable to conform to the tenets of the Western civilization, Muslims dialectically reorganize themselves just like Algerians and they thus form a new identity that resists hierarchies and generalizations. When Islam becomes divorced from Arabness, it turns into a new mode of representation through which the oppressed can assume a new identity, which is also affected by the liminal self's position relative to others. As Hasan (2015) puts it, the third space (of Islam) is a place where the diasporic or colonized subjects "can confidently engage in a reinterpretation of the Islamic texts and thus reclaim an identity which liberates them from culturally enacted practices of their countries of origin" (p. 89). Now that Islam becomes deterritorialized and is inserted into the European context, a space opens up for Islam to get rid of the negative associations linked with it. This liminal space, where Islam transcends from one space to another and is a shifting paradigm, and thanks to it, it is possible to write back to "national, anti-nationalist histories of the 'people'" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 56). Bhabha (1994) adds to this saying "And by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 56).

When considered from a binaristic world-view, the oppressed or the colonized has always been restricted to a fixed stereotype that is mostly associated with non-human attributes. Yet, in the third space of enunciation, which is the "bar and bearer of difference" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 143), the oppressed can become a new historical subject of the "transnational phase of late capitalism" thanks to "interstitial, disjunctive spaces and signs" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 311). Since spaces, histories and therefore subjectivities are remarkably shifting in the postcolonial period, the idea of a third space allows us to think beyond the fixed categories of place and time. In the third space narratives are in constant interaction with culture and identity and the Western dualistic worldsystem decays. Considering the negative bias of the West against Islam and the accusations against Islam that it cannot be modernized and therefore westernized, we can claim that the liminal subjects passing from the second space/ the new space of existence to the third space of enunciation or representation can show the richness of Islam. As put by Mandaville (2001), "debates and negotiations over Muslim authenticity and authority are particularly rich when they take place in translocality – especially when compared to the Islam of various territorially and

iscursively bounded lifeworlds” (p. 54). Mandaville (2003) elaborates his discussion by stating

*Taken at face value, ‘Islam’ is the name of a religion while ‘the West’ is a geographic signifier conventionally used in reference to those cultural spheres in which power, social organisation and logos are legitimised and explained in terms of a master signifier derived from the history of European reason. In this sense, then, the West is purely a discursive creation and something that does not so easily correspond to one category or another (e.g. religion, ideology, etc.) of the standard taxonomy of analytical abstractions which the West has created for its own use. (p. 60)*

The third space, then, allows the muslim subject to re-negotiate his/her identity and subvert the hierarchy of the western parameters of identity. Although Islam is an ‘other’ contextually and connotes cliches of vulgarity, barbarism and non-civilization, the third space allows Islam to rehistoricize the religion and insert itself into the Western agenda. In this constellation Islam becomes neither one nor the other but turns into an agent that subverts norms as regards the fixed stereotypes while at the same time opening up space to question the validity and truthfulness of the binary assumptions. Since the binary assumptions begin to lose significance, Islam in the third space begins to function as an intermediary to asserting difference. If we are to put it in another way, if Islam is the religion of the uncivilized and barbarian Orient, now it both temporally and spatially exists in another space and time and is ready to interact with the oppressive discourse.

Islam is so powerful that it has its own agenda of liberation. It does not need to be inserted into postcolonialism to be able to realize its target of emancipating its people. Given that the postcolonial theory is biased western (Malak, 2005) and cannot voice the concerns of Muslim people in the face of stereotyping and discrimination, Islam comes along with its own discourse that defies all categorizations. In this sense, Islam paradoxically runs parallel to and is against postcolonial theory. On all accounts, Bhabha’s theories discussed herein helps us to locate Islam as an antidote to Western spirited colonialism and postcolonialism. As Nash et. al. (2014) states, Islam “has been to replace the more familiar secular/nationalist/left liberation movements of the early postcolonial period” (p. 4). This way, Islam also acquires the power to deconstruct the stereotypes and contribute to the formation of subjects. Even, it can be said that Islam functions as “the space of representation, where the image – missing person, invisible eye, Oriental stereotype – is confronted with its difference, its Other” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 66) challenging the Western

framees of identity by implying “the impossibility of claiming an origin for the Self (or Other) within a tradition of representation that conceives of identity as the satisfaction of a totalizing, plenitudinous object of vision” (Bhabha, 1994, p.66). This way, Islam “can subvert the perverse satisfaction of the racist...gaze that disavows its presence” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 67) and acts as a discursive and disciplinary place from which “questions of identity are strategically and institutionally posed” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 68). Being Muslim or belonging to the Islamic community therefore becomes a means of enunciating difference; difference from a hierarchical dualistic philosophy of identity that rests on the principle of master and slave. At the same time, based on Bhabha’s thoughts, we can claim that Islam and its adherents cannot be disawaoved; they exist, are visible and different from and exceed how they are initially construed as opposed to the orientalist worldview that sees the ‘other’ as belonging to “a unified racial, geographical, political and cultural zone of the world” (Bhabha, 1994, p.101). Islam in this sense can also be said to be “a place and a time that exists in-between the violent and the violated, the accused and the accuser, allegation and admission. And that site of in-betweenness becomes the ground of discussion, dispute, confession, apology and negotiation” (Bhabha, 2009, p. x). Bhabha (2009) further adds that “The third space is a challenge to the limits of the self in the act of reaching out to what is liminal in the historic experience, and in the cultural representation, of other peoples, times, languages, texts” (p. xiii).

However much the orientalist discourse fixes identities as the self/other, black/White or Muslim/Christian, the meanings conferred upon these binaries are not natural and concrete. Even if the ‘other’ is brute, wild, savage and devoid of civil, this process of signification cannot be accepted as ever-existent. The relationship between the ‘other’ as a sign and the meanings conferred upon it as a ‘signified’ can never be fixed and prone to change. Considering this case from an Islamic perspective, we can allege that Islamic identity cannot be seen as vulgar and barbaric and the discursive meanings conferred upon the term are only artificial. Thus, Islam, which is inherently against the dogmas of colonialism and Western logocentrism, acts as a space through which the other can show his/her true identity, which is not based on the I/eye of the colonizer and allows “diverse ‘subjects’ of differentiation” rather than “singularities of difference” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 105), since “the knowledge of identity and difference is as much a question of

epistemology and history as it is a perceptual and phenomenological problem that relates to how we see and from where we look” (Bhabha, 2009, p. xii).

## **1.2. Bakhtin and Islam: Is Islam Dialogic or Authorative?**

Novel is an originally European way of writing. Taking Bhabha’s theory of ambivalence, the novel as a form has a lot to do to explain cultural unification or blending and identity besides the very foundations such as race, nation and history identity rests upon, as it imposes and imports European culture with itself. Besides its European origins, novel as a literary form has more political power than other types of fiction does. Particularly in the post-colonial period, the power of novel to enable the subordinated peoples to speak is very conspicuous. Even if poetry may have such a function in giving voice to the ‘other’, novel is much stronger in the sense that it is the voice and representative of all the member of a given community. In other words, the novel is in a dialogic interaction with its origin and the people from whom it was conceived. In the context of preserving one’s identity and the sense of belonging, the representational aspect of novel and the fact that it is more readily grasped by wider audience due to the affinity of experiences to real life and the simplicity of language makes it an invaluable type of narrative.

Bakhtin’s approach to novel as a genre is also crucial for the general argument and overflow of this thesis. He mentions of three basic characteristics in his book *The Dialogic Imagination*(1981) that distinguishes the genre from other ones, particularly the epic form. These are: 1) “its stylistic three-dimensionality, which is linked with the multi-consciousness realized in the novel, 2) the radical change it effects in the temporal coordinates of literary image, 3) the new zone opened by the novel for structuring literary images, namely, the zone of maximal contact with the present (with contemporary reality) in all its openedness” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 13). Bakhtin (1981) extends the scope of his discussion saying

*These three characteristics of the novel are all organically interrelated and have all been powerfully affected by a very specific rupture in the history of European civilization: its emergence from a socially isolated and culturally deaf semi-patriarchal society, and its entrance into international and interlingual contacts and relationships. A multitude of different languages, cultures and times became available to Europe, and this became a decisive factor in its life and thought. (p. 11)*

To Bakhtin (1981), the world is polyglot, that is, speaking diverse languages. He states that the “period of national languages comes to an end” and novel as a genre can best fulfill the leadership function in an era in which “genres that had been formed during eras of closed and deaf monoglossia” can no longer function (1981, p. 12). Based on this theoretical framework I can state that, novel functions as a fruitful platform to negotiate between African identity as discursively established by Europe and true African identity.

Gurnah and Islamic identities in his three novels are the main revenues of this thesis and the focal point of analysis is Islam in the novels written in a non-Arab environment. Chronologically evaluating, not all the three novels deal with Africa after colonialism. Gurnah also deals with Africa before the arrival of the colonizer. This is not simply to say that the thesis will delve into the representation of religion both before and after colonization. Rather, the writer seems to deal with the issue of identity and religion in a subtle network of historical, social and political dynamics within the region, as if through the eyes of a social scientist unfolding the inherent driving forces in the continent. What is more, we can say that one of the purposes behind Gurnah’s use of Islam as a central theme in his novels may be to destruct or rather deconstruct the religion from its embedded Arab identity and to re-flourish it in an African setting.

Mikhail Bakhtin is noted for his discussions on monologue and dialogue and he equates authority with monologue and dialogue with multiple speech and a decentred authority. This Russian formalist’s theories are used in many places in humanities and I will try to deal with Bakhtin’s dialogism and heteroglossia in relation to representation of Islam in Gurnah’s novels. My main argument will be that Gurnah does not represent Islam as the utmost authority and as paving no way for communication. Rather, Islam enables the Zanzibari diasporic writer to speak in the name of his people in the face of a Christian Europe that has located itself in the centre. As opposed to the logocentrism of the West, Gurnah makes use of Islam to pave the way for dialogue. The Islam Gurnah represents is not the oppressive Islam that asks for unconditional acceptance. Instead, as opposed to the strict nationalism of the West and the West’s close association to spatiality as the locus of identity, Gurnah shows us how Islam can transcend the boundaries of the nation state and how it can allow the oppressed to make his/her voice be heard simultaneously with that of the oppressor.

Islam is a religion that supports brotherhood of all people and in Islamic thinking, nothing but faith in Allah can make a person superior to one another. Neither race nor the color of one's skin can be used to negate, stereotype and essentialize a human being. In Quran the verse that goes as "O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female, and have made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another" [Quran 49:13] stands as a nice example to Islam's parallelism with dialogue and its affinity to the theoretical stances of both Bakhtin and Bhabha.

### **1.2.1. Between Continents and Cultures: Islam as Shared Textuality and Polyphony**

Polyphony implies the existence of multiple voices together. In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1984), Bakhtin frequently reiterates the idea that Dostoevsky is not the central voice in his novels but acts as an intermediary to reflect the consciousness and voices of his characters. This way, perspectives in the novel multiply and go beyond the control of the author. All these perspectives have their own terms and validities. Moreover, these perspectives interact strongly with the discourse and there is a constant clash with the domineering systems of thought. In the book, Bakhtin (1984) appreciates the existence of polyphony in Dostoevsky's novels thus:

*A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels. What unfolds in his works is not a multitude of characters and fates in a single objective world, illuminated by a single authorial consciousness; rather a plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world, combine but are not merged in the unity of the event. (p. 6)*

Based on this statement, it can be claimed that Islam – as a unifying principle for the oppressed and subjugated- helps to prevent the formation of a governing single principle. Rather, voices with their own distinct perspectives arise and they equally control the discourse. The power to act as agents of discourse belongs to the characters in the novels analyzed herein. The author, uniting different times and spaces, is an intermediary for ensuring interaction and merging between clashing poles, which are namely the Christian and Islamic world. Because each distinct sound will speak for itself, the authority of both the author and the oppressor becomes weaker. The monologic power to control and shape discourse leaves its place to a platform in which there are multiple consciousnesses,

oscillating subject-object positions and subversions of the norm. This in turn leads to the deconstruction of monologic signifying practices. Therefore, Gurnah's novels, as Bakhtin (1984) states, can be seen as "constructed not as the whole of a single consciousness, absorbing other consciousnesses as objects into itself, but as a whole formed by the interaction of several consciousnesses, none of which entirely becomes an object for the other" (p.18).

As King (2019) also states, Gurnah's writing "challenges the possibility of singular and simplistic attachment and instead prompts multiple positioning" (p. 185). This polyphonic aura in Gurnah's novels ensures that the characters' are "autonomous subjects, not objects" (Bakhtin, 1984, p.7). Bakhtin (1984) pushes his argument further by saying

*Polyphonic novel is a fully realized and thoroughly consistent dialogic position, one that affirms the independence, internal freedom, unfinalizability, and indeterminacy of the hero. For the author the hero is not "he" and not "I" but a fully valid "thou," that is, another and other autonomous "I" ("thou art"). ( p. 63)*

Thus, when the monopoly over the signifying practices are lost, truth becomes a volatile concept that is prone to change eternally. When considered from a political angle, the multi-consciousness Gurnah achieves in his novels through an Islamic dialogism functions to subvert the superiority of West and Christianity both spatially and temporally. I use the adverb spatially to emphasize the well-known relationship between space and nation. I use the adverb temporally to imply the importance of temporality for Western logocentrism. Now that the links between time and space are apt to change and become shattered with the emergence and clash of multiple consciousnesses, the oppressed (Islamic) subject may re-emerge independently from Gurnah's ideology. What is more, Gurnah's Muslim subjects are neither restricted by the Arabism of Islam, nor do they articulate and represent themselves as the essentialized Muslims. Gurnah challenges all the grandnarratives of nation, space and language and at the same time shows how these grand narratives restrict freedom to interact with the 'other'. As Tina Steiner (2010) also argues "Gurnah's narratives insist on moments of relation, of small voices affirming hospitality within the violent and hostile contexts of colonial and imperialist onslaught and the exclusionary rhetoric of new African nationalisms" (p. 125). Constantly interacting with the discourse, then, Gurnah's novels are interdiscursive. That is to say, they inform and are informed by the surrounding cultures, beliefs and voices. This

interaction is dialectical, open ended and dynamic. Since it resists closure and monopoly over language, it is capable of disrupting the order of history, discourse and territories and paves the way for simultaneous existence of contesting ideas and identities. This perspective also gives us to see each character in the novels as subjects, since each is involved in the dialogue with his/her worldviews and given that the course of dialogue is unfinalizable, it transforms subjects who are in constant flux. The role of Islam in this context, then, can be defined as a catalyst for the characters. It sets the ground for them for knowing the world and understanding their existence in even in fluid spaces. Besides, these alternative subjects become multi-conscious since in this site of encounter and “only in this milieu are they capable of being elevated to completely new ideological heights” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 61). As Bakhtin (1981) also reiterates in *The Dialogic Imagination*, “every novel is a dialogized system made up of the images of “languages,” styles and consciousnesses that are concrete and inseparable from language. Language in the novel not only represents, but itself serves as the object of representation” (p. 49).

The intermingling of languages and epistemes indirectly parody the existing dominant structures and deconstruct the rooted myth of nation. When looked at from the perspective of this study, it can be alleged that these fluid sites of encounter and spaces between the Islamic and Christian way of knowing the world give characters the opportunity to create alternative subjectivities. Bakhtin (1981) supports this idea thus:

*The novel senses itself on the border between the completed, dominant literary language and the extraliterary languages that know heteroglossia; the novel either serves to further the centralizing tendencies of a new literary language in the process of taking shape (with its grammatical, stylistic and ideological norms), or-on the contrary-the novel fights for the renovation of an antiquated literary language, in the interests of those strata of the national language that have remained (to a greater or lesser degree) outside the centralizing and unifying influence of the artistic and ideological norm established by the dominant literary language. The literary-artistic consciousness of the modern novel, sensing itself on the border between two languages, one literary, the other extraliterary, each of which now knows heteroglossia, also senses itself on the border of time: it is extraordinarily sensitive to time in language, it senses time's shifts, the aging and renewing of language, the past and the future-and all in language. (p. 67)*

### **1.2.2. East African Novel and Islam towards Being World Literature: Heteroglossia and Intersecting with the ‘Other’**

Heteroglossia is a Bakhtinian concept that describes the coexistence of different varieties in a single language. It is dynamic and is functional in representing the distinct modes of

being in a single language. Heteroglossia can be defined as “diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices”( Bakhtin, 1981, p. 262).

Bhabha (2004) opines that “transnational histories of migrants, the colonized, or political refugees - these border and frontier conditions - may be the terrains of world literature” (Bhabha, 2004, p. 12) and this can be well combined with Bakhtinian thought. Particularly in *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* (1984), Bakhtin puts special emphasis on Dostoevsky’s literary art and reiterates the idea that what makes Dostoevsky’s works special is the plurality of voices, rather than the monologic voice of the author. Then, transnational histories and different ways of knowing the world creates an aura of polyphony, in which constant interaction between opposite poles takes place. While in a monological setting characters and the plot are governed within a single authorial setting, in a polyphonic setting there arises interaction between different voices and what is left at the periphery can strongly interact with that in the centre. Thus, a single critical perspective cannot suffice to understand these transnational histories and their relations to multiple times and spaces. In accordance with this, Gurnah can be said to be describing a heterogeneity he experienced while in Zanzibar. This heterogeneity stemmed from a combination of his colonial education and what he learned from the Koran school and his social circles. Gurnah’s stories resist stories of exclusion and he inserts Africa into the world history.

