



RESEARCH PAPER

Liminality and Cultural Identity in Gurnah's *Gravel Heart*

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ABSTRACT

This article explores Gurnah's *Gravel Heart* from Bhabhian perspectives of liminality and cultural identity through immigrant experiences of the protagonist Salim who faces identity crisis, relational positioning and racial prejudice. Gurnah is of the view that immigrants are always in a liminal space, experiencing 'in-between-ness' and as they try to assimilate with the new culture, identity crises emerge. In this process of assimilation, immigrants feel like they are divided into two parts. They have traits of this new culture now but cannot overlook the norms and culture of their native lands as well. They find themselves at liminal space where no matter how hard they try to save their culture, it still gets hybrid and new elements of the host culture, they interact with, continue to become a part of their lives, which in turn, reshape their identity.

KEYWORDS Cultural Identity, Hybridity, Liminality, Post-Colonialism

Introduction

Liminality is a threshold or an in-between space. In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Homi K. Bhabha explains "liminality" as the point of cultural negotiation across differences of race, class, gender, and identity. He asserts: "It is 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" (p.2). In other words, for Bhabha cultural identities are not fixed but mutual and mutable. Neither the colonizers, nor the colonized can be considered having distinct identities. as these are shaped by the past and present experiences of people. In his view, cultural identity "renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent 'in-between' space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The past-present becomes part of necessity, not the nostalgia, of living." (Bhabha,1994, p. 7). Gurnah's *Gravel Heart* presents the struggle of the people who face identity crisis being at liminal positions. It is a story of homelessness, migration and exile that its protagonist, Salim, experiences after his migration from post-colonial Tanzania to London. His journey is funded by his uncle Amir. Through Amir's character, the novelist highlights how the colonized become the slave of Western culture. Immigrants become puppet in the hands of the West and feel proud in following and mimicking their ways of living. Uncle Amir is the first member of his family who went to London and changed his way of living by adopting white man's manners, hence, becoming a mimic man. He forces Salim to learn Western lifestyle and go for business studies against his interest. Uncle Amir believes that he is doing a favor to Salim. Salim who has a disturbed childhood because of his parents' conflict presumes London as an escape from his childhood traumas. Later, when he fails in exams and is no more patronized by his uncle, he realizes that the fairy tale of London is not as interesting and smooth as he

thought of it. He is left alone to survive. His identity is often questioned, and he experiences racial and cultural prejudice in the host country.

Background of the Study

Gravel Heart is Gurnah's ninth post-colonial novel that describes the life and experiences of people of Post-colonial Tanzania. His previous eight novels also explore experiences and effects of post-colonialism, unhomeliness, identity crisis and immigrant experiences. Colonialism is a complex term that beholds a variety of meanings and notions attached to it. It is defined as "control of one power over a dependent area or people" (Osman, 2017, p. 1). It is a practice where one country uses violence to invade another country and forces its people to live there and experience slavery. The colonized masses were pushed to the margins as a result of the imperial and colonial expansion. People assumed decolonization to be an end of colonialism which proved to be wrong. Colonized people got physical but not mental freedom. The remnants of colonization and colonial practices could be seen even after its so-called end. The anti-colonial critics condemned the evil practices of colonialists in the name of revolution and betterment. They had this audacity to raise their voice and highlight the resistance of colonized. They revealed that colonized were not easy targets at all. Gurnah, being a Tanzanian-born British novelist gives a quite realistic picture of the life and condition of people of post-Colonial Tanzania while focusing specifically on the character of Amir and Salim and generally on the life and condition of Tanzanian people.

Bhabha (1994) describes the resistance of colonizers that was overlooked by White colonial writers. He asserts that the colonized were not at all an easy target. They resisted colonial power in different ways. His concepts of mimicry, hybridity, difference, ambivalence, liminality, cultural identity, and the Third World further introspect into the nature of resistance that the natives exhibit. In *Signs taken for Wonders* (1985), Bhabha uses the concept of hybridity to find out a space where two cultures collide. For Bhabha, hybridity is a way through which colonized could resist colonial power. In *Location of Culture* (1994), he discovers the liminal spaces where the negotiations of cultural articulation could happen. He is of those liminal spaces serve as key to cultural negotiations where the experiences of different nations are intermingled with one another without disrespecting any other nation's cultural values and interests.

The selected fiction of Gurnah portrays the concepts of liminality and cultural identity deeply reflecting the era of both pre- and post-colonialism. The writer tries to explore the relationship between colonized and colonizers by offering a first-person narrative through a character whose story resembles his own. He shows the impact and after-effects of colonization on the lives of Tanzanian. He portrays post-colonial people nostalgic about the atrocities and evil forced on them in the disguise of colonization. He further depicts the life of an immigrant Salim, a third-world person, in a big city London, suffering from identity crisis, facing hybrid culture, and racism against Blacks. The author himself has survived those harsh times and cries his heart out for the hardships in his fiction. He shows his characters' doubts about their own identity and culture. His characters begin to question their identity at some point. He portrays the cultural weakness and evil practiced upon natives in the name of enlightenment. How do the characters confront cultural and identity crises, unhomeliness, racial discrimination while finding themselves at liminal spaces is the major question that the researcher attempts to answer in the present research.