In *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, Bakhtin (1984) states “A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky’s novels” (p. 6). The same applies to Gurnah’s novels. As a writer whose way of knowing the world is not monologic but polyphonic, he creates sites of encounters in which the opposing voices and thoughts intermingle and each character has a voice of his/her won. What is more, Gurnah as a polyphonic author has the “task of constructing a polyphonic world and destroying the established forms of the fundamentally *monologic* (homophonic) European novel” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 8). Indeed, to Steinby (2013), Bakhtin views the novel “as the epitome of a carnivalistic and satiric counter-culture” (p.10). Based on these arguments, the purpose of the author cannot be simply confined to destructing the normativity of the

European writing systems in which the meaning and the relationship between the signified and the signifier are fixed. Instead, in addition to having a subversive approach against the European episteme and forms of writing, the author juxtaposes the Islamic and Christian world to blur the demarcating lines between the two. In this sense, it becomes obvious that the author utilizes writing politically and he becomes the reporter of distinct voices clashing and co-existing with one another. Bakhtin (1984) elaborates on the polyphonic nature of Dostoevsky's novels thus:

*In actual fact, the utterly incompatible elements comprising Dostoevsky's material are distributed among several worlds and several autonomous consciousnesses; they are presented not within a single field of vision but within several fields of vision, each full and of equal worth; and it is not the material directly but these worlds, their consciousnesses with their individual fields of vision that combine in a higher unity, a unity, so to speak, of the second order, the unity of a polyphonic novel. (p. 16)*

Polyphony is indisputably a characteristic of Gurnah's novels and Gurnah makes use of Islam strategically to counteract the essentialist and dualistic views of the West. His characters are not simple "manifestation of reality that possesses fixed and specific socially typical or individually characteristic traits" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 47), since the idea of polyphony implies not only "a plurality of voices, but also a genuine encounter among the various subjective points of view" (Steinby, 2013, p. 40).

It should be kept in mind that the novel "begins by presuming a verbal and semantic decentering of the ideological world, a certain linguistic homelessness of literary consciousness" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 367). Benefiting from this aspect of the novel, Gurnah both decenters the ideological World of the West and forefronts the unique subjectivities of his characters and he no longer "illuminates the hero's reality but the hero's self-consciousness" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 49). Gurnah strategically resorts to Islam as part of his polyphonic writing. As Nasta and Stein (2020) inform us, such polyphonic literature (Black and Asian writing)

*challenges and expands narrow and insular definitions of the nation, reminding the UK of the lingering effects of empire, confronting it with its colonial past and postcolonial present, and representing the irrevocable entanglement with the peoples and cultures it once colonised and who have now, for many generations, made up the face of the nation. (p. 8)*

Based on Nasta and Stein's argument, it can be claimed that Islam is the repressed other of colonial history. The frequent voicing of Islam reminds the West of the history of colonialism and how it suppressed the stories and voices of the other. When Islam speaks and is heard, it begins to unsettle the norms of hierarchy of 'I' and 'the other'. Bakhtin's following statements can help us to better understand how the voice of Islam and the colonized can intermingle with the West.

*These voices are not self-enclosed or deaf to one another. They hear each other constantly, call back and forth to each other, and are reflected in one another (especially in the microdialogues). And outside this dialogue of "conflicting truths" not a single essential act is realized, nor a single essential thought of the major characters.(1984, p. 86)*

Dispersing the narrative among a variety of opposing settings, personae and ways of knowing, Gurnah makes the polyphonic voice of the subaltern be heard, and its difference be recognized. While opposing and subverting the Eurocentric ways of knowing and the episteme, Gurnah shifts the positions of the center and the periphery benefiting from the position of a dialogic and heteroglot author. As pointed out by Bakhtin (1981) himself

*all languages of heteroglossia, whatever the principle underlying them and making each unique, are specific points of view on the world, forms for conceptualizing the world in words, specific world views, each characterized by its own objects, meanings and values. As such they all may be juxtaposed to one another, mutually supplement one another, contradict one another and be interrelated dialogically. ( pp. 291-2)*

Unheard stories of East Africa thus can become world literature, despite having deviated from the Western way of writing. Having a negative bias against the idea of nation as a determiner of identity, Gurnah diligently opposes the idea of Europe and Africa both as nations. At every opportunity, he lays bare how cultures, identities, subjectivities and ways of looking at the world can intermingle, shows how fixity prevents cultures and ideas from flourishing and there can be no textual authority that produces epistemes that are self-contained. Bakhtin's ideas as regards the unfinalizability of the self is noteworthy.

*This merging of the hero's discourse about himself with his ideological discourse about the world greatly increases the direct signifying power of a self-utterance, strengthens its internal resistance to all sorts of external finalization. The idea helps self-consciousness assert its sovereignty in Dostoevsky's artistic world, and helps it triumph over all fixed, stable, neutral images. (Bakhtin, 1984, p.79)*

As a matter of fact, dialogism and heteroglossia blur the boundaries of self-contained ideologies and when discourses are dialogized, the true colors of humanity arise. Because

authoritative discourse “permits no play with the context framing it, no play with its borders, no gradual and flexible transitions, no spontaneously creative stylizing variants on it” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 343), the author turns to a double voiced discourse to be able to construct hybrid identities. Considering these discussions within the framework of this study, it can be alleged that for Gurnah Islam as a religion and novel as a genre are means of creating a double-voiced discourse to be able to ensure hybridity. As Bakhtin (1981) clearly states, “The novel can be defined as a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized” (p. 262). Based on all these, the novel for Bakhtin is a medium in which every utterance is embedded with an ideology. Bakhtin’s philosophy, writes Simons (1988), “acknowledges that man is a speaking subject; acknowledges man’s integral connection to his artistic and material creations and to his ideologies; acknowledges the unity and continuity of human experience and its representation in language and artistic works” (p.15). Blackledge et. al. (2013) also highlight the word’s being embedded with an ideology by saying “the word may point to, belong to, or be recognized as representing a certain set of values, an ideology, a social group, a nationality, and so on”(p. 62). Based on these discussions, it can be stated that Gurnah’s characters are not monological but they are intersubjective and their consciousness is also unfinalized. These characters come up with multiple discourses and these discourses encounter the multiple discourses of alternative spaces in a dialogical fashion. Considered from this perspective, the people we interact with are not only objects of our gaze but they are also subjects in their own terms. Even, these characters are “free people, capable of standing alongside their creator, capable of not agreeing with him and even of rebelling against him” (Bakhtin, 1984, p.6).

Therefore, instead of representing the history of colonialism and identities univocally through imitating the prevalent discourses on colonialism, Gurnah attempts to deconstruct colonial narratives through heterogenous perspectives towards the past, being and becoming that are based on dialogue. As Göle (2012) also points out, “As a religion of migration in late modernity, Islam expresses the lived experiences and new Muslims who inhabit secular life-spaces in global cities, reinterpreting cultural and religious norms, and belonging to several communities of language and networks of communication” (pp. 668-9). She emphasizes that Islam is somehow being more anchored in Europe. If we synthesize this fact with Gurnah’s writing, it can be claimed that rather than focusing on

Islam solely as a point of difference, Gurnah shows us how Islam functionally creates a site of contact and an awareness of subjectivity.

### **1.3. Some Final Remarks**

After mentioning of Islam's entrance into the East Africa mainly by way of trade and intermarriages, I tried to discuss the situation of Islam in the face of colonialism and post-colonialism. I mainly stated that Islam's spreading in Africa was not so much difficult since it was important in promoting trade and gaining political status. Moreover, the fact that Islam intermingled with indigenous religions and arose in the form of a syncretic religion facilitated the conversion of more people into Islam. Besides, Islam's emphasis on human dignity and its opposition to slavery were among important factors that turned Islam into the characteristic religion of the region.

Discussing the stance of Islam against colonialism and the perception regarding the relationship between Islam and postcolonialism, I discussed Gurnah as an in-between exile novelist. As mentioned by Bakhtin, Gurnah's writing is not free from politics. Even though he has no purposes of being a radical Islamist, writing opens up a space for him through which he acquires agency and make his people's voices be heard. As I mentioned beforehand, his choice of novel as a genre is deliberate in that the novel as a form as also maintained by Bakhtin allows for dialogue and intermingling of sounds, blurring of binaries and distinctions. To Booker and Juraga (1995), "the novel must continually challenge predefined notions of what it should be. It is therefore an inherently antiauthoritarian genre" (p. 25). Within this context, we can claim that Gurnah makes use of the novel genre deliberately to be able to subvert the hierarchy between the powerful and the powerless in the atmosphere of carnivalesque and dialogue created by migration and mobility. In this atmosphere each voice is kneaded thoroughly with one another and the author is also part of the dialogue, not the governor of it.

One another aspect that may conclude the second part of my thesis is that Islam's nature as a religion is opposed to dictatorship and exerting one sided authority on its believers. However, after the caliphade, some people integrated the dictatorship regime with Islam and later on Christians-for example- supported this kind of regimes which they knew were inherently not Islamic but were running after power and the continuity of their reign.

All in All, Gurnah narrates the stories of Africans who experienced displacement in their own lands, or either were drifted towards unknown lands. Whatever the case is, Gurnah's stance against mixture, migrancy is not negative and perhaps he may be said to be striving for depicting a true African identity that has not been shaped by either Islam or colonialism.



## CHAPTER TWO

### ABDULRAZAK GURNAH'S BIOGRAPHY AND ISLAM IN *BY THE SEA*

#### 2.1. Abdulrazak Gurnah: From Margins to Being a Nobel Prize Winner

Abdulrazak Gurnah was born in the Sultanate of Zanzibar in 1948 and he moved to the UK in 1968 following the Zanzibar Revolution in which the ruling Arab elite were overthrown. He is the author of various novels such as *Paradise* (1994), *By the Sea* (2001), and *Desertion* (2005), each of which was either shortlisted or long listed for globally significant prizes. The novels were outstanding due to the penetrating impacts of colonialism and the existential effort of the refugee to home himself/herself amongst the clash of cultures and continents. His novels were not much popular and circulated mostly in the UK until he got the Nobel prize in 2021. However, following the prize, Gurnah received offers from publishers around the World and he became more widely known through the stories in which reiterated themes such as exile, dislocation, subjectivity and homelessness.

Gurnah studied at different schools in the UK including Christ Church College, Canterbury, and the University of Kent, where he got his PhD degree in 1982. Between 1980 and 1983, he worked at a university in Nigeria and returned back to the University of Kent where he became a professor emeritus of postcolonial literatures.

Although his mother tongue was Swahili, Gurnah mostly wrote in English. Yet, his writings carry the traces of Swahili and Arabic embedded into English. Since he knew English even before he settled in England, he delicately brings together multiple languages and world views together.

When he was in his 20s, Gurnah began to write about home and his longing for home in his diary and these reflections about his past and home turned into larger stories of encounters. Besides, these stories centrally focused on the experience of being a displaced migrant and the question of whether nation is a genuine marker of identity. As Hand (2010) states “the tension between individual perceptions of history and collective consciousness is one of the major issues in Gurnah’s novels” (p.76).

Gurnah mostly sets his work in Zanzibar on the coast of East Africa and various cities in Europe. Most of the protagonists are Zanzibaris and it is clearly seen that Zanzibar asserts its presence strongly in Gurnah’s writings. Quoting Hand (2010) again, the novels center themselves around “the alienation and loneliness that emigration can produce and the soul-searching questions it gives rise to about fragmented identities and the very meaning of ‘home’” (p. 39).

To name a few of the novels that are not in the scope of this study, *Memory of Departure* (1987) can be mentioned of. Gurnah examined the image of Africa in the memory of the character Hassan, who left the country after spending his youth in Africa. Gurnah explored the themes of war, exile, displacement, marginalization and cultural interactions in his subsequent writings. He acted as the voice of people who cannot tell their stories and be heard.

His second novel, *Pilgrim's Way* (1988), takes its title from the road connecting Winchester to the Thomas Beckett shrine in Canterbury. Daud, a Tanzanian who comes to England with the hope of a better life, develops a paranoid self due to the anti-immigrant attitudes he encounters and seeks the solution by completely erasing his past in Tanzania.

In *Dottie* (1990), Dottie undergoes a similar problem of alienation. Her hybrid identity is a symbol of the traumatic effects of the race and ethnicity problem on immigrant and exile characters.

In *Paradise* (1994), Gurnah rewrites the story of Jacob’s son Joseph, told in the Quran, adapting it to East Africa. The novel seemingly is a criticism of the cliches of colonialism such as slavery and Islamophobia.

Gurnah's novels were either shortlisted or longlisted for various prizes such as the Booker and Whitbread. In 2006 he was honored as a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. The most outstanding prize of his life was surely the 2021 Nobel Prize in Literature for his thorough handling of the effects of colonialism and the the existential quest of the refugee in-between cultures and spaces. The prize was quite noteworthy in that the stories of people in the margins became heard and known by a Eurocentric authority. At the same time, the prize was an indicator of how writing by a marginalized author could unsettle and decentre the racial assumptions of the colonialist and logocentric outlook. The high prevalence of studies dealing with Gurnah's writings in the Western academia is also another means to help the suppressed histories of Gurnah's characters to be rewritten into the World history.

## **2.2. *By The Sea***

### **2.2.1. Overview of the novel**

*By the Sea* mainly narrates Saleh Omar's story and encompasses the time periods between 1960-1979 and his arrival at Gatwick airport in November 1993 as an asylum seeker. The second story in the novel belongs to Latif Mahmoud who also came to England as a refugee but now a professor of English.

The novel chronologically narrates the times before and after Zanzibari revolution. Following the revolution, Saleh Omar arrives in England in 1993 as an asylum seeker. The other protagonist of the story is Latif Mahmud, who moved to England years ago and now is a professor of English literature at a university. Before being obliged to come to England, Saleh Omar makes a contract with the villainous Persian merchant Hussein. Hussein gets a huge amount of money from Saleh Omar and Saleh Omar is given the deeds of Shaaban Mahmud's house as security, since Hussein had given a loan to Shabaan Mahmud and got the deeds of the house as security. Shabaan Mahmud is Omar's landlord. Yet, the unlucky and expected thing happens. Hussein does not pay the loan and he never returns back. In this case, Omar becomes obliged to claim the loan from Rajab Shabaan, since his house has been given as security to the loan.

Rajab Shabaan becomes angry with Omar thinking that he also deceived his aunt and took her house. However, the fact was that Omar's father was married to the widowed aunt and the aunt had left the house to Omar on her own will. Yet, Shabaan is the victim in everyone's eyes and he seeks relief by becoming more pious. Though his wife is not a chaste woman and loyal to him, she plans to take revenge on Omar and one of her lovers, the minister of development and resources, help her and they both organize a plan to put Omar into prison. Undergoing harsh times in prison, Saleh Omar decides to flee from Zanzibar and he starts a journey through which he relocates himself and his identity. This journey also helps Latif Mahmoud to perceive his past and who he is.

### **2.2.2. *By The Sea*: Dialogizing Identity at Home Away from Home and the Black Muslim Subject**

*By The Sea* is set upon the two narrators's exchanging stories of an intriguing past in a foreign land. Saleh Omar and Latif Mahmud, the two dialogic narrators of the story and both from Stone Town, share some familial bonds and through re-narrating and re-constructing the story, they provide us with a glimpse and history of Islam in Zanzibar, how the strong nationalist tendencies following decolonization and Zanzibari revolution indeed ruined people's lives and made people homeless in their own lands. Voicing two dislocated people – Latif on his own will and Saleh Omar forcibly displaced-, Gurnah as a dialogic writer deconstructs universalized modes of writing and the association of identity with national affiliation. While the idea that identity is rooted upon a nation or a certain spatiality is problematized, we witness that identity, space and temporalities are heterogeneously negotiated and in line with Bakhtin's theory of unfixity, no space or nation can suffice to draw the boundary of our identities. While doing this, Gurnah problematizes the idea of home and represents Zanzibar not as home but only as a national land. On the other hand, even if England sees these people as other, their history is reconstructed and reaches to a reconciliation here.

Once powerful and rich, Saleh Omar, having undergone unjust imprisonment in his own country without proper trial, is now an asylum seeker in a foreign land, England Only thirty years after these two people – Saleh Omar and Latif Mahmud- can fill in the blanks in their past story. Here Hall's point is apt. Hall (1990) sees identity "as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside,

representation” (p. 222). Gurnah’s tendency to represent his displaced Muslim characters are parallel to Hall’s claims. Resisting the dualisms created by the postcolonialist discourse, Gurnah shows how possible to it is to reconstruct Muslim identities in a foreign land, thereby subverting the very notion that Islam is the religion of Easterners or Arabs. In fact, the journey is functional “in transforming particularly these two people not only from a citizen into a migrant or refugee, or from merchant into a pauper during their *rite de passage*, but also has a deep impact on the traveller’s mindset” (as cited in Helff, 2009, p. 69).

In line with Bhabha’s theory of unfixity and unhomeliness, Saleh Omar utters these words he beginning of the novel:

*I am a refugee, an asylum seeker. These are not simple words, even if habit of hearing them makes them seem so. I arrived at Gatwick airport in the late afternoon of 23 november last year. It is a familiar minor climax in our stories, leaving what we know and arriving at strange places, carrying little bits of jumbled luggage and suppressing secret and garbled ambitions. (Gurnah, 2001, p.4)*

The novel, therefore, at the very beginning provides the reader with its gist. A man, escaping from his country following the turmoil and political instability, leaves his home with the desire of homing himself elsewhere, with a different name and feigning not to speak English. In Bhabha’s thinking, diasporas can help us to see “how rich and manifold the hidden can be under conditions of intimacy” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 15). The two men, Saleh Omar and Latif Mahmoud meeting coincidentally in England when Saleh Omar needs a translator for his official tasks at the refugee centre, have a huge jumbled luggage and are ready to share their stories. Upon understanding that somebody from his homeland will be assisting him throughout the legal transactions at the refugee centre, Saleh Omar says

*I could not suppress a feeling of anxiety and apprehension as I thought of him, that after having come such a long way I should have come so close to him. So he was the expert on our area! Mashaallah, that was something, not a stranger who came to summarise us, but one of our own. (Gurnah, 2011, p. 67)*

This passage from the novel holds an important place since it signifies a rite of passage for Saleh. The process of application at the same time signifies a process of acquiring a new identity in a new space despite the newly house found for Saleh is defined by himself as a house “whose language and whose noises are foreign” (Gurnah, 2011, p. 68).

Through these two men, Gurnah questions the notion of racial purity and cultural determinacy. The dialogues between two men and the verbal exchanges come to the conclusion that homelessness is not having a home but being homed elsewhere and this new territory is both plural and dialogic and free from the ethno-racial emphasis and formulations of the post-national movement in Zanzibar. If now the two men are free from such formulations of the nationalist-racist Zanzibari government, how can they reconstruct and re-align their identities in England where African Muslims are prone to severe victimization because of being black and Muslim. Now that Islam connotes Arabs and blackness connotes Africa, can they really overcome the burden of this double victimization or does this open up a space for them to challenge the image of black Muslims as having monolithic and fossilized identities. By juxtaposing and combining history and story and making us question the validity of narrations of history and oppressive discourses, Gurnah forefronts the rooted hostility between Europe and Islam. Indeed, in the novel Gurnah overtly states the British intervention on the coast in the 1950s eliminated the power of Muslim states along the region. As reiterated before, though the references to religion are not always direct in the novel, the association between being non-European and other(Muslim) is always implied. At the refugee centre, Edelman, who also came to England from another part of Europe years ago, utters these words:

*But my parents are European, they have a right, they are part of the family...Mr shabaan, look at yourself. It saddens me to say this to you, because you won't understand it and I wish you bloody well did. People like you come pouring in here without any thought of the damage they cause. You don't belong here, you don't value any of the things we value, you haven't paid for them through generations, and we don't want you here. (Gurnah, 2011, p. 12)*

Besides being hostile and inhospitable, Edelman's speech symbolizes a clear demarcation between the European (the Christian) and the non-European(non-Christian). Despite lacking a clear reference to Islam or religion, the implied association of Europe with Christianity and the idea of being a part of the family excludes Mr Shabaan and identifies him as an outsider/other. In this sense, the ideas in Wintle's article "Islam as Europe's "Other" in the Long Term: Some Discontinuities" (2016) in which he emphasizes the "importance of Christianity as an essential force in European identity" (p. 45) are very much supportive of my claims. In the article the following statements are read:

*First, it is necessary to note the significance of religion for European identity. If Islam has functioned as an alterity of the reverse of the medal should be that Europe shares and by a faith that is not Muslim: that is Christianity... Christianity is fundamentally entwined with public life in Europe and is still always present in the background. (Wintle, 2016, pp.45-6).*

Backing Wintle's claims, Göle (2012) also implies an inherent opposition between Islam and Europe and states that the encounter between these two bring forth new experiences and new dialogues. Göle (2012) writes that

*The idea of Europe as a secular site of modernity as a timeless and sacred reference point binding a communers implies two monolithic macroentities that are difficult. In fact, the encounter between them brings about a destabilizing of the time-place matrix that frames social scripts and activities. The location of this encounter, namely old Europe, is becoming a site of novel experiences, where we can no longer speak of two distinct civilizations separated by time and space. The discourse of civilizational difference does not, in spite of its popularity, capture social realities and social imaginaries that are shaped by transgressions of geographic frontiers, borrowings and hybridity. (p.668)*

In line with this idea, one day an old English man uses the word 'grinning blackamoor' (Gurnah, 2011, p.72) for Latif. Hand (2010) states that Latif "occupies the "third space" that Bhabha has written about, too English for the Africans, who cannot recognize him as a compatriot, and too black for sectors of the British population, who refuse to accommodate him in their midst" (p. 79) and upon reflecting these words and checking the meaning of 'black' from OED, Saleh Omar once more sets out to subvert the association of blackness with whatever is bad.

*So, I looked up black and quailed: blackhearted, blackbrowed, blacklist, blackguard, blackmail, Black Maria, black market, black sheep. Entry after entry like that, so by the time I finished reading through them all I felt despicable and disheartened, smeared by the torrent of vituperation. Of course I knew about the construction of black as other, as wicked, as beast, as some evil dark place in the innermost being of even the most skinless civilized European, but I had not expected to see so much black black black on a page like that. Stumbling on it so unprepared was a bigger shock than being called you grinning blackamoor by a man who looked like a disgruntled, dated movie persona. It made me feel hated, suddenly weak with a kind of terror at such associations. This is the house I live in, I thought, a language which barks and scorns at me every corner. (Gurnah, 2011, pp.72-3)*

At the refugee centre, while thinking about the origins of the name Edelman, the refugee centre officer, Mr Shabaan (Saleh Omar) once more reminds us of the distinction between being from the family/ (we/Europe/non-Muslim/subject) and being from elsewhere

(they/non-european/non-christian/object). Saleh Omar states the following as regards this:

*Any way, the name of the owner of Europe, who knew its values and had paid for them through generations. But the whole world had paid for Europes values already, even if a lot of the time it just paid and paid and did not get to enjoy them. Think of me as one of those objects that Europe took away with her. (Gurnah, 2011, p.12)*

When these quotes are read from a Bakhtinian perspective, it can be said that they run parallel to the claim in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* that "The author retains for himself no essential "surplus" of meaning and enters on an equal footing with Raskolnikov into the great dialogue of the novel as a whole" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 75). Moreover, in Bakhtin's thinking, this great diogue that runs throughout the novel should not be seen and interpreted directly as an act of oppression or objectification. Though the western epistemological theory may lead the reader to approach Saleh as an objectified being, the dialogic approach requires the elimination of the theoretical transcription and seek for the points of contact where boundaries dissolve. Though Saleh Omar, for instance remains to keep silent and pretends that he does not speak English, Bhabha (2004) reads this as a moment in which the unhomely stirs. He states thus:

*But it is precisely in these banalities that the unhomely stirs, as the violence of a racialized society falls most enduringly on the details of life: where you can sit, or not; how you can live, or not; what you can learn, or not; who you can love, or not. Between the banal act of freedom and its historic denial rises the silence. ( p.15)*

While setting the story, Gurnah summarizes and condenses the history of colonialism thus: "They brought with them their goods and gods and their way of looking at the world, their stories and their songs and prayers, and just a glimpse of the learning which was the jewel of their endeavors (Gurnah, 2011, p.15), "in the name of a higher civilization" (Gurnah, 2001, p. 23). "It also speaks of the complex negotiations such encounters by the sea entailed in terms of the trading of goods, the interchange of ideas, and the mingling of languages, cultures, and faiths" (Steiner, 2010, p.125).

However, it should also be kept in mind that Saleh Omar feels an admiration for the English for "their audacity in being there, such a long way from home, calling the shots with such an appearance of assurance, and for knowing so much about how to do the things that mattered: curing diseases, flying aeroplanes, making movies" (Gurnah, 2011,

p. 17) and he associates this desire to know and learn by saying “I do not think we all knew what it was we were eager for. It was learning, something we revered and were instructed to revere by the teaching of the prophet” (Gurnah, 2011, p. 18). Then, the author sets out to change the established discourse of the ‘other’ knowing that it is a story: “It was as if they had remade us, and in ways that we no longer had any recourse but to accept, so complete and well fitting was the story they told about us” (Gurnah, 2001, p. 18). Gurnah’s hero then, just like Dostoevsky’s hero, is “not only a discourse about himself and his immediate environment, but also a discourse about the world; he is not only cognizant, but an ideologist as well” (Bakhtin, 1984, p.78).

Despite the long known history of colonization, Gurnah re-makes another history, “a different category of knowledge, which, despite our assertive observance, could not contest with theirs”( Gurnah, 2011, p.18) through Saleh because as a dialogic novelist he knows a “ person has no sovereign internal territory, he is wholly and always on the boundary; looking inside himself, he looks into the eyes of another or with the eyes of another (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 287) while strictly refusing the idea that “geography became biology in order to construct a hierarchy in which to place the people who lived in their inaccessibility and primitiveness in other places on the map” (Gurnah, 2001, p. 35). As a dialogic narrator who resists the restrictive power of hierarchies created by maps and place, Saleh Omar mentions of authors such as Emerson, Melville and Douglas who “excited a noble curiosity because they were not contaminated by a discourse of tutelage and hierarchy” ( Gurnah, 2011, p. 106).

Therefore, the novel requires a newer perspective to look through. Although the West looked at people other than itself as other and colonized all these people’s lands with the so-called intention of civilizing those lands, the novel allows for a double-voiced dialogue in which the outlook of the theoretical world is deconstructed. With regard to this, these words are quite supportive.

*Between the speaking subject, the word, and its object there exists an elastic environment of other words about the same object... it is precisely in the process of living interaction with this specific environment that the word may be individualized and given stylistic shape. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 276)*

Gurnah's homeless heroes, therefore, multiply the meaning of stories, words and identities in the flexibility of space. They are neither bound up by the black-Muslim stereotype, nor can their speech be confined to a monologic closed discourse.

### **2.2.3. *By The Sea*: Islam as a Voice in the Luggage and Islam as Culture**

In "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", Stuart Hall (1990) associates cultural identity with "one, shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self', hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves', which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common" (p. 223). As Steiner (2010) also writes, Gurnah offers "counternarratives to myths of nation, land and language" and his fiction "points out precisely the lack of freedom such discourses and politics produce (pp. 124-125).

When looked from this angle, identities in *By The Sea* are very much under the effect of Islam as a shaping and defining force, which is also a regulator of social life in Zanzibar, not the myth of nation or something else. Latif Mahmoud recalls his childhood and shows us how indispensable part of life Islam was for them and how Islam regulated people's social lives.

*The large room downstairs was for receiving male visitors who were strangers to the family, on the days of Idd or Maulid Nabi, or at a death or marriage. That was why it was near the front door, so that covetous male eyes would not penetrate to the tender pulse of male intimacy. It was the kind of room we did not usually have much use for as my father did not invite male exotica to our house, nor did he have open house during Idd and Maulid Nabi as some people did. I imagine it was used for the women's wake and readings after the death of father's mother. (Gurnah, 2001, p. 83)*

Despite existence of corrupt or anti-religious behaviour, Islam apparently governs all facets of social life in Zanzibar. The codes of hospitality, children's being sent to Koran school every day, separation of women's rooms from men's, celebration of Islamic holy days and festivals clearly indicate the permeating affect of Islam on Zanzibari society. For instance, while narrating his days in the detention centre in Zanzibar, he tells that they prayed five times a day and recited Koran from memory, until his amnesty in 1979 (Gurnah, 2001, pp. 232-3). Yet, Gurnah also lays bare how unhomed Islam is in Zanzibar by depicting some stories that in no way abide Islamic rules. Hassan, Latif's brother, is sexually abused by Uncle Hussein who is a guest at Latif Mahmoud's father's house. While narrating the moment when he notices that his brother was sexually harassed by Hussein, Latif says

*Hassan was well built and full, a youth and recently he had been so conscious of his maturity that even when we were alone in our room he had taken to covering his genitals when before he would have lolled about without a care if the mood took him. And that look of catastrophe in his face, in someone whose eyes glared and stared or leapt with scorn and mischief and insurrection at any misuse. (Gurnah, 2001, p. 92)*

The corrupt and unlawful state of events in Zanzibar is not confined to Hassan's being sexually harassed by the merchant Hussein. Latif Mahmoud's mother's adulterous relationship with the same merchant is another example that can be held as to how rotten the Zanzibari society has become: "Do you want me to come in? She walked past him into the room, and he followed behind her and shut the door" (Gurnah, 2001, p. 94). Besides, while narrating the society's reaction to Hassan's being sexually harassed, Latif Mahmoud is once more disgusted to be a member of that society. School friends chase Latif Mahmud and ask him if "it was true he had a new father" (Gurnah, 2001, p. 95). Even, a man gives Latif Mahmoud a letter written in English to be taken to Hassan but Hassan tore it into pieces. While all these are happening, it can be said that Islam is an instrument in making the hero conscious. In other words, Islam provides the hero with a framework to evaluate what is going around him. Then, the hero is not

*manifestation of reality that possesses fixed and specific socially typical or individually characteristic traits, nor as a specific profile assembled out of unambiguous and objective features which, taken together, answer the question "Who is he?" No, the hero interests Dostoevsky as a. particular point of view on the world and on oneself, as the position enabling a person to interpret and evaluate his own self and his surrounding reality. What is important to Dostoevsky is not how his hero appears in the world but first and foremost how the world appears to his hero, and how the hero appears to himself. (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 47)*

Based on Bakhtin's words, Latif Mahmoud evaluates the world around him through an Islamic way of knowing. Instead of a fixed image or a stereotype, both Latif and Saleh Omar are the subjects of their "own self consciousness... and all of reality becomes an element of the character's self-consciousness" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 48). This point becomes more robust when Saleh Omar informs the reader by saying that he will "tell it this way" or alterations from the "original" (Gurnah, 2001, p. 16) may exist.

Saleh Omar, despite once being a rich and renowned tradesman in Zanzibar but now an asylum seeker under a false name, has the same self-consciousness as a hero. The different positions of identity we witness and the different people in which he dialogically interacts reveals a discourse that disrupt the existing power relations. As Helff (2009)

states “By recollecting and illuminating a Zanzibari past, a cold-war continental Europe and present-day multicultural Britain the protagonists’ life-stories weave a polyphonic narrative net, reflecting distinctively different refugee experiences and illegal diasporic lives” (p.74). Moreover, this recollection of the past helps offers “alternative accounts of history as sources of empowerment” (Nyman, 2009, p. 136).

Even if the two characters undergo different times and assume differing identities, one central point remains intact. They resist having a national (Zanzibari) identity and the cultural boundaries this identity carries with itself. But they do never deny being Muslim. When Rachel, Saleh Omar’s legal adviser on the issue of asylum transactions, organizes a meeting between Saleh Omar and Latif Mahmoud, who will help with the translation job, Saleh Omar feels fearful since he knows the man but says “So he was the expert on our area! Mashaallah, that was something, not a stranger who came to summarise us, but one of our own (Gurnah, 2001, p. 67). Yet, despite his fear, this confrontation helps him the unfolding of truth and the re-construction of past in another setting. The same fear is also experienced when Salih Omar prefers to remain silent during his application at the refugee centre. While on one hand characters leave their old identities aside, they get prepared to establish new identities in new places that are free from nationalist or racist boundaries. Only religion remains functional and provides the heroes with a way of knowing, looking at the world. This situation is best expressed when Saleh Omar says

*My name is Rajab Shaaban. It is not my real name, but a name I borrowed for the occasion of this life-saving trip. It belonged to someone I knew for many years. Shaaban is also the name of the eighth month of the year, the month of division, when the destinies of the coming year are fixed and the sins of the truly penitent are absolved. (Gurnah, 2001, pp. 41)*

This Islamic consciousness produces an unfixed center of culture that challenges cultural models identifying themselves with nation. In line with Bhabha’s famous theory interrogating the location of culture, the culture on which these two men’s identities cannot be limited to place or their skin color. The process of mobility and diaspora provides them with unfixable categories of identity and those that are beyond national or historical consciousness. As regards this, Murray’s point is noteworthy. Gurnah “occupies gaps, articulates contradictions, creates disjunctures, all in the attempt to

reconfigured the mobile contours of his own cultural affiliations into content and narrative modes that blur African, Muslim and British identity markers” (Murray, 2013, p. 152).



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **ISLAM IN *DESERTION***

#### **3.1. *Desertion***

##### **3.1.1. Overview of the novel**

The main narrator of the novel is Rashid and he is the youngest of three siblings. Amin is two years older than Rashid and Farida is the oldest child. The events narrated depict scenes in Zanzibar during the late 1950s when Zanzibar was undergoing a transition from colonialism to independence. And again, the reiteration of themes such as home, belonging and nation as sources of identity are renegotiated throughout the novel.

The novel combines two stories which are contingent on one another. The main story in the novel starts in a small town in Kenya, along Mombasa. An Englishman is found as collapsed outside a mosque one morning in 1899. Hassanali comes across the man and, as a rule of hospitality and as required by Islamic codes of hospitality, does not leave the helpless man in front of the mosque and takes him to his home. The family members and people from the neighbourhood come to help and nurse the man so as to heal him.

Hassanali is depicted in the novel as a coward and nervous man. After the sick and dehydrated Martin Pearce is taken to Hassanali's home, Frederick Turner who was already seeking Martin Pearce, arrives at the scene and he even blames Hassanali's family for stealing Martin Pearce's belongings. Martin Pearce, a man who can be named as an orientalist and has a robust linguistic knowledge, is taken by Turner to the residency. When he begins to converse with Frederick Turner, Martin Pearce expresses his sorrow for accusations against the savior family, since he had nothing beside him when he was rescued by Hassanali. He decides to pay a visit to Hassanali to apologize and sees Rehana,

Hassanali's sister. Pearce immediately falls in love with Rehana. Rehana's father originally came from India and settled in Mombasa and married a woman from Mombasa. The family was a minority but the days of slavery and sultanate had just passed.

As the novel proceeds, we witness an affair between Rehana and Pearce. On one level this affair can be read as going together of two clashing and conflicting worldviews. On the other level, we witness Rehana's story which symbolizes the homelessness of a woman from a minority group. She is even expelled from the town due to the love affair. This affair is the core of the story and it unfolds again half a century later in quite an unexpected way. The three siblings Amin, Rashid and Farida receive a colonial education in Zanzibar. Rashid, wants to go to Oxbridge and Farida cannot achieve anything at school and she deals with household chores as well as being a tailor. She has a client named Jamila, who is the granddaughter of Rehana and Pearce. The fate of the homeless grandmother affects the granddaughter and she is labelled as a "divorced woman whose grandmother slept with 'mzungu'". Amin becomes attracted to Jamila. However, Amin's parents do not accept such an affair on grounds of Jamila's family history. Amin yields to his family's objections but at the same time suffers thinking that Jamila will think she is deserted by him.

The process of independence and revolution changes the lives of everybody entirely. Rashid, who deserts home for his passion for learning, misses childhood days and his family. However, the existing dictatorship does not allow him to return back and he can only keep track of the situation through letters and news. Towards the ends of the story, Ma and Amin become blind. Years pass by and Rashid puts the story together from notes kept by Amin and remnants from his memory.

#### **3.1.1.1. *Desertion*: Heteroglossia and Islam as Counternarratives to Nation**

Heteroglossia in *Desertion* is an indispensable part of the novel. Martin Pearce communicates with Hassanali, the son of an Indian father and African mother, in Arabic and he tries to communicate with the natives in the same language. Pearce's effort to communicate with these people in Arabic cannot be solely regarded as gesture towards these people. Instead, the grandiosity of colonialism is subverted through the various identities such as Indian, African, Muslim and English, languages and ways of knowing

that permeate three generations. Now that heteroglossia refers to “points of view on the world, forms for conceptualizing the world in words, specific world views, each characterized by its own objects, meanings and values” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 291), it has the power and potential to govern meaning and deconstruct the prevalent discourse. As Lavery mentions “Gurnah focuses in particular on language, forms of narrative and the effects of distance” (Lavery, 2017, p. 35). The heteroglossia in the novel does not only feed on the diversities of religion, ethnicity and languages but also it is backed up by silences and memories in the novel. For instance, Barbara Turner, who is the granddaughter of Frederick Turner, learns about the love affair between Rehana and Pearce from the diary his grandfather kept during his mission in Africa. Rashid, who immigrated from Africa to England, receives the upsetting news from his country through letters and most importantly he acquires a new way of looking at the world, his country and England as a heteroglot Muslim.