Literature Review

The postcolonial theory, as contrary to Western hegemonies and methodologies, is a heterogeneous term in which various concepts are found related to the experiences of postcolonial people. The resistance of colonized peoples to Western rule, the power relations that are found in colonial history throughout different phases of colonialism, the Western domination of natives and their colonization (Fanon, 2008), a debate on the resistance of colonizers to follow them (Bhabha, 1994), and the insecurities of Westerners when they see themselves failing in their goal are the important area that postcolonial theory addresses. The twentieth century clearly witnessed the climax and fall of European powers; therefore, it marks the resistance of the colonized whereby they attempt to fight back for their culture, ethnicity, and norms.

Liminality, in many aspects, relates to hybridity as both the concepts denote in-betweenness and being connected to two different cultures and identities. Van Gennep (2019) states that a liminal person is "wavering between two worlds" (p. 3). He states that being on the borderline or threshold that separates one space from the other is a psychological process that witnesses a transition, mental or physical. Victor Turner (1977) mentions that "the 'liminal' and the 'inferior' conditions are often associated with ritual powers and with the total community seen as undifferentiated" (Turner, 1977, p. 362). He explains further that 'liminal situations and roles are almost everywhere [... regarded as dangerous, inauspicious, or polluting to persons, objects, events, and relationships that have not been ritually incorporated into the liminal context' (p. 108). Liminality is a double vision of being in the middle of something. A liminal person is a hybrid who touches two different cultures and stands between two different states. It is, as regarded by Victor Turner, a kind of danger to the status quo.

Liminality constructs the identity of a postcolonial subject that is constituted through various important factors. There is a relationship between different elements from the past and the present that touch the personality of a subject. Liminal species do not exist anywhere. They do not have a fixed place here or there, they are liminal, they are in between, they are betwixt. Turner has used the phrase 'neither here nor there' (p. 95), but "betwixt and between" (p. 95) to clarify the positions of postcolonial subjects. "Liminality both initiates and becomes the process of change. It initiates change by severing the participants from whatever has been the merely customary or enforced routine, and it thereby suggests these familiar realities are merely customary, time bound, or routinized" (Elsbree, 1991, p. 20). There is ambiguity in the liminal spaces. On the borderline, the postcolonial subject has no idea what is about to come. He has neither left the past completely nor accepted the present either.

Culture is a common behavior linked to a particular group of people (Orbe & Harris, 2014). Human cultural identity is wholly and more important than any aspect of his life no matter in which area he resides. Eagleton (2000) calls culture "a body of artistic and intellectual work" (p. 14). According to him, culture is a "process" where "spiritual and material progress" takes place (p. 48). According to Deller (2016), Eagleton in his third definition, calls culture a set of the values, customs, beliefs, and symbolic practices by which men and women live. Culture is complex because it does not depend on a single aspect; it is a whole way of life. Eagleton views these shared characteristics as what make the cultural identity of people different from others. Alfred and Corntassel (2005) have used the term *indigenous identity* and expressed indigenous identity as "an identity constructed, shaped, and lived in the politicized context of contemporary colonialism" (p. 298). They assert that identity is indigenous when there is no motion, no action, and no involvement with other cultures. Maintaining cultural identity is still a task of survival

under colonial settlement and domination, because the ways of colonizers become more subtle here as compared to the past experiences. The focus here is on maintaining one's own identity and living with the same cultural identity and being fluid with it as it distinguishes a person from the other cultural identities within which he lives.

Gurnah's fiction, *Gravel Heart*, has been studied from various perspectives. Gurnah was the first Tanzanian writer to win a Nobel Prize. He shares his personal experiences through his fictional stories and the traumas he went through, using his fictional characters in a creative way. In "A Psychoanalytic Reading of Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Gravel Heart*," Al Areqi (2022) is of the view that "Gravel Heart traces the traumas in Salim's life and his confusion over the actions of his parents" (para.6). Most of his worries result from his father's self-exile and his mother's disappearance with a stranger for which he finds no reason and explanation. Al Areqi further explains that Salim's homelessness, issues of belonging, lack of intimate family ties serve cause him shame and worry.

In, "Unhomeliness, Self-Estrangement, and Labefaction in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Gravel Heart*", TAS (2022) highlights that the novel reflects Salim's self-estrangement and sense of hopelessness "underlining the societal labefaction that emerged after the colonial period" in the "psyches of the individuals of once colonized societies" (p.241). He is of the view that this sense of estrangement and cultural deterioration is the aftermath of colonization in once colonized societies.