The heteroglossia in the novel does not only decentralize the discourse but the affairs between Pearce and Rehana, Amin and Jamil and Rashid and Barbara go beyond national and ethnic identities and are moved into a universal platform. In the same vein, Zekeriya, Hassanali and Rehana’s father, gets married to an African woman although he is Indian in origin. He sees no problem in getting married to an African woman since Islam is a universal and universalizing religion that disregards boundaries of identity such as race or country of origin. As reiterated before, Gurnah does not necessarily focus on Islam as an instrument of salvation and nor his stance towards religion is about disseminating the teaching of Islam and inviting people to pious ways of living. Instead Gurnah sees Islam as a constructive instrument that makes transitions between ethnic and national identities possible. While telling the situation of Zakariya, a man of Indian origin and denying racial categories which people around him are so much obsessed with, the third person narrator writes

*Their father, whose name was Zakariya, had always said that he was a muslim living along Muslims, and that was enough for him. Where he was born or came from was neither here nor there, they all lived in the house of God, dar-al-Islam which stretched across mountains and forests and oceans, and where all were the same in submission to God. He had a gift for languages, their father, and spoke Kiswahili, Arabic and Gujarati fleuntly. ( Gurnah, 2005, p. 62)*

Zakariya also “had never seemed troubled or interested in his Indianness, so completely absorbed was he by the daily details of family and neighbours and his business’ (Gurnah, 2005, p. 64). Bhabha’s approach to the existence of minorities and how they dissolve the boundaries of the idea of nation seem very apt in this sense.

*...colonials, postcolonials, migrants, minorities — wandering peoples who will not be contained within the Heim of the national culture and its unisonant discourse, but are themselves the marks of a shifting boundary that alienates the frontiers of the modern nation. They are Marx’s reserve army of migrant labour who by speaking the foreignness of language split the patriotic voice of unisonance and become Nietzsche’s mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms. They articulate the death-in-life of the idea of the ‘imagined community’ of the nation; the worn-out metaphors of the resplendent national life now circulate in another narrative of entry permits and passports and work permits that at once preserve and proliferate, bind and breach the human rights of the nation.(Bhabha, 1990, p. 315)*

The dialogic narrator of the novel, Rashid is a professor of literature and as a homeless narrator that belongs neither to Africa nor to England, brings together the different languages of people from three different generations. Despite being blind, people can imagine transnational boundaries and the ideas of nationhood and home get devastated. They write their own histories; “the peoples of the periphery return to rewrite the history and fiction of the metropolis” (Bhabha, 1990, p.6).

In *Desertion*, Gurnah closely deals with the concepts of root, identity, nation and religion as categories of identity. Since these categories are functional in defining the other and constructing hierarchies of power, Gurnah skillfully plays with these notions and dismantles them so as to show identity and space are not functional for maintaining strict boundaries for communities. Instead, borders are constantly crossed over through new languages, humanitarian relations and political discourses. By constantly adding stories into stories, the dialogic narrators in *Desertion* shows us how various dislocated subjects renegotiate their identities in an outside Africa.

As the narrator of the 21st century Africa, Gurnah is determined to depict the intermingling of societies, nations and communities and to establish connections between these intermingling power hierarchies among the colonizer and the colonized. While bringing into light the complicated stories of the characters, Gurnah redefines the identity of a Muslim African within the framework of bi-racial relations and migration. This way,

a polyphonic atmosphere occurs and the fiction is moved from monologism to intermingling of different sounds. Gurnah's style in most of his novels and particularly in *Desertion* can be seen as a revolt against earlier fiction about Africa that could not move beyond (African) nationalism as a marker of identity. In all his novels, the negotiation of identity is surely the central point. However, in *Desertion*, the perspective of a migrant African both concerning himself and the people around him and the time span covering almost ninety years make this novel slightly more important in analyzing the arguments of this thesis and deconstruct the simple and fixed constructions of African identity. The novel does not simply lay bare the opposition between the colonizer and the colonized nor the conflict between Islam and the Christian world. Lewis notes that Gurnah is "as suspicious of potentially racist and sexist African nationalism as he is critical of its racist and sexist colonialist antecedent" (2011, p. 54).

The rivalries within racial and ethnic groups that have lasted from old times onwards are dismantled by the dialogic narrator. Therefore, not only the narrator dialogizes and reconstructs patterns of identity but also he blurs spatio-temporal limitations of narration to resist stereotypical images of the black muslim. Gurnah skillfully mixes Asian, Indian and European patrilineages against the background of homogenous identities in earlier African fiction. Gurnah does not sentimentalize blackness and he does not try to come up with a pure African identity although "At the end of colonialism, the idea of a pure (black) African identity was taken up by groups such as black politicians, black African philosophers, as well as black African writers of fiction, in order to consolidate the notion that black Africanness was indeed the Other of Europe" (Kalua, 2020, p. 2). The constant mentioning of people from various races and ethnicities and the confluence of cultures are skillfully used by the narrator to destabilize binaristic frames of identity such as the colonized and the colonizer, Muslim and Christian and male and female. Gurnah makes this argument more robust in an interview with Nasta by saying

*On the other hand the idea of a pre-colonial homogeneity comes in very useful politically – to new nationalist or to new African governments which say, 'Everyone who is not like me or like us is a stranger, is marginal to the real political, authentic citizen.' Many African societies have used this as a way of expelling and tormenting, in Uganda for example, with Idi Amin, and in Zanzibar. So the idea of who belongs then becomes one that is made into an essentialist question. One is made into a certain kind of 'African' so when you ask the question 'What is an African?' an African becomes somebody 'who looks like me'. Not someone who has some kind of citizen rights to the place. So these two*

*things made me uncomfortable with some of these fictions. ( as cited in Nasta,2004, p. 360)*

The story in *Desertion* mainly veers around Rashid who leaves Zanzibar in the 1960s for his dream of becoming an academician. However, we learn that, after his departure, Zanzibar turns into a chaotic place both economically and politically. Even though he can regularly communicate with his family at the beginning, the government soon prohibits correspondances with other countres. Tragedy befalls upon his family. Rashid later learns that his brother Amin falls blind. While his family undergo severe difficulties in Africa, Rashid becomes a prolific academic in Britain.

The novel entails stories within stroies which are skillfully intertwined with one another through varying time frames. In the first part we have four chapters which narrate events towards the end of the 19th century and the second part involves events in the late 1950s. The chapters at the beginning of the novel deal with Hassanali, Martin Pearce, Rehana and Frederick Turner. Hassanali and Rehana are siblings and they already belong to a minority group since they are the children born out of the marriage of an Indian father and African mother. Hassanali is married and Rehana, a divorced woman, lives with his borther's family. When one morning Hassanali finds the collapsed Martin Pearce in front of the mosque, he brings him to his house as he thinks Muslim codes of hospitality require this. Also as a firm believer, Hassanali thinks "It was God's chance that made things happen as they did, and God did nothing by chance" (Gurnah, 2005, p. 23) or "This was a burden that had been chosen for him, perhaps to try him or punish him or test him, according to a wisdom which was not apparent to him" (Gurnah, 2005, p. 23). On all accounts, Hassanalis's religious codes justify his behaviour to accept the wounded guest to his home and he thinks this is ordained by God. He also says "You can't expect me to leave a suffering son of Adam out there when we can offer himkindness and care" (gurnah, 2005, p. 12). By using the phrase the "son of Adam", Gurnah disseminates the idea of nationhood and instead he turns the whole world into the home of humanity.

Martin is introduced as a historian and orientalist. While on an animal hunting expedition, he thought this was a very cruel way of entertainment and as he was returning from the expedition, he was robbed by Somali guides except for his small diary. Rehana on the other hand is an intelligent and outgoing young woman. We learn that she was deserted by her husband and cruelly she is stigmatized in the society for being single at that age.

Amidst all this insult and labelling, she falls in love Pearce, the guest at their house, and moves to another city with him and Asmil is born out of this marriage. Though the narrator says “What would have made an Englishman of his background - university, colonial official, a scholar - begin something like that with the sister of a shopkeeper in a small town on the East African coast?”(Gurnah, 2005, 117), Rehana behaves against the religious customs and impositions of her community and escapes from Mombasa to lead a life with Martin. When the story moves into the 1950s, we learn that Amin, Rashid’s brother, falls in love with Jamila, Rehana’s granddaughter and Asmil’s daughter.

The introduction of the novel mainly focuses on biracial Hassanali, since he is the pious Muslim that symbolizes the bridge between Rehana and Pearce. The role Islam plays in his life can be discussed. Is Islam an instrument for him to come over the nullity his mixed roots have caused? For instance we learn from the novel that

*When the banter started he always struggled against the flow of jibes and jokes, and kept quiet to stay out of trouble. He lived in this state of self-absorbed timidity, expecting mockery and inevitably suffering it. He could not disguise the anxiety and people who had known him all his life knew this about him, and made a joke out of it.(Gurnah, 2005, p. 17)*

Or does he want to earn the community’s approval through adhering to religious practices. The answers to these questions might vary. However, his identity as a muslim dominates his bi-racial background and allows him a sense of identity. The society he lives in stubbornly sees him as Indian and he can bind himself to that society through religious practices. Gurnah, as a writer who wants to destabilize the significance of nation and place as markers of identity, shows how Islam can create alternative spaces. Both Rehana and Hassanali are called “chotara”. Rehana “remembered as a child how sometimes these Indians came past the shop and how they treated their father disdainfully”(Gurnah, 2005, p. 66) since he was married to an African woman and later she understands that the word ‘chotara’ meant “bastard, an improper child of an Indian man with an African woman” (Gurnah, 2005, p. 66). Each time, Gurnah strategically uses Islam as a glue that binds people within a society regardless of their nations. Not only the two children but also Zakariya, the father, is made to suffer due to his wife’s Africanness. Due to fear of attack and disdain from his friends, he has to leave Mombasa, the place he sees as his own.

Gurnah therefore not only narrates the encounter between the colonized and the colonizer. He shows the reader how unhomed his characters are but at the same time how different ways of knowing the world interact with one another. Zakariya is a good example for this. A pious man who is very careful with his religious duties

*had a gift for languages, their father, and spoke Kiswahili, Arabic and Gujarati fluently. His Kiswahili was quite perfect. It was not only that he could make himself understood in this language, but that he felt it, and made his way in it with an intimacy and assurance that was like an instinct, like walking, a skill so profoundly learned that it seemed natural.*(Gurnah, 2005, p .62)

Zakariya is a muslim living among muslims. To Moorthy (2010), “Where race and language embody difference, necessitating the forging of bridges across barriers, today’s historians see Islam as the great universal link” and “Gurnah appears to present Islam as the great universal ideal across the Indian Ocean” (p. 80). Being a muslim is an identity for him that eliminates the significance of racial and ethnic roots. But it is not the same for his African wife. She is discriminated on grounds of being African, yet she discriminates Rehana and her granddaughter on grounds of their ancestry and affair with an Englishman. Serious conflict arises when Amin falls in love with Rehana’s granddaughter. Amin’s mother strongly resists her son’s affair with the daughter of a chotara by saying

*Do you know what kind of people they are? Her grandmother wasa chotara, a child of sin by an Indian man, a bastard. When she grew into a woman , she was the mistress of an Englishman for many years, and before that another mzungu gave her a child of sin too, her own bastard. (Gurnah, 2005, p. 204)*

Through the female characters in the novel, Gurnah once more problematizes and deconstructs the issue of race as a marker of identity. He uses the same strategy on Martin Pearce. He is introduced to us as an exhausted and collapsed man who is need of care and protection. By doing this, Gurnah deconstructs the image of Europe as powerful and dominant. Besides, Martin Pearce does not have any belongings near him, apart from the small notebook which he used as his diary. Despite being a European, he is hosted by a Muslim native family during his recovery. Even if he is rudely taken from that house by Frederick Turner, he returns back to apologize for Frederick’s blamings. Therefore, Martin Pearce symbolizes an anticolonial-man inside. One day Burton, one of the colonial men in the estate, says that Africa “ has the potential to be another America”, “but not as

long as the Africans are here. The niggers have been corrupted by the Arabs, by their religion and their...” (Gurnah, 2005, p. 83). Pearce, on the other hand, is far from this colonial mindset and instead he thinks “we owe them care for the way we have intruded in their ways of life”(Gurnah, 2005, p. 85).



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **ISLAM IN *THE LAST GIFT***

#### **4.1. *The Last Gift***

##### **4.1.1. Overview of the novel**

*The Last Gift* is the last novel written by Gurnah. The domineering themes of exile, attempts at re-locating identity, being victims of circumstances and ethical dilemmas because of these circumstances dominate the novel. The characters in the novel have problems with their roots and besides being spatially dislocated, they are also dislocated temporally.

In the novel, the story mostly veers around Abbas who immigrated to England from East Africa. He withholds his story and past from his family. Despite several attempts by his children and wife, he never tells them to which part of Africa he belongs, how his years on ship crews passed and why he deserted Africa. He is a diabetic patient and one day, the way home, he has a heart attack which leaves him unable to speak and walk. Following the heart attack, he the medical team and his wife encourage him to tell about his life before he came to England. Despite keeping his past as a secret up to that day, Abbas decides to unfold to his two children and wife the very circumstances that led him to leave Zanzibar, to work as a sailor and get married to Maryam, a mixed descent British woman. The storyline that begins with Abbas's leaving East Africa and getting married to Maryam is full of new encounters, dialogues and reflects the possible outcomes of being unhomed in a world that is totally alien and unwelcoming. This process of unfolding brings with itself lots of suppressed memories and shows how afloat his identity has been while trying to reconcile with his past and memories. Throughout all this process, his

identity as a Muslim poses a liminal identity. Sometimes, he becomes a Muslim African and sometimes he becomes an English Muslim.

The wife Maryam was an orphan, most possibly of Muslim origin as can be understood from her name, gets married to Abbas at an early age. Her main problem also lies in the fact that her roots are unclear; she does not even know where she comes from and what her roots are. Still, being Muslim defines her as an outcast in the Christian English society.

The children of the family, Hannah and Jamal, undergo crises of identity in different levels, since their past is in England, not in India or East Africa. They oscillate between Englishness and their narrated Islamic identity. Hanna, as a girl dissatisfied with her given name, wants to be called as Anna and never accepts being African, while on the other hand the English society in which she is living does not accept her as English. She is seemingly so much raged “about the secrecy and their suppressed and dissembling lives” (Gurnah, 2012, p. 46). She even does not/cannot confess that she is African when she introduces herself to her boyfriend’s family, who are racist and discriminatory against the non-English. As opposed to Anna, her brother Jamal, stings more to being a Muslim as part of his identity even though we cannot observe direct Islamic practices conducted by him. Perhaps, Islam as an instrument of identity is important mostly for Jamal since he needs to understand it more to be able to construct his subjectivity.

#### **4.1.2. ‘The Monkey from Africa!’: Unhomed Islam in *The Last Gift***

Bhabha’s concepts of mimicry, hybridity and unhomely can help us understand Abbas, Maryam, Hanna and Jamal’s sense of identity and belonging in a world that is dominated by Christian ways of knowing. Beforehand, I maintained that identity is so much embedded in space and space is associated with nation as the locus of identity. Besides, space is an essentialized notion. To give an example, East Africa, when considered from a European spatial perspective, denotes backwardness, Islamic-Arabic culture and brutality. Yet, when identity is divorced from place, there remains unhomeliness. To expand on this a little more, we can give the example of East African Muslim immigrant seeking residence in Christian Britain. The relation of Muslim East African to European space is surely that of unhomeliness, which is a term that leans back to Freudian uncanny that has been translated from the German word *unheimliche*. Unhomeliness is intimately

linked with hybridity, since there can be no identity or state of being that is uncontaminated or unaffected with other cultures. The dialogization or hybridization among cultures and identities results in unhomeliness, because no space or identity can be regarded as homely and they are always apt to change. As also touched upon by Murray, space/place becomes “an insufficient and problematic marker of identity” for Gurnah (Murray, 2013, p. 145). Therefore, Gurnah’s characters explore different spaces and each time they explore different spaces and are unhomed, they undergo colorful transformations of identity and subjectivity.

When Islam as a marker of identity becomes unhomely, we can discover “how rich and manifold the hidden can be under conditions of intimacy” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 15). When Islam as culture and identity is unhomely, it can relate “the traumatic ambivalences of a personal, psychic history to the wider disjunctions of political existence” (Bhabha, 1994, p.15). When considered from this perspective, Abbas’s traumatic past and his escape to England can reveal a lot about his status and being in England. Firstly, the general idea that permeates the text of the novel is that Abbas prefers to remain silent as regards his past. His children and wife do not totally know why and how he moved to England. Despite the fact that he fabricates differing stories of his past each time and the focal points of his stories are multiple, religion as an identity marker can be observed along the lines of his stories. Perhaps, at the first glance, Abbas’s story seems no different from a traditional migrant story, which tells displacement and the sense of not belonging to anywhere. However, if we look from an unhomely perspective, we can notice how the unhomed Muslim can be a subject in his/her own terms and how authoritative he/she can be in narrating his/her story. Though the issue of identity here intersects both with narration and politics, it should be noted that both are interdependent. That is to say, what is narrated cannot be free from the politics of the day. Hence, Abbas’s coming to England as a Muslim immigrant and the existence of his family in England as a Muslim one cannot only be restricted to the frames of narration.

There is benefit in stating that the function of religion in the *Last Gift* is that it is a significant marker of identity. Abbas tries to preserve his ontological position in Britain as a Muslim diasporic African person. However, Islam has a dualistic dimension in the novel. Firstly, as I have just stated, it signifies root and identity for the diasporic hero.

Secondly, it denotes the rotten status of the African society that identifies itself with Islam but hosts a lot of unacceptable things that in fact do not comply with Islam.

One day he remembers the days of his youth when religion was abused by African society. Abbas recalls his first marriage to Sharifa and shares how it began with the audience. One day while Abbas and Sharifa were “making eyes at each other from the safety of their homes” (Gurnah, 2011, p.134), the merchant father saw them and he informed the girl’s aunt of the situation and the aunt raised fears about “how a story can change as it passes from hand to hand and how it can grow into a different shape, especially where it concerned a young woman’s reputation” (Gurnah, 2011, p. 135), despite Abbas was just taking a look, not even thinking of anything, not even interested in anything, just enjoying how she looked”(Gurnah, 2011, p. 132). Although there was not even a slight contact between Sharifa and Abbas, Abbas was charged with causing dishonor on Sharifa and intriguingly enough, they were made to marry. Upon learning that Abbas committed such dishonor on Sharifa, the rich merchant’s daughter, Abbas’s father becomes angry and he blames his son thus:

*I knew it would end like this, he shouted. I knew it, I just knew it. Those European teachers and their school have turned your head. Their books have taught you to give yourself such airs that you think you can go and fuck a rich man’s daughter. Now they’ll beat you in the streets like a dog, you don’t know these Yemeni merchants. (Gurnah, 2011, p.136)*

This quotation from the novel is utterly important in that it depicts the status of East Africa at the time. On one hand it is a littoral region where trade governs the social structure. Yet, on the other hand it is a region where Europe, Islam, Arabic culture and the native African culture intermingle. Firstly, although Abbas has not done anything to the girl, he becomes obliged to propose marriage to Sharifa to save her honor. In Islam, sexual violation of a woman by a man should either result in marriage or the man has to be punished in different ways to compensate for the woman’s dishonor. However, in this case Islam itself becomes violated by the Yemeni family to cover the unlawful pregnancy of Sharifa from another unknown man, which Abbas understands quickly when the baby is born too soon after the wedding. The victim is unfortunately Abbas. However, Abbas’s father’s reaction is also significant. He thinks the teachers at Mfeneseni have negatively changed Abbas’s way of thinking and manners. The quotation above, therefore, clearly shows us how the native society of Zanzibar has been left between Arabic culture and

Islam. Normally, Abbas's family adheres to religious rules but on the other hand they also have to abide by the rule of the rich to be able to survive and they see this as Islamic law, while indeed it is not. This is not the single example as to how rotten the society in East Africa was. Besides political instability and social unrest, Abbas the narrator lists so many events which indicate that the so-called Muslim Yemeni or the Muslims in Africa do not lead religious lives. As Schiffren (2022) writes, most of Gurnah's characters are "cafeteria Muslims, picking and choosing which rules they will follow. Though the Koran provides solace, most of the younger immigrants go native on alcohol and pork" (p. 40). Religion compensates people's weaknesses and failures and being a Muslim or clinging to this identity never can be labelled as a fundamentalist stance against the Western norms. Just as African people were unhomed in their own lands and had to confront the tyranny brought about by the revolution, Islam is also unhomed and unrooted in African lands. The religion experienced and practiced by people is not the Islam that complies with the teachings of Koran.

While people might abuse Islam to justify their deeds, what they are doing is closely linked to tradition. While Islam sees superiority in *taqwa*, Abbas becomes insulted in Sharifa's family on grounds of not coming from a rich family. The narrator writes the following as regards Sharifa's brothers and how they mistreat Abbas and do not abide by Islamic rules.

*The brothers were always teasing him and laughing at him in their worldly way, treating him like a stumbling innocent blundering through life. They were notorious men. Every evening, in their separate cars, they parked in discreet places to wait for women who came in search of them. They were both married. (Gurnah, 2011, p. 139).*

Both the narrator and Abbas multiply examples as to the religious insincerity of the East African/Yemeni society. Adultery, humiliation and corruption are so widespread in Abbas's childhood society, though seemingly its majority is characterized as being Muslim. However, Abbas is a self-conscious, thinking man. Though the surface focus of Gurnah's novels is displacement and diaspora, Gurnah implicitly shows us that neither the characters nor Islam unconditionally belong to Africa. Out of blue, he finds himself married to the daughter of a rich family and he is insulted and discriminated intolerably. The family rebukes him like a child and treat him like a servant. All these narrations show us how unhomed people become in their own lands if injustice and hypocrisy prevail.

Looking back to Africa now as an old man and his family wondering about his past, Abbas adds further details while at the same time disseminating the idea of nationhood and myths of grandiosity. Instead, he narrates in detail how tragic the condition in the society was, despite the so-called relatively high number of Muslim believers in the society.

*They keep catching us out in our lies, our better, hardly listening to the stories about our tolerant, smiling, harmonious ancient civilisations. That is what I would like to have told my children if I had spoken about that little place. That we all lived together in peace, in a forbearing society built as only Muslims know how, even though among us were people of many religions and race. I would have known no other way of talking about it. I would not have told them about the rage that lay just under the surface waiting to break, or the rough justice the children of the enslaved planned to inflict on their sultan and on everyone else who mocked and despised them. I would not have told them about our hatreds, or about the way women were treated like merchandise, how they were traded and inherited by their uncles and brothers and brothers-in-law. I would not have told them how enthusiastically the women themselves performed their worthlessness. And I would not have told them about our tyrannical ways with children. Why are we such a lying, deceitful rabble?( Gurnah, 2011, p. 243).*

The author comes up with a social critique of his time while handling Islam. It is indeed this rottenness that makes him escape from his own country. Despite the fact that he constantly associates himself with East Africa, each time he also remembers that he did not belong there and he was already homeless in his own country. Now that he is under tyranny and Islam is abused in Africa, he establishes another Islamic identity apart from home. This time, the religious identity he founds is far from Arabism and the mischiefs of the society he was living in.

One of the biggest memories that remains in Abbas's mind as regards Africa is his being deceitfully made to get married to Sharifa. Although Sharifa was pregnant from somebody else, Abbas was deceived by his family into getting married to her. What is even worse is that he was persuaded to divorce her with one word if he did not want to remain married: "There was nothing easier to do than divorce a wife. Just one little word will do it" (Gurnah, 2011, p. 141). Abbas, as the narrator of the story, therefore questions his identity as an Muslim African but he cannot locate it anywhere. Being an African is almost synonymous with being nobody and being a Muslim has confusing connotations. Why did he have to bear such tyranny and mistreatment in a Muslim country? Why did they make him marry to a girl who was already pregnant from another man, only to save the girl from dishonor? Taking all these into account, Abbas's naming himself as a monkey

from Africa gains more significance, since he cannot identify himself either as a human or as a Muslim in Africa. His identity as Abbas, Maryam's husband, Jamal and Hanna's father, Abbas the wanderer, Abbas as a Muslim guy from Africa become set up on the way. This naturally brings us to Bhabha's famous philosophy that identity is not fixed but a process that moves on. Thus, it is wrong and impossible to classify people with essentialist labels.

Abbas's "mode of representation of otherness" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 97) is totally related to the Western discourse that sees Islam and Orient "as a unified racial, geographical, political and cultural zone of the world" (Bhabha, 1994, p.101). Though Abbas constructs stories of his past that have different focuses, this is mainly because he resists the singularity of his identity as a Muslim. Abbas mentions of a friend called Ibrahim who helped him find accommodation and work when he came to Durban. As two Muslim guys, they are in solidarity and support one another. But one thing is outstanding. The region where Ibrahim's family was living was densely packed with Muslim Indians and the rest of the Muslims were called Arabs.

*That was how the Indians liked it. It kept the savages out of their midst, although they did not mind so much the Arabs, as the rest of the Muslims were called. That was the official name the government had for them. Even Muslim Indians were Arabs. It was important not to be called native, because then you would be subject to bad laws, and anyway, none of them wanted to be called African then. (Gurnah, 2011, p. 254)*

As also understood from the quote above, the orientalist discourse equates being Muslim with Arabness. Since Islamic identity is unhomely in the European context, Abbas can never reveal it truly but each time he makes up a new past that defines himself. Despite his wife's yearning for a story that grounds Abbas's existence on firm grounds, Abbas's narrations of his past are full of remorse, silences and hesitations.

Gurnah depicts the impact of colonisation and how traumatic and at the same time fruitful it can be during the process of identity formation. The characters in the novel all try to locate themselves in a region that is foreign to them, both in terms of culture and religion. Particularly Abbas, the main character of this novel, represents the role of a Muslim father that contrasts with actual practices of Muslims, which is a controversial aspect of Gurnah's work. However, through the dialogic processes the characters are used by the author to deconstruct the orientalist perspective towards Islam. Being a Muslim is not

necessarily being an Arab, Islam is on no account limited to a certain spatiality or temporality and the mischiefs of nations or people associated with Islam cannot be attributed to believers all around the world.

#### **4.1.3. Religion as Narrated Identity and Religion as Dialogue: From Hanna to Anna**

In this part of the thesis, I will mainly deal with Hanna, Abbas's daughter as an in-between character. Despite being grown up in England as opposed to her father, Hanna undergoes many difficulties as a girl with an immigrant family and Muslim heritage. When superficially looked, Hanna changes her name into Anna and begins to live with her English boyfriend. Hanna never reveals her true roots to her boyfriend's family and masking her identity, she introduces herself as British. Beneath this masking, there is surely the desire to avoid discrimination and humiliation and being called a girl from a third world country. She insistently tries to be a part of the non-Muslim Christian culture she is living in. Since she was never exposed to the cultural values of the actual heritage she belonged to, she always escaped from accepting who she is. Yet, the name of the novel is at stake here. The last gift in the novel is indeed Abbas's revealing his true identity to his children and making them recall who they are. When looked from this perspective, we observe Anna as a character who is in a dialogic process of self-formation and she turns her otherness into a self. In Bakhtinian terms, "selfhood as a dialogical formation constitutes a fundamental relation by which we much participate without end, making dialogue an unavoidable social activity immersed in language" (McKnight, 2004, p. 281). Hanna's negative attitude towards her true heritage indicates the facts illustrated by the orientalism theory that Eastern-regions are uncivilized ones. Hanna resists accepting to be a part of such an uncivilised culture and worried about her boyfriend's attitude after knowing her real identity.

When Anna and Jamal were children, Abbas excluded them from Christian activities: "because her name was Hanna Abbas and her record said she was a Muslim, her parents were offered the option of excluding her and they took it" (Gurnah, 2011, p. 113). However, the significant thing here is that

*It was her father who was the Muslim, although there was nothing particularly Muslim about what he did or the way they lived. Sometimes he told them what it meant to be a Muslim, the Pillars of Islam, as he called them, praying, fasting, giving alms, going on*

*the pilgrimage to Mecca, although he never did any of those things himself (Gurnah, 2011, p. 113).*

Despite the fact that Abbas is not a pious believer himself, he still feels proud of belonging to a Muslim heritage and being a Muslim person is his narrated identity. On the contrary Anna denies her East-African and Muslim heritage and she insists that she is British when her boyfriend's family ask her where she is from. At a family gathering with Anna's boyfriend,

*After a puzzled silence, Uncle Digby said, 'You don't know where your father comes from! Well, I find this hard to believe.'  
'I don't know,' Anna repeated, unable to think of anything else to say.  
'I'm shocked. Do you mean you don't know, or you don't want to know? It makes me sad to hear you speak with such little interest about your home, Anna,' Uncle Digby said, his eyes lowered and his mouth turned down wretchedly.  
'I am British,' Anna said, and heard the strain in her own voice as she spoke. (Gurnah, 2011. p. 117)*

Perhaps living as a female Muslim immigrant in England is challenging mostly for Hanna. The cultural values she is taught at home and she faces in the outer world are totally different. She is now a young woman, studying at a university with her own efforts. And she faces more voices than her parents do. The author indeed sides with Anna in this respect. Despite Abbas's claims to be a Muslim person, there is nothing truly Islamic about his life and he has been unable to speak throughout his life, remaining silent. Yet, the case is different for Anna. She studies at a university, she has many friends around her. Despite her name and surname reveal her origins, her insistence on being British brings into our minds the fluidity of the idea of nation and religion as markers of identity. Nationhood may be a historical fact and religion is a matter of belief but on the other hand nations and religions as a marker of identity are constructed and narrated. This becomes particularly apparent in the quote below when Abbas says

*They keep catching us out in our lies, our betters, hardly listening to the stories about our tolerant, smiling, harmonious ancient civilisations. That is what I would like to have told my children if I had spoken about that little place. That we all lived together in peace, in a forbearing society built as only Muslims know how, even though among us were people of many religions and race. I would have known no other way of talking about it. I would not have told them about the rage that lay just under the surface waiting to break, or the rough justice the children of the enslaved planned to inflict on their sultan and on everyone else who mocked and despised them. (Gurnah, 2011, p. 244)*

Instead, Abbas either prefers to hide his story from his family or sometimes he makes up other stories as regards his past. As Abbas is now bedridden and apart from the society, he can still sustain his identity as a black Muslim African, being “still a stranger after all these years, coping with that strangeness all his life” (Gurnah, 2011, p.119).

As opposed to her father, Hanna is within the discourse. She goes to school, she has friends, she dates with a British boy. It is impossible for Hanna to remain as a Muslim African under these circumstances. Despite her father’s reprimand “Is this what we sent you to university for? To turn you into a proper English girl?” (Gurnah, 2011, p. 95), Hanna interacts with the dominant discourse more than her father and being Muslim and from Africa are narrated identities for Anna. Since she does not know that culture and far from the Islamic discourse, she cannot be expected to behave like Africans or Muslims. Though the father insistently wants to see Islam as a border/threshold between himself and the British, the non-existence of Islam widely in the public and governmental discourse perpetuates Islam’s status as the ‘other’.

Benedict Anderson (1983) sees nation as an imagined construct in his book *Imagined Communities*. To him, people belonging to a certain group imagine themselves as part of a group and they form communities. Now that both nation and religion are not markers of identity that comes with birth, we neither can talk about their stability nor unchangability. The governmental tools and the dominant discourse make use of ideologies and a common language to perpetuate itself. All these and Bhabha’s notion of hybridity taken into consideration, how can Anna sustain her African-Muslim identity. Under the conditions she is living in, can she resist being British? This can be best exemplified through the following lines.

*What will anybody think if they see you like that? he said. That we have not brought you up to have self-respect. In the end he got tired of the bad feeling these encounters aroused and he tried to ignore her, looking hurt that she took no notice of his instruction. (Gurnah, 2011, p. 94)*

Despite the father’s effort to save Anna from resembling to British and adopting their culture, Anna first starts by calling herself Anna instead of Hanna. Yet, Anna is perhaps the most dialogic character in the novel, interacting with many voices at a time. One day Anna visits her parents and Maryam notices that Anna is replacing her black, African and

Muslim identity with an identity that does not essentially define itself as Muslim and dialogizes with the world she is living in.

*Each time Maryam saw her, she seemed more assured: in her voice and in the movement of her eyes, in the way she dressed, as if complicated choices were involved in the way she looked as she did. Well, yes of course complicated choices were involved, but it was as if she was deliberately remaking herself from someone she did not like. Maryam thought her speech was also changing, leaving one voice behind and taking up another one, still warm (most of the time), but with an undertone of challenge and worldliness that had not been there before. It was the voice of a young Englishwoman making her way in the world. (Gurnah, 2011, p. 31)*

Islam, as I noted earlier, is not a way of living for Gurnah's immigrant characters. It is a way of finding solace or a demarcating line between the Westerners and the muslim immigrants. However, this line of demarcation seems totally lost for Anna; she endeavors at making Nick (her boyfriend) "see that she was unlike them, that she was not one of those immigrants" (Gurnah, 2011, p. 119). Jamal, the brother, protects his ties with Islam. He attends Islam Reading Group meetings "to understand more about a religion he was nominally part of" and "with the need to hear different voices on what was happening in the world" (Gurnah, 2011, p. 120). Even if he does not know how the prayers are made and he is alien to the teachings of Islam, he is still nominally Muslim, not a Westerner. This is best understood when Jamal feels anxious for the Palestinians after 9/11 bombings in New York. The narrator expresses Jamal's anxiety thus:

*And his first thought was let it not be the Palestinians who have done this, because if it is, they will now lose everything as the Americans turn their wrath on them. Then he thought, let the buildings be empty. Let it not be Muslims who have done this. Let it be maddened drug barons or crazed criminals. But of course it was Muslims, and they were proud of what they had done. And the towers were not empty but crowded with people. (Gurnah, 2011, p. 121)*

The author creates two different dialogic voices through the siblings. One refutes her Afro-Islamic roots, while the other tries to hang up to his nominal Muslim identity. Anna is mostly placed with Nick and his family, while Jamal is mostly together with Muslim immigrants like himself. This could be because of two reasons. Firstly, Islam in the post-colonial context is a stronger term than nation. Nation implies fixity and is bound to place. However, Islam is inherently a broader concept and instead of being segregative, it has the mission of unifying people. As we see in the case of Jamal, he tries to preserve his identity by socializing with Muslim immigrants. He does not emphasize being a Muslim much. This could be because "Gurnah resists this idea of pure African indigeneity, one

that silences rather than gives room to other voices” (Lavery, 2002, p. 16). Thus, being African or being defined through a nation is restrictive. However, Islam is universal and open to dialogic processes. Even if Jamal and Anna’s approaches to being Muslim may differ, they both do not define themselves as African. It is a lost place for both siblings. As Abbas says to his family,

*When I left there I did not know how much I was leaving behind. Wherever I wandered or came to live after that nothing was expected of me. I was a man without responsibility, without a purpose. Nothing was required of me. I would have wanted to explain that to you, how I had lost that place, and at the same time lost my place in the world. That’s what it means, this wandering. (Gurnah 2011, p. 249)*

The novel, therefore, shows the slippery nature of the relationship between place and identity. Despite this fluidity, their religious identity remains functional in defining who they are.

## CONCLUSION

The main objective of this thesis was to analyze Islam in a transnational and cross-cultural context and as an unhomely concept in Abdulrazak Gurnah's novels *By The Sea*, *Desertion* and *The Last Gift* through Bhabha's theoretical lenses he provided in the *Location of Culture* and Bakhtin's dialogism which he specified in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* and *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* by M.M. Bakhtin. The novels handled in this thesis take us to the conclusion that Islam as an unhomely concept is used by the dialogic author to narrate and realign identities in a world in which there are no fixed boundaries as regards identity and being. We also tried to analyze the characters' unfixed relation to space as Muslims and people of the periphery. One of the significant background on which this thesis lies is the fact that Islam has been treated as the 'other' of Western culture and religion and we developed the argument that Gurnah strategically uses Islam to resist the dominant discourses supported by the essentializing and fixing systems of thought. Even, it can be said that Gurnah sees Islam as an antidote to colonialism, that rests on the principle of the superiority of the West as a nation. We expect to have achieved these aims through the analyses of the novels through the given theoretical framework.

This study has first concerned itself with the discussions of mobility, migration, diaspora, colonialism, refugees, cultures and the unfixed identities. The incessant mobility in the modern world has blurred the boundaries between 'I' and 'you' and instead interactions among different ways of looking at the world does not allow the formation of stable identities. The cultural, ethnic, religious and racial diversity of the African littoral given, the cultural and political exchanges with the colonial west brought forth very colorful interactions. Based on this, we focused our discussion on the central idea that Africa does not have a native culture solely of its own but colonialism and the quest for nationhood had some dire consequences for people inhabiting in these lands. The result of us

analyses showed that the black Muslim subject is also fluid and cannot be located into any strict conceptual or organizational category. We emphasized throughout the thesis that Islam has been associated with blackness, Africanness, Arabness and the 'other. Therefore, being a Muslim turns into a ground through which the colonizer can exert racialized violence. Yet, the author deconstructs this long established association and Gurnah explores the extensions of colonial discourse through Islam. Besides he also resists the essentialist and politically motivated Western scholarship on Islam and Africa. This way, he allows us to imagine alternative subjectivities while highlighting cultural difference.

We notice that Islam is a strategic instrument for Gurnah to explore the cultural depths of his black Muslim and white European characters. As a diasporic author himself who had to leave his country due to political turmoil, Gurnah does not explore Islam as a matter of faith but a way of looking at the world and a universal system of thought that rejects essentialized categories of being. Islam acts as a means to articulate difference by problematizing hierarchies and classifications and it helps the black subject to assert his/her subjectivity.

Taking these discussions into account, we analyzed Islam, diaspora and subjectivity within the context of unhomeliness and dialogism. Indeed, the concepts support one another in that something that is unhomely has the capacity to interact with larger surroundings and informs and is informed those surroundings. However, the fact that Gurnah's muslim characters are unhomed does not mean that they do not have homes. They can establish fluid relationships with space and this unhomeliness helps to deconstruct binaristic frames of knowledge. Unhomeliness helps Gurnah to refine Islam from Arabness and reconstruct transnational identities. Bhabha's theory of unhomeliness is functional in forming counterdiscourses to Eurocentric assumptions and when these robust assumptions are reversed or subverted, intercultural dialogue becomes possible.

Therefore, in addition to Bhabha's theories of hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence and nationhood which he explains in "*Nation and Narration*", the discussion of *identity as identification* and *culture as a domineering factor over identity* gained prominence. Henceforth, based on these discussions, I tried to analyze in the novels what it means to be an exilic/diasporic/outcast Muslim, its very relations with ethnicity and culture and

how religion and religious identity politically acts as a shield in the face of multitude of social, historical and economic factors that oppress people. What is more, I enlarged the scope of my discussions within the context of migration, Islam, ethnicity and culture, thereby revising my thesis within the scope of transnationalist and multiculturalist approaches to identity and contingent subject positions.

Islam in Gurnah's oeuvre is a discursive realm that unifies the heterogeneous ethnicity and cultures of the littoral region. Since the four novels in concern deal mostly with the issue of identity abroad, the religion again undergoes processes of change and becomes embedded with new meanings. Here an important question arises? How does the new significations loaded upon Islam reconcile with its true nature? How parallel are the newly identified meanings to the essence of Muhammedanism? Or do the migrants and colonizeds bind to their Muslim identities in the face of an oppressive dualism that segregates them in all walks of life, despite the fact that the written law of the host countries apparently is not segregatory.

After handling these background discussions, we moved on with the theoretical framework of the thesis, to be able to trace the transformative aspect of Islam and religion in the postcolonial, nationalist African and Anglophone discourses. We benefited largely from the poststructuralist thinker Homi Bhabha's contention that the colonial discourse is so much dependent on otherization and 'fixities' is an important point of discussion. In Bhabha's thinking, though the colonial order benefited from dualisms and hierarchies to perpetuate its authority, the fluid and dialogic contact zones between the west and the east defied categorizations. In this sense, hybridity held an important place in our discussions. Hybridity denies the pure essentialist aspect of any given idea, religion or culture, as it bases its main arguments on the interaction between oppositions. What's more, nation as an identity marker is only performative and narrative constructions emerge as a result of dialogic processes in the interstices. Hybridity, therefore, presupposes that mimicry occurs between two opposite poles and we cannot mention or originary subjectivities.

Based on Bhabha's theory of unhomeliness, we analyzed Islam as an unhomely concept in the western context. To Bhabha, being unhomed differs from being homeless and unhomeliness is a borderline or liminal space where the fixed categories of identity,

particularly nation, are dispersed. Thanks to this concept, Islam can be divorced from Arabness. Moreover, the idea of Islamic ummah, implying that Islam cannot be confined to any ethnicity or region, runs parallel to the idea of Islam as an unhomed religion, that is neither bound up space nor temporality. Through the concept of unhomeliness, we could criticize the purity of the nation state.

Despite the apparent hostility between Islam and the Western civilization, many ideas and ways are constantly exchanged between the two. Given that Islam and Europe are two opposite spheres but the present era is an era of hyphenization and hybridity, we can relocate Islam into the Western space. The idea of the West as Christian has no currency and Islam has a spirit of community that unifies and combines. Based on Bhabha's arguments, we concluded that a liminal space occurs for Islam and in this liminal space, which we may also call the third space, the politics of polarity can be eluded. In this third space, the muslim subject can renegotiate his identity and subvert the hierarchy of western parameters. Although Islam is an 'other' contextually, the third space allows it to question the validity and truthfulness of binary assumptions.

The second theorist that helped me to strengthen the theoretical background of my thesis is the Russian formalist Bakhtin. We benefited from Bakhtin's theories to interrogate whether Islam allows polyphony and heteroglossia and we tried to trace the novel as a form that enhances dialogue. The parallelism of Bakhtin's theoretical outlook with Bhabha is that there is always an uncentered dialogue between opposite poles and we cannot talk of the dominance of one way of looking at the world over the other. Bakhtin's discussions that we benefited from usually veer around the novel as a genre. The novel is three dimensional stylistically and it allows the realization of multi-consciousness. Gurnah's use of multiple narrators and allowing his characters to contact with reality in all its openedness help us to better formulate our assumptions. In Bakhtin's thinking, the world is polyglot. It means different languages, different philosophies and different ways of knowing exist in the world. It can be alleged that Islam enables the Zanzibari diasporic writer to speak in the name of his people in the face of a Christian world. As opposed to the logocentrism of the West, Gurnah depicts Islam as a religion of openedness, dialogue, relation and hospitality. For instance, when Hassanali finds Martin Pearce, the Englishman, collapsed before the mosque, he takes him to his home thinking

that Muslim codes of behavior require this and he cannot leave a man who is in need of help alone. As opposed to the strict nationalism of the West and West's close association to spatiality as the locus of identity, Bhabha's theories show us how Islam can transcend the boundaries of the nation state.

A second important theory by Bakhtin is the fact that novel enables the coexistence of multiple voices together. This way perspectives in the novel multiply and these perspectives interact strongly with the discourse and there is a constant clash with the domineering systems of thought. Islam-as a unifying principle for the oppressed and subjugated, helps to prevent the formation of a single governing principle. The author unites different times and spaces and several consciousnesses interact with one another. The links between time and space are also shattered thanks to the clash of multiple consciousnesses and the oppressed Islamic subject may reassert himself or herself independently from Gurnah's individual ideology. In other words, Gurnah's novels are interdiscursive. They inform and are informed by the surrounding cultures, beliefs and voices.

One another Bakhtinian concept that forms the theoretical backbone of this thesis is heteroglossia, which is the diversity of social speech types. Bhabha's idea that transnational histories of migrants and border conditions may form world literature runs very parallel to Bakhtinian thought. Bakhtin gives the example of Dostoevsky in this regard. There is a polyphonic setting in the novel and what is left at the periphery can strongly interact with that in the centre. Gurnah's novels, too, like those of Dostoevsky's, includes genuine polyphony and a plurality of independent voices. In Bakhtinian thinking, the dialogic novel has the capacity to decenter the ideological world of the West. This way, unheard stories of East Africa can become world literature, despite having deviated from the Western way of writing. As a matter of fact, dialogism and heteroglossia blurs the boundaries of self-contained ideologies.

The first novel analysed in this thesis is *By The Sea*. The novel narrates the story of a Saleh Omar seeking asylum in England under a false name and his encounter with Saleh Omar, another immigrant from his hometown whom he meets coincidentally. The novel interrogates the possibility of finding a home elsewhere. While implying that refugee identity is fluid and ambiguous, Gurnah also show us the unfixed relationship of his

characters with space. On one side Gurnah lays bare the corruption and disorder prevailing in post-independence nationalist Zanzibar and on the other side we witness how the characters- as East African Muslims- reconstruct their family history and fill in the gaps so as to re-negotiate their identities. Religion in this novel does not only act as a matter of faith. It regulates social life, arranges the family affairs, marriage and inheritance issues. Gurnah lays bare the hypocrisy of Muslims in Zanzibar. Despite being an Islamic society, adultery, corruption and various other disorders that cannot be accepted by Islamic codes can be observed. Yet, Gurnah has a broader approach to Islam in this novel. He juxtaposes the European and non-European( which is at the same time non-Christian) to subvert the rooted binary of Islam and Europe.

The second novel analyzed in this thesis is *Desertion*. The novel combines two stories which are contingent on one another. The main story in the novel starts in a small town in Kenya, along Mombasa. An Englishman is found as collapsed outside a mosque one morning in 1899. Hassanali comes across the man and, as a rule of hospitality and as required by Islamic codes of hospitality, does not leave the helpless man in front of the mosque and takes him to his home. The family members and people from the neighbourhood come to help and nurse the man so as to heal him. The heteroglossia in the novel does not only decentralize the discourse but the affairs between Pearce and Rehana, Amin and Jamil and Rashid and Barbara go beyond national and ethnic identities and are moved into a universal platform. In the same vein, Zekeriya, Hassanali and Rehana's father, gets married to an African woman although he is Indian in origin. He sees no problem in getting married to an African woman since Islam is a universal and universalizing religion that disregards boundaries of identity such as race or country of origin. As reiterated before, Gurnah does not necessarily focus on Islam as an instrument of salvation and nor his stance towards religion is about disseminating the teaching of Islam and inviting people to pious ways of living. Instead Gurnah sees Islam as a constructive instrument that makes transitions between ethnic and national identities possible.

The third novel of analysis is *The Last Gift*. In the novel, the story mostly centers around Abbas who immigrated to England from East Africa. He hides the story of his past from his children and wife. One day he unexpectedly has a heart attack and discloses his past

to his family. The storyline that begins with Abbas's leaving East Africa and getting married to Maryam is full of new encounters, dialogues and reflects the possible outcomes of being unhomed in a world as a Muslim that is totally alien and unwelcoming. In this novel, Gurnah as a dialogic writer deconstructs universalized modes of writing and the association of identity with national affiliation. While the idea that identity is rooted upon a nation or a certain spatiality is problematized, we witness that identity, space and temporalities are heterogeneously negotiated and in line with Bakhtin's theory of unfixity, no space or nation can suffice to draw the boundary of our identities. Gurnah depicts the impact of colonisation and how traumatic and at the same time fruitful it can be during the process of identity formation.

The characters in the novel all try to locate themselves in a region that is foreign to them, both in terms of culture and religion. Particularly Abbas, the main character of this novel, represents the role of a Muslim father that contrasts with actual practices of Muslims, which is a controversial aspect of Gurnah's work. However, through the dialogic processes the characters are used by the author to deconstruct the orientalist perspective towards Islam. Being a Muslim is not necessarily being an Arab, Islam is on no account limited to a certain spatiality or temporality and the mischiefs of nations or people associated with Islam cannot be attributed to believers all around the world.

## GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Bu tezimizde Abdulrazak Gurnah'ın *Deniz Kenarında*, *Terkediş* ve *Son Hediye* romanlarında İslam'ı sınırlar ötesi ve evsiz bir kavram olarak incelemeyi amaçladık. Bu romanları Bhabha ve Bakhtin'in teorik bakış açılarıyla yeniden okuduk ve sınırların değiştiği bir dünyada İslam'ın - evsiz bir kavram olarak - yazar tarafından sistematik olarak kimlikleri temsil etmek için nasıl kullanıldığını analiz etmeye çalıştık ve bundan yola çıkarak karakterleri incelemeyi amaçladık ve aynı zamanda Batının hakim olduğu bir dünyada, periferik bir dine mensup olan Müslümanların mekanla sabit olmayan ilişkisini ele aldık.

Bu çalışmada incelediğimiz Gurnah'ın üç romanında, ikilikler arasındaki yakınlığı vurgulayan Bakhtin ve Bhabha tarafından geliştirilen teorilere dayalı olarak İslam ve kimlik, İslam ve ulusal devlet ve bununla ilgili diğer hususlar ele alınmaktadır. Bhabha'nın ufuk açıcı eseri *The Location of Culture*'da belirttiği gibi, diaspora ve farklı kültürlerin karşılaşması söz konusu olduğunda istikrarlı bir kimlikten söz edemeyiz. Dolayısıyla bu karşılaşmalarda göçmen insanlar farklı tarihlerle ve kültürel etkileşimlerle harmanlanırlar. Başka bir anlamda melez insanlar haline gelirler. Ne oraya ne de buraya aitlerdir. Ayrıca, Avrupa'da tarih, kültür ve siyasetin karmaşık bir şekilde iç içe geçmesi göz önüne alındığında, Afrika kültürünün saflığından söz edemeyiz; çünkü sömürgecilik ve bağımsızlığın ardından ulus/millet olma arayışının kıta üzerinde bazı ciddi sonuçları olmuştur. Ayrıca dini kimliklerin tekiliğinden de söz edemeyiz. Bu tezin incelediği romanlarda mekanın istikrarsızlığı da göz önüne alındığında, dinin kimlik oluşumunda oynadığı rol de değişken hale gelmektedir.

Batılı seküler alan, Gurnah tarafından Müslüman kimliğini yeniden inşa etmek için kullanılmaktadır. Bu kimlik, İslam'la ilişkilendirilen sözde muhafazakar dini kimlikten oldukça farklıdır. Üç romandaki Müslüman kimlikleri, Müslümanlığın yeniden inşa

edilmiş imgelerinden oluşmaktadır. Postkolonyal toplumda dinin marjinal bir alana atılması da yazarın dini kimlikleri yeniden inşa etme çabasında etkilidir. Bununla birlikte Müslümanlığın söylemsel kimliğinin oluşumunda çeşitli seslerin, mekanların ve kültürlerin etkileşimini de görmekteyiz.

Her ne kadar Afrika'nın ve Afrika geleneğinin edebi temsillerinde İslam, öncelikle Avrupalı yaşam tarzına veya Avrupalı kimliklere karşı bir muhalefet olsa da, İslam, postkolonyal dünyanın doğasında var olan diyalog yoluyla Afrika kimliğinin yeniden yazılmasını sağlamaktadır. İslam, kendisine olumsuz anlamlar yükleyen oryantalist bir söylemin içinde yer almakta ve Avrupa ile Batı'ya doğrudan karşıtlık içinde bulunmaktadır. Gurnah, bu ikiliğin yönünü incelikli etkileşimlerin ortaya çıkacağı bir düzeye yönlendirerek İslam'ı kutuplaşmaktan ve özelleşmekten kurtarmaktadır. Ayrıca, “örtüşen, birbirleri ile etkileşim halinde olan ve herhangi bir kısaltılmış veya özgün anlayış tarzının izin verebileceğinden çok daha ilginç şekillerde bir arada yaşayan kültürlerin yavaş yavaş birlikte var olması” söz konusudur.

Bu nedenle İslam'ın, Gurnah'ın Doğu Afrikalı karakterlerinin farklılıklarını ortaya koymaları ve kimliklerini karmaşık ve devam eden kimlikler olarak yeniden düzenlemeleri için bir araç görevi gördüğü söylenebilir. Ayrıca İslam, Gurnah'ın Müslümanlar ve İslam ile ilgili sömürgeci söylemin uzantılarını keşfetmesi için iyi bir araçtır. Gurnah'ın romanlarına İslam'ı dahil etme çabası aynı zamanda şununla da bağlantılıdır: Batı epistemi İslam'ı büyük ölçüde çarpıtmıştır çünkü genel olarak İslam'a düşmandır, siyasi güdüm taşımaktadır ve özcüdür. Bu episteme aynı zamanda İslam'ı kasıtlı olarak İslam'ın dışında kalan bir mantıkla analiz etmektedir.

Diasporik bir yazar olan yazar Gurnah tarafından İslam'ın ve Müslüman kimliklerinin nasıl temsil edildiğini ve inşa edildiğini anlamayı amaçlamanın yanı sıra, yazarın biyografisi ile Avrupa merkezli ve Hristiyan bir dünyada Müslüman olma algıları arasındaki bağlantılar da bu çalışmanın odak noktasıdır. Gurnah, 18 yaşındayken memleketi Zanzibar'ı terk ederek İngiltere'ye yerleşmeyi seçti. Diasporaya yol açan etkenin ülkesindeki terör ve huzursuzluk olduğu düşünüldüğünde kendini güvende hissedebileceği yer İngiltere idi. Yazarın bu tarihsel ve otobiyografik geçmişi, Avrupa'ya siyahi bir Müslüman olarak gelen ve yeni bir ortamda yeni bir yuva edinen bir kişi olarak yazılarının gündemini şekillendirmiştir.

Bu nedenle Gurnah, metnin dokusunda çeşitli sesleri bir araya getirebilen bir romancı olarak madun Doğu Afrikalı Müslümanın sesini duyurmasına olanak tanır. Afrika'nın doğu kısmındaki Müslümanlar, ne Arap kökenli olduklarından ne de yarımadanın Mağrip olarak adlandırılan batı kısmına ait olduklarından dolayı madundurlar. Kelimenin tam anlamıyla ve mecazi olarak dışlanmış Müslümanlardırlar. Bu nedenle Gurnah için din meselesi, karakterlerinin alışlagelmiş arada kalmışlık yolculuğunu anlatmak açısından oldukça işlevseldir. Gurnah'ın İslam'a merkezi bir mesele olarak yaklaşmasının nedeni, öncelikle dini (Arap ve Afrika) yapay bir kurgu olduğu için milliyetçilikten arındırma ve ikinci olarak yeni ulusötesi kimlikler inşa etme arzusundan kaynaklanmaktadır. Bu yeni oluşan kimlikler ikili veya sabit bir kök içerisine yerleştirilemez. Postkolonyal bir perspektiften bakıldığında, bu evsiz kimlikler milliyetçiliklerin romantikliğini ortadan kaldırmaya ve bir kişinin verili bir yerle ilişkisini yapısöküme uğratmaya hizmet etmektedir.

O halde Gurnah için Afrika'yı yazmak demek Afrikayı milliyetçi ideallerden kurtarmak ve İslam'ın ırkçılığa karşı olan duruşuyla Afrikayı yeniden inşa etmek demektir. Gurnah gibi romancıların, Doğu Afrika'nın bu ideolojik sınırlarını yapısöküme uğrattıkları ve dış faktörler tarafından şekillendirilmeyen, kendisini şekillendiren ve diyaloglaştıran gerçek bir Afrika kimliği inşa ettikleri söylenebilir.

Melezlik terimi, ulus gibi katı sınıflandırmalara direnmesi nedeniyle bu tezdeki tartışmalarda önemli bir yer tutmaktadır. Melezlik terimi, bir ögenin diğerine üstün kabul edildiği Batılı ikili düşünce tarzını yapısöküme uğratma girişimi olmasının yanı sıra, taklitçiliğin iki karşıt kutup arasında gerçekleştiğini varsayar ve melezlik kavramı söz konusuken kökensel öznelliklerden söz edemeyiz. Üstelik Bhabha'ya göre sömürgeci, sömürgeleştirdiği halka karşı tutumunda kararsız bir tavır sergiler ve belli bir süre içinde bazı tavırları bir şekilde sömürgeleştirileninkine benzemeye başlar. Sadece bu değil, metinsel olarak bir “öteki”nin yaratılmış olması da sömürgeleştirilenin nihai gücüne ilişkin soruları gündeme getiriyor.

Ulus ve ırk gibi sabit kimlik kategorilerine ilişkin kavramlara meydan okuyan Bhabha, bize İslam'ı Araplıktan ayırmak için yararlı bir teorik çerçeve sunmaktadır. İslam ırksallaştırıldıkça ve İslamofobi ve İslami terörizm Araplarla yakından bağlantılı hale getirildikçe, Bhabha'nın melezlik teorisi İslam'ı kendi bağlamında, sömürge döneminden

bugüne kadar var olan ırksal ve siyasi temellerinden arınmış olarak görmemize olanak tanımaktadır.

Tartışmalarımda önemli yer tutan ikinci teorisyen ise Rus formalist Bakhtin'dir. Onun diyalog teorisi ve roman üzerine teorileri çalışmamı şekillendirmede oldukça önemliydi. *Dialogic Imagination* adlı kitabında Bakhtin (1981) roman türünü diğerlerinden, özellikle de destan biçiminden ayıran üç temel özellikten bahseder. Onun belirttiği gibi bunlar: 1) “romanda gerçekleştirilen çoklu bilinçle bağlantılı olan üslupsal üç boyutluluk, 2) edebi imgenin zamansal koordinatlarda yarattığı köklü değişim, 3)” roman tarafından edebi imgelerin yapılandırılması için açılmış, yani tüm açıklığıyla şimdiki zamanla (çağdaş gerçeklikle) maksimum temas alanı”dır (s. 13).

Mikhail Bakhtin, monolog ve diyalog hakkındaki tartışmalarıyla dikkat çekmektedir ve otoriteyi monologla, diyalogu ise çoklu konuşma ve merkezi olmayan otoriteyle eşleştirir. Bu Rus formalistin teorileri beşeri bilimlerin birçok alanında kullanılmaktadır ve bu çalışmada Gurnah'ın romanlarında İslam'ın temsiliyle ilgili olarak Bakhtin'in diyalojizmi ve çok dilliliği (heteroglossia) önemli bir yer tutmuştur. Ana argümanım, Gurnah'nın İslam'ı en üst otorite olarak ve iletişim için hiçbir yol açmayacak şekilde ele almamasıdır. Daha ziyade İslam, Zanzibarlı diaspora yazarının kendisini merkezde konumlandıran Hristiyan Avrupa karşısında kendi halkı adına konuşmasını sağlar. Batı'nın söz merkeziliğinin aksine Gurnah, diyalogun önünü açmak için İslam'dan yararlanır. Gurnah'ın temsil ettiği İslam, koşulsuz kabul isteyen baskıcı İslam değildir. Bunun yerine, Gurnah Batı'nın katı milliyetçiliğine ve Batı'nın kimliğin odağı olarak mekansallıkla yakın ilişkisine karşıt olarak, İslam'ın ulus devletin sınırlarını nasıl aşabileceğini ve ezilenlerin sesini duyurmasına nasıl izin verebileceğini göstermektedir ve b uses zalimin sesiyle aynı anda duyulur.

İslam, tüm insanların kardeşliğini destekleyen bir dindir ve İslam düşüncesinde Allah'a imandan başka hiçbir şey insanı birbirine üstün kılamaz. Ne ırk ne de ten rengi, insanı olumsuzlamak, kalıplaştırmak ve özelleştirmek için kullanılamaz. Kur'an'da “Ey insanlar, doğrusu Biz sizi bir erkek ve bir dişiden yarattık ve birbirinizle tanışmanız için sizi milletlere ve kabilelere ayırdık” (49:13) ayeti İslam'ın bu konudaki anlayışına güzel bir örnek teşkil etmektedir. Bu anlay hem Bakhtin hem de Bhabha'nın teorik duruşlarına yakınlık göstermektedir

Bhabha'nın "göçmenlerin, sömürgeleştirilenlerin veya siyasi mültecilerin ulusötesi tarihleri - bu sınır ve sınır ötesi koşullar - dünya edebiyatının zemini olabilir" (Bhabha, 2004, s. 12) fikri Bakhtin'in düşüncesiyle iyi bir şekilde birleştirilebilir. Özellikle Dostoyevski'nin Poetikasının Sorunları'nda Bakhtin, Dostoyevski'nin edebi sanatına özel bir vurgu yapar ve Dostoyevski'nin eserlerini özel kılan şeyin yazarın monolojik sesinden ziyade seslerin çoğulluğu olduğu fikrini yineler. Daha sonra, ulusötesi tarihler ve dünyayı tanımanın farklı yolları, karşıt kutuplar arasında sürekli etkileşimin gerçekleştiği bir çokseslilik havası yaratır. Monolojik bir ortamda karakterler ve olay örgüsü tek bir yazar ortamında yönetilirken, çok sesli bir ortamda farklı sesler arasında etkileşim ortaya çıkar ve çevrede kalanlar merkezdekilerle güçlü bir etkileşime girebilir. Dolayısıyla tek bir eleştirel bakış açısı, bu ulusötesi tarihleri ve bunların birçok zaman ve mekânla ilişkilerini anlamak için yeterli olamaz. Buna paralel olarak Gurnah, "Zanzibar'da büyürken deneyimlediği katıksız heterojenliği, burada İngiliz sömürge eğitiminin yanı sıra" camiden, Kur'an okulundan, sokaklardan ve evinden öğrendiğini anlatmaktadır.

Çalışmada İslam'ın Doğu Afrika'ya ticaret ve evlilikler yoluyla girişinden bahsettikten sonra sömürgecilik ve sömürgecilik sonrası dönemde İslam'ın durumu ele alınmıştır. Esas olarak İslam'ın Afrika'da yayılmasının, ticaretin gelişmesi ve siyasi statü kazanılması açısından önemli olması nedeniyle çok da zor olmadığını belirtilmiştir. Üstelik İslam'ın yerli dinlerle karışarak senkretik bir din olarak ortaya çıkması da daha fazla insanın İslam'a geçmesini kolaylaştırmıştır. Ayrıca İslam'ın insan onuruna verdiği önem ve köleliğe karşı olması da İslam'ı bölgenin karakteristik dini haline getiren önemli faktörler arasındadır.

İslam'ın sömürgeciliğe karşı duruşunu ve İslam ile postkolonyalizm arasındaki ilişkiye dair algıyı tartışırken, Gurnah diasporik bir romancı olarak daha da büyük önem kazanmıştır. Bakhtin'in de belirttiği gibi Gurnah'nın yazıları mevcut politikadan bağımsız değildir. Her ne kadar radikal İslamcı olmak gibi bir amacı olmasa da yazmak ona, aracılık(agency) kazanabileceği ve halkının sesini duyurabileceği bir alan açmaktadır. Daha önce de belirttiğim gibi, romanın bir tür olarak seçilmesi kasıtlıdır; zira Bakhtin tarafından da savunulan bir form olarak roman, diyaloga ve seslerin birbirine karışmasına, ikililiklerin ve ayrımların bulanıklaşmasına izin verir. Booker ve Juraga'ya

(1995) göre, “roman, ne olması gerektiğine dair önceden tanımlanmış kavramlara sürekli olarak meydan okumalıdır. Bu nedenle doğası gereği anti-otoriter bir türdür” (s. 25). Bu bağlamda Gurnah’nın, karnavalesk atmosferde, göç ve hareketliliğin yarattığı diyalog ortamında güçlü ile güçsüz arasındaki hiyerarşiyi yıkabilmek için roman türünü bilinçli olarak kullandığını iddia edebiliriz. Bu atmosferde her ses birbiriyle iyice yoğrulur ve yazar da diyalogun yöneticisi değil, onun bir parçasıdır.

Sonuç olarak Gurnah, kendi topraklarında yerinden edilen veya bilinmeyen topraklara sürüklenen Afrikalıların hikâyelerini anlatır. Durum ne olursa olsun Gurnah’nın hibirtliğe, göçe karşı duruşu olumsuz değildir ve belki de ne İslam’ın ne de sömürgeciliğin şekillendirmediği gerçek bir Afrika kimliğini tasvir etmeye çalıştığı söylenebilir.

Bu çalışmada incelenen ilk roman olan *Deniz Kenarında*, Zanzibar devriminin öncesi ve sonrasını kronolojik olarak anlatmaktadır. Devrimin ardından Saleh Omar, 1993 yılında sığınmacı olarak İngiltere’ye gelir. Hikâyenin diğer kahramanı ise yıllar önce İngiltere’ye taşınan ve şu anda bir üniversitede İngiliz edebiyatı profesörü olan Latif Mahmud’dur. Saleh Omar, İngiltere’ye gelmek zorunda kalmadan önce, kötü karakterli İranlı tüccar Hüseyin ile bir sözleşme yapar. Hüseyin, Salih Ömer’den büyük miktarda para alır ve Hüseyin, Şaban Mahmud’a borç verip evin tapularını teminat olarak aldığı için Salih Ömer’e teminat olarak Şaban Mahmud’un evinin tapuları verilir. Şaban Mahmud, Omar’ın ev sahibidir. Ancak ne yazık ki beklenen şey olur. Hüseyin borcu ödemez ve bir daha da geri dönmez. Bu durumda Ömer, evinin krediye teminat olarak verilmesi nedeniyle krediyi Receb Şaban’dan talep etmek zorunda kalır.

Rajab Shabaan, teyzesini de aldattığını ve onun evini aldığını düşünen Ömer’e kızar. Ancak gerçek şudur ki Ömer’in babası dul teyzesiyle evlidir ve teyze evi kendi isteğiyle Ömer’e bırakmıştı. Ancak Şaban herkesin gözünde kurbandır ve daha dindarlaşarak rahatlamaya çalışır. Şaban’ın karısı iffetli ve sadakatli bir kadın değildir ve kendilerine yapıldığını düşündüğü kötülükten dolayı sevgililerinden biri olan kalkınma ve kaynaklar bakanı aracılığıyla Saleh Omar’den intikam almayı planlar ve onu hapse attırırlar. Hapishanede zor günler geçiren Saleh Omar, Zanzibar’dan kaçmaya karar verir ve kendisini ve kimliğini değiştireceği bir yolculuğa çıkar. Bu yolculuk aynı zamanda Latif Mahmud’un geçmişini ve kim olduğunu algılamasına da yardımcı olur.

Çalışmada incelenen ikinci roman ise *Terkediş*'dir. Romanın ana anlatıcısı Raşid'dir ve üç kardeşin en küçüğüdür. Amin, Rashid'den iki yaş büyüktür ve Farida en büyük çocuktur. Anlatılan olaylar, Zanzibar'ın sömürgecilikten bağımsızlığa geçiş yaşadığı 1950'lerin sonlarında Zanzibar'daki sahneleri tasvir etmektedir. Ve yine roman boyunca kimliğin kaynağı olarak ev, aidiyet, millet gibi temaların yinelenmesi ele alınır.

Roman birbirine bağlı iki hikâyeyi birleştirmektedir. Romanın ana hikâyesi Kenya'nın Mombasa kıyısındaki küçük bir kasabada başlar. 1899 yılında bir sabah İngiliz Martin Pearce, caminin önünde yere yığılmış halde bulunur. Hasanali adamla karşılaşır ve misafirperverlik kuralı ve müslüman misafirperverliği gereği, çaresiz adamı caminin önünde bırakmaz ve onu eve götürür. Adamın iyileşmesi için aile bireyleri ve mahalle sakinleri yardıma ve bakıma gelir.

Romanın diyalojik anlatıcısı olan Raşid edebiyat profesörüdür ve ne Afrika'ya ne de İngiltere'ye ait olmayan evsiz bir anlatıcı olarak üç farklı kuşaktan insanların farklı dillerini bir araya getirir. Kör olmalarına rağmen insanlar ulusötesi sınırları hayal edebilmektedirler ve ulus olma ve yuva olma fikirleri ters yüz edilmektedir. Bu insanlar kendi tarihlerini yazarlar.

Birinci bölümde 19. yüzyılın sonlarına doğru yaşanan olayların anlatıldığı dört bölüm, ikinci bölümde ise 1950'lerin sonlarına doğru yaşanan olaylar yer almaktadır. Romanın başındaki bölümler Hassanali, Martin Pearce, Rehana ve Frederick Turner'ı konu alır. Hassanali ve Rehana kardeşler ve Hintli bir baba ile Afrikalı bir annenin evliliğinden doğan çocuklar oldukları için zaten bir azınlık grubuna aittirler. Hassanali evli ve boşanmış bir kadın olan Rehana, erkek kardeşinin ailesiyle birlikte yaşar. Hikâye daha sonra farklı zamansallıkların, yerlerin ve kimliklerin iç içe geçmesini anlatan bir dizi serüven içerir.

*Son Hediye*, Gurnah'nın yazdığı son romandır. Baskıcı sürgün temaları, kimliği yeniden konumlandırma çabaları, koşulların kurbanı olma ve bu koşullar nedeniyle yaşanan etik ikilemler romana hâkimdir. Romandaki karakterlerin kökleriyle ilgili sorunları vardır ve mekânsal olarak yer değiştirmenin yanı sıra zamansal olarak da yer değiştirmeler yaşamaktadırlar.

Romanda hikâye çoğunlukla Doğu Afrika'dan İngiltere'ye göç eden Abbas'ın etrafında döner. Abbas hikâyesini ve geçmişini ailesinden saklamaktadır. Çocukları ve eşinin birçok girişimine rağmen Afrika'nın hangi bölgesine ait olduğunu, gemi mürettebatında geçirdiği yılların nasıl geçtiğini ve Afrika'yı neden terk ettiğini onlara asla söylemez. Şeker hastasıdır ve bir gün eve giderken kalp krizi geçirir ve bu durum onu konuşamaz ve yürüyemez hale getirir. Kalp krizinin ardından sağlık ekibi ve eşi, İngiltere'ye gelmeden önceki hayatını anlatması için onu cesaretlendirir. Abbas, geçmişini o güne kadar bir sır olarak saklamasına rağmen, iki çocuğuna ve karısına, kendisini Zanzibar'dan ayrılıp denizci olarak çalışmaya ve karma kökenli İngiliz bir kadın olan Maryam ile evlenmeye iten koşulları açıklamaya karar verir. Abbas'ın Doğu Afrika'yı terk edip Maryam'la evlenmesiyle başlayan hikâye, yeni karşılaşmalar, diyaloglarla dolu ve tamamen yabancı ve sevimsiz bir dünyada evsiz kalmanın olası sonuçlarını yansıtır. Bu açılma süreci, birçok bastırılmış anıyı da beraberinde getiriyor ve geçmişle ve anılarıyla uzlaşmaya çalışırken kimliğinin ne kadar yüzdüğünü gösteriyor. Tüm bu süreçte Müslüman kimliği bir eşik oluşturur. Bazen Afrikalı Müslüman, bazen de İngiliz Müslüman olurlar.

Yetim olan eşi Meryem, adından da anlaşılacağı üzere büyük ihtimalle Müslüman kökenlidir ve Abbas'la erken yaşta evlenir. Onun asıl sorunu aynı zamanda köklerinin belirsiz olmasıdır; nereden geldiğini, köklerinin ne olduğunu bile bilmemektedir. Yine de Müslüman olması onu Hristiyan İngiliz toplumunda dışlanmış biri olarak tanımlar.

Ailenin çocukları Hannah ve Jamal, geçmişleri Hindistan ya da Doğu Afrika'da olmamasına rağmen, İngiltere'de olduğundan farklı düzeylerde kimlik krizleri yaşarlar. İngilizlik ile anlattıkları İslami kimlik arasında gidip gelirler. Hanna, isminden memnun olmayan bir kız olarak Anna olarak anılmak ister ve Afrikalı olmayı asla kabul etmez, diğer yandan yaşadığı İngiliz toplumu onu İngiliz olarak kabul etmez. Hatta İngiliz olmayanlara karşı ırkçı ve ayrımcı davranan erkek arkadaşının ailesine kendini tanıtırken Afrikalı olduğunu dahi itiraf edemez. Kardeşi Cemal, kimliğinin bir parçası olarak Müslüman olmayı daha çok öne çıkarmaktadır. Belki de bir kimlik aracı olarak İslam daha çok Cemal için önemlidir çünkü kendi özneliğini inşa edebilmek için İslam'ı daha iyi anlaması gerekmektedir.

Romanlarda çoğunlukla her şeyi bilen üçüncü şahıs anlatıcı olan Gurnah'nın, çok sayıda diyalog, zamansallık ve mekân katmanını bir araya getirerek bize Doğu Afrika bölgesindeki kültürü oluşturan girift ağırları gösterdiğini söyleyebiliriz. Bölgenin coğrafi çeşitliliğinin yanı sıra, hem sömürge öncesi hem de sömürge döneminde sınıfsal ve etnik çeşitlilik de mevcuttur. Ayrıca bölgenin her iki dönemde de çeşitli siyasi ve idari süreçlerden geçtiği görülmektedir. Dolayısıyla daha önce de belirttiğim gibi tam anlamıyla İslami ve homojen bir toplumdaki söz edemeyiz. Doğu Afrika yazılarında din, bir farklılık unsuru olarak işlev görmektedir. Hikâyelerdeki karakterler dini kimlikleri sayesinde kimliklerini kaybetmeye direnebilirler. Bu kişilerin yerleşiklik ve dışlanma arasında melez kimliklere sahip olduklarını dikkate aldığımızda dinin bir inanç meselesi olmaktan çıkıp, kişinin kimliğini koruyan en güçlü şemsiye terime dönüştüğünü söyleyebiliriz.

## EXTENDED SUMMARY

In this thesis we aimed at analyzing Islam as a cross-boundary and an unhomely concept in Abdulrazak Gurnah's novels *By The Sea*, *Desertion* and *The Last Gift*. We tried to re-read these novels through Bhabha and Bakhtin's theoretical lenses and tried to trace how Islam- as an unhomely concept- is systematically used by the author to represent identities in a world in which boundaries are in flux and based on this, we tried to investigate the characters' unfixed relationships with space as Muslims, as people belonging to a peripheric religion in a world dominated by the West.

In Gurnah's three novels that we analyzed in this study, the issues of Islam and identity, Islam as an identitarian religion, Islam and the national state and other aspects related to it based on theories developed by Bakhtin and Bhabha who emphasize the convergence between binaries, rather than a divergence have been handled. As Bhabha mentions in his seminal work *The Location of Culture*, we cannot talk of a stable identity when diaspora and the encounter of different cultures are at stake. Therefore, the migrant and people of these encounters are by-products of diverse histories and cultural interweavings. They become hybrid people in another sense. They belong to neither here nor there. Also, given the complex interweavings of history, culture and politics in Europe, we cannot talk about the purity of African culture, since colonialism and the quest for nationhood following independence had some drastic consequences on the continent. Besides, we cannot talk of the singularity of religious identities. Considering the instability of space in the novels this thesis looks into, the role religion plays in the formation of identity is also fluid.

The Western secular space is used by the author to reconstruct Muslim identity in its own context. This identity is quite a lot different than the so-called conservative religious identity associated with Islam. The Muslim identities in the three novels are made up of reconstructed images of Muslimness. The fact that religion is thrown onto a marginal

realm in the postcolonial society is also effective in the author's efforts to reconstruct religious identities. Nevertheless, we see the interaction of various voices, places and cultures in the formation of the discursive identity of Muslimness.

Although Islam in the literary representations of Africa and African tradition is primarily one of opposition to a European way of life or European identities, Islam becomes the means to rewrite African identity through the dialogism inherent within the postcolonial world in the shape of expansiveness, polyvalence, and indeterminacy. Islam is located within an orientalist discourse that impose negative meanings upon it and in direct opposition to Europe and the West. Gurnah steers the direction of this binarism to a level in which subtle interactions occur and saves Islam from being polarized and essentialized. Then there is the "slow working together of cultures that overlap, borrow from each other, and live together in far more interesting ways than any abridged or in authentic mode of understanding can allow."

Thus, Islam can be said to be acting as a means through which Gurnah's East African characters assert their difference and realign their identities as complex and on-going ones. In addition, Islam is a good intermediary for Gurnah to explore the extensions of colonial discourse as regards Muslims and Islam. Gurnah's effort in inserting Islam into his novels is also linked to restoration in the sense that "scholarship has grossly distorted Islam because it was generally hostile to Islam, was politically motivated, ahistorical, and essentialist, analyzing Islam from a logic that was deliberately external to it".

Besides aspiring to understand how Islam and Muslim identities are represented and constructed by the diasporic author Gurnah, the links between the writer's biography and his perceptions of being a Muslim in a Euro-centric and Christian world were also the focuses of this study. Gurnah left Zanzibar, his homeland, while he was 18 years old and he chose to settle in England. Considering the factor that led to his diaspora was the terror and unrest in his country, England was the place where he could feel safe. This historical and autobiographical background of the author shaped the agenda of his writing as a person who came to Europe as a black Muslim and acquired a new home in a new setting.

Therefore, Islam turns into a central and cultural framework in Gurnah's novels. As a novelist who can bring various voices together in the fabric of the text, he allows the

subaltern East African Muslim be heard. The Muslims in the Eastern part of Africa are subaltern because they are neither Arabs in origin nor they belong to the Western part of the peninsula which is called Maghreb. They are literally and figuratively outcast Muslims. Therefore, the issue of religion for Gurnah is very much functional to describe his characters' habitual journey of in-betweenness. The reason behind Gurnah's approaching Islam as a central issue firstly stems from his desire to refine the religion from (Arab and African) nationalism, since it is an artificial construct, and secondly reconstruct new transnational identities. This newly formed identities cannot be located within a binary or a fixed root. From a postcolonial perspective, these unhomely identities serve to de-romanticize nationalisms and deconstruct a person's relationship to a given place.

For Gurnah, then, writing Africa means releasing it from conviction to nationalist ideals and racialization of Islam. Novelists like Gurnah can be said to be deconstructing these ideological boundaries of Eastern Africa and construct a genuine African identity that is not shaped by external factors but one that shapes and dialogizes itself.

The term hybridity holds an important place for the discussions within this thesis, since it resists strict categorizations such as nation. As well as being an attempt to deconstruct Western way of binary thinking in which one item is regarded as being superior to the other one, the term hybridity presupposes that mimicry occurs between two opposite poles and we cannot mention of originary subjectivities, since they have undergone change. What is more, to Bhabha, the colonizer is ambivalent in his attitude towards the people he colonizes and within a certain period of time, some of his attitude and manners somehow begin to resemble those of the colonized. Not only this but also the fact that an "other" has been textually created also poses questions regarding the ultimate power of the colonized.

Defying the concepts as regards fixed categories of identity of such as nation and race, Bhabha provides us with a useful theoretical framework to divorce Islam from Arabness. As Islam has been racialized and Islamophobia and Islamic terrorism has been intimately linked to Arabs, Bhabha's theory of hybridity allows us to see Islam in its own context, freed from its racial and political underpinnings that have existed from the colonial period up to now.

The second theorist that holds an important place for my discussions is the Russian formalist Bakhtin. His theory of dialogism and his theories on novel were quite important for shaping my study. He mentions of three basic characteristics in his book the *Dialogic Imagination* that distinguishes the genre from other ones, particularly the epic form. As stated by him, these are: 1) “its stylistic three-dimensionality, which is linked with the multi-consciousness realized in the novel, 2) the radical change it effects in the temporal coordinates of literary image, 3) the new zone opened by the novel for structuring literary images, namely, the zone of maximal contact with the present (with contemporary reality) in all its openedness” (1981, p. 13).

Mikhail Bakhtin is noted for his discussions on monologue and dialogue and he equates authority with monologue and dialogue with multiple speech and a decentred authority. This Russian formalist’s theories are used in many places in humanities and I will try to deal with Bakhtin’s dialogism and heteroglossia in relation to representation of Islam in Gurnah’s novels. My main argument will be that Gurnah does not represent Islam as the utmost authority and as paving no way for communication. Rather, Islam enables the Zanzibari diasporic writer to speak in the name of his people in the face of a Christian Europe that has located itself in the centre. As opposed to the logocentrism of the West, Gurnah makes use of Islam to pave the way for dialogue. The Islam Gurnah represents is not the oppressive Islam that asks for unconditional acceptance. Instead, as opposed to the strict nationalism of the West and the West’s close association to spatiality as the locus of identity, Gurnah shows us how Islam can transcend the boundaries of the nation state and how it can allow the oppressed to make his/her voice be heard simultaneously with that of the oppressor.

Islam is a religion that supports brotherhood of all people and in Islamic thinking, nothing but faith in Allah can make a person superior to one another. Neither race nor the color of one’s skin can be used to negate, stereotype and essentialize a human being. In Koran the verse that goes as “O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female, and have made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another” [Quran 49:13] stands as a nice example to Islam’s parallelism with dialogue and its affinity to the theoretical stances of both Bakhtin and Bhabha.

Bhabha's idea that "transnational histories of migrants, the colonized, or political refugees - these border and frontier conditions - may be the terrains of world literature" (Bhabha, 2004, p.12) can be well combined with Bakhtinian thought. Particularly in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin puts special emphasis on Dostoevsky's literary art and reiterates the idea that what makes Dostoevsky's works special is the plurality of voices, rather than the monologic voice of the author. Then, transnational histories and different ways of knowing the world creates an aura of polyphony, in which constant interaction between opposite poles takes place. While in a monological setting characters and the plot are governed within a single authorial setting, in a polyphonic setting there arises interaction between different voices and what is left at the periphery can strongly interact with that in the centre. Thus, a single critical perspective cannot suffice to understand these transnational histories and their relations to multiple times and spaces. Gurnah's stories resist stories of exclusion and he inserts Africa into the world history.

After mentioning of Islam's entrance into the East Africa mainly by way of trade and intermarriages, I tried to discuss the situation of Islam in the face of colonialism and post-colonialism. I mainly stated that Islam's spreading in Africa was not so much difficult since it was important in promoting trade and gaining political status. Moreover, the fact that Islam intermingled with indigenous religions and arose in the form of a syncretic religion facilitated the conversion of more people into Islam. Besides, Islam's emphasis on human dignity and its opposition to slavery were among important factors that turned Islam into the characteristic religion of the region.

Discussing the stance of Islam against colonialism and the perception regarding the relationship between Islam and postcolonialism, I discussed Gurnah as an in-between exile novelist. As mentioned by Bakhtin, Gurnah's writing is not free from politics. Even though he has no purposes of being a radical Islamist, writing opens up a space for him through which he acquires agency and make his people's voices be heard. As I mentioned beforehand, his choice of novel as a genre is deliberate in that the novel as a form as also maintained by Bakhtin allows for dialogue and intermingling of sounds, blurring of binaries and distinctions. Within this context, we can claim that Gurnah makes use of the novel genre deliberately to be able to subvert the hierarchy between the powerful and the

powerless in the atmosphere of carnivalesque and dialogue created by migration and mobility. In this atmosphere each voice is kneaded thoroughly with one another and the author is also part of the dialogue, not the governor of it.

All in All, Gurnah narrates the stories of Africans who experienced displacement in their own lands, or either were drifted towards unknown lands. Whatever the case is, Gurnah's stance against mixture, migrancy is not negative and perhaps he may be said to be striving for depicting a true African identity that has not been shaped by either Islam or colonialism.

*By The Sea* is the first novel analyzed in this study and it *chronologically* narrates the times before and after Zanzibari revolution. Following the revolution, Saleh Omar arrives in England in 1993 as an asylum seeker. The other protagonist of the story is Latif Mahmud, who moved to England years ago and now is a professor of English literature at a university. Before being obliged to come to England, Saleh Omar makes a contract with the villainous Persian merchant Hussein. Hussein gets a huge amount of money from Saleh Omar and Saleh Omar is given the deeds of Shaaban Mahmud's house as security, since Hussein had given a loan to Shabaan Mahmud and got the deeds of the house as security. Shabaan Mahmud is Omar's landlord. Yet, the unlucky and expected thing happens. Hussein does not pay the loan and he never returns back. In this case, Omar becomes obliged to claim the loan from Rajab Shabaan, since his house has been given as security to the loan.

Rajab Shabaan becomes angry with Omar thinking that he also deceived his aunt and took her house. However, the fact was that Omar's father was married to the widowed aunt and the aunt had left the house to Omar on her own will. Yet, Shabaan is the victim in everyone's eyes and he seeks relief by becoming more pious. Though his wife is not a chaste woman and loyal to him, she plans to take revenge on Omar and one of her lovers, the minister of development and resources, help her and they both organize a plan to put Omar into prison. Undergoing harsh times in prison, Saleh Omar decides to flee from Zanzibar and he starts a journey through which he relocates himself and his identity. This journey also helps Latif Mahmoud to perceive his past and who he is.

The second novel analyzed in the study is *Desertion*. The main narrator of the novel is Rashid and he is the youngest of three siblings. Amin is two years older than Rashid and Farida is the oldest child. The events narrated depict scenes in Zanzibar during the late 1950s when Zanzibar was undergoing a transition from colonialism to independence. And again, the reiteration of themes such as home, belonging and nation as sources of identity are renegotiated throughout the novel.

The novel combines two stories which are contingent on one another. The main story in the novel starts in a small town in Kenya, along Mombasa. An Englishman is found as collapsed outside a mosque one morning in 1899. Hassanali comes across the man and, as a rule of hospitality and as required by Islamic codes of hospitality, does not leave the helpless man in front of the mosque and takes him to his home. The family members and people from the neighbourhood come to help and nurse the man so as to heal him.

The dialogic narrator of the novel, Rashid is a professor of literature and as a homeless narrator that belongs neither to Africa nor to England, brings together the different languages of people from three different generations. Despite being blind, people can imagine transnational boundaries and the ideas of nationhood and home get devastated. They write their own histories; “the peoples of the periphery return to rewrite the history and fiction of the metropolis. The novel entails stories within stories which are skillfully intertwined with one another through varying time frames. In the first part we have four chapters which narrate events towards the end of the 19th century and the second part involves events in the late 1950s. The chapters at the beginning of the novel deal with Hassanali, Martin Pearce, Rehana and Frederick Turner. Hassanali and Rehana are siblings and they already belong to a minority group since they are the children born out of the marriage of an Indian father and African mother. Hassanali is married and Rehana, a divorced woman, lives with her brother’s family. When one morning Hassanali finds the collapsed Martin Pearce in front of the mosque, he brings him to his house as he thinks Muslim codes of hospitality require this.

*The Last Gift* is the last novel written by Gurnah. The domineering themes of exile, attempts at re-locating identity, being victims of circumstances and ethical dilemmas because of these circumstances dominate the novel. The characters in the novel have

problems with their roots and besides being spatially dislocated, they are also dislocated temporally.

In the novel, the story mostly veers around Abbas who immigrated to England from East Africa. He withholds his story and past from his family. Despite several attempts by his children and wife, he never tells them to which part of Africa he belongs, how his years on ship crews passed and why he deserted Africa. He is a diabetic patient and one day, the way home, he has a heart attack which leaves him unable to speak and walk. Following the heart attack, he the medical team and his wife encourage him to tell about his life before he came to England. Despite keeping his past as a secret up to that day, Abbas decides to unfold to his two children and wife the very circumstances that led him to leave Zanzibar, to work as a sailor and get married to Maryam, a mixed descent British woman. The storyline that begins with Abbas's leaving East Africa and getting married to Maryam is full of new encounters, dialogues and reflects the possible outcomes of being unhomed in a world that is totally alien and unwelcoming. This process of unfolding brings with itself lots of suppressed memories and shows how afloat his identity has been while trying to reconcile with his past and memories. Throughout all this process, his identity as a Muslim poses a threshold. Sometimes, he becomes a Muslim African and sometimes he becomes an English Muslim.

The wife Maryam was an orphan, most possibly of Muslim origin as can be understood from her name, gets married to Abbas at an early age. Her main problem also lies in the fact that her roots are unclear; she does not even know where she comes from and what her roots are. Still, being Muslim defines her as an outcast in the Christian English society.

The children of the family, Hannah and Jamal, undergo crises of identity in different levels, since their past is in England, not in India or East Africa. They oscillate between Englishness and their narrated Islamic identity. Hanna, as a girl dissatisfied with her given name, wants to be called as Anna and never accepts being African, while on the other hand the English society in which she is living does not accept her as English. She is seemingly so much raged "about the secrecy and their suppressed and dissembling lives" (Gurnah, 2012, p. 46). She even does not/cannot confess that she is African when she introduces herself to her boyfriend's family, who are racist and discriminatory against the non-English. As opposed to Anna, her brother Jamal, stings more to being a Muslim as

part of his identity even though we cannot observe direct Islamic practices conducted by him. Perhaps, Islam as an instrument of identity is important mostly for Jamal since he needs to understand it more to be able to construct his subjectivity

I can say that Gurnah, mostly the omniscient third person narrator in the novels, brings together multiple layers of dialogues, temporalities and locations and shows us the intricate webs within the East African region that constitute culture. Besides the geographical variety of the region, there is the class and ethnic variety in both the pre-colonial and colonial era. Furthermore, the region seems to have undergone various political and governmental processes in both periods. So, we cannot talk of a strictly Islamic and homogenous community, a point I reiterated previously. Therefore, this question arises: Why does the issue of religion and religious identity hold such an extensive place in these novels? While they narrate the confrontation between the colonizer and the colonized, while they narrate how a man assumes a somewhat subject position in his deathbed through the detailed narration of his homeland, while a man comes of age against the backdrop of an Africa growing corrupt with violence, how and why do Muslim identities act as the zone of contact with one's very essence, individual and collective identity, since religious identities are to be understood by aligning them with large cultural systems that preceded them. And even more importantly, religion in East African writing functions as a factor of difference. Through their religious identities, the characters in the stories can resist losing identity. Taking into consideration that these people have hybrid identities half way between settlement and exclusion, we can say that religion turns into the most powerful umbrella term that protects one's identity, rather than a matter of faith.

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