In "The notion of uncanniness in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Gravel Heart*," Shalini & Batta (2022) focus on the issues of unhomeliness that the individuals face who are constantly on the move from one place to another. The researcher tends to explore this sense of unhomeliness through Salim's unhappy transition from childhood to adulthood that according to Bhabha emerges from "when the home is no longer the sphere of domestic life" (p.5262). Salim moves from Zanzibar to England as an immigrant and finds himself in uncanny condition experiencing displacement, alienation and ambivalence.

Al Areqi (2022), Salini & Bhatta's (2022), and TAS (2022) study of *Gravel Heart* focuses on psychoanalytical perspective and on finding a sense of estrangement, uncanny and unhomeliness in its characters. Less research has been done on *Gravel Heart* from Bhabha's perspectives of liminality and cultural identity. The present research, therefore, focuses on these less explored areas as they find expression in Gurnah's *Gravel Heart*, which is an influential and very powerful family tale that highlights the power relations, family conflicts and turmoil. Gurnah has proved himself wise enough to discuss serious political issues through a family tale while keeping the effects of colonization in the background of the fiction.

Bhabhian Perspectives of Liminality and Cultural Identity: Theoretical Framework

The term Post colonialism refers to the era when colonies and regions gained independence from European colonizers. This post-colonial era was effects on the culture and identity of the communities and previous colonies. The world is full of people who got their lives shaped by the bitter experiences of colonialism. When they were just slaves and were stated that they had no culture, no identity, and no language. With the political change, they got free from the colonizer's rule, but it did not save them from going through the dilemma and crisis of cultural confusion and identity. These national and ethnic identity dilemmas are presented in hundreds of studies and illustrate the space that is not defined accurately after the collapse of the Empire.

Bhabha (1994) talks about the impurity of culture and sheds light on the borderlines of the cultures. He focusses on what happens on the borderlines to find out what happens in-between the cultures. He calls this concept *liminal* which means threshold or being on the border. A threshold is just like a doorway that one must cross in order to enter somewhere. It is a place where the outer world ends, and the new beginning or inner world starts. Threshold comes with the images of leaving, change, crossing or entering somewhere. The person who crosses the threshold is neither rejected by the outer world nor is he welcomed by the inner world.

The word *liminal* comes from Latin and *liminal space* stresses on the idea of being in-between the culture. The term *liminal* was first discussed by Arnold van Gennep in his *Les Rites de Passage* as known as (*The Rites of Passage*, 2019). Bhabha used this term in his *Location of Culture* (1994). In his opinion *liminal* or *liminality* is a transitory or in-between space where there is indeterminacy, hybridity, and ambiguity. In literature *liminality* holds a great importance because it a space where cultures transform. For Bhabha, this term is very central to postcolonial literature because he wants to study about the borderlines. Bhabha highlighted “the importance of border locations as the threshold environment, where subjectivity finds itself poised between sameness and ‘alterity’ and new discursive forms are constituted” (Thieme, 2003, p. 144). In postcolonial literature the importance of the idea of *liminal space* lies on the fact that it serves as a point where cultural transformations and interchange take place. That is the reason for Bhabha to focus in-between the cultures because that is where *liminal spaces* of colonial discourse are found. He mentions “the desire for a reformed, recognizable other, is a subject of a difference that is almost the same but not quite.” (Bhabha, 1984, p, 126). The approach of *liminality* demands of giving privilege to the hybrid cultures. Bhabha has used this term to talk about and undermine the dichotomy of colonizers and colonized. He supports *liminal spaces* where colonizer is not superior to the colonized. In *liminal spaces*, blurring of roles takes place and this blurring is a symbol of living on margins. This *liminal space* is a space where the transformation takes place. This transformation leads to ambiguity and confusion. A person enters to a new space, but there, he is not accepted immediately. So, he takes time for the incorporation into that group or space. Turner (1997) puts it as: ‘*Liminal* means being on a threshold, [...] a state or process which is betwixt and between the normal [...] Since *liminal time* is not controlled by the clock it is a time of enchantment when anything might, even should, happen.’ (p. 33). *Liminality* is described as a point “when the past has lost its grip and the future has not yet taken definite shape” (Turner, 1992, p. 133). Bhabha (2004) describes *liminality* as “an expanded and ex-centric site of experience and empowerment” (p. 6). He perceived *liminality* as an important and positive concept in post-colonial studies. He calls *liminal space* ‘in-between’ (p. 29) because here two cultures can mix and there is a space for hybridity and hybrid identities. Hybridity exerts those cultures are not separate but always “in contact with one another and this contact leads to cultural mixed-ness” (Huddart, 2006, p. 4). This *liminal space* is a space where the othering can end. It gives a space to the repressed to recreate their identity and give it new meanings to the identity. What Bhabha calls borders are not the actual or physical borders, these borders are imaginary where there is a birth of cultural transformations and cultural meanings.

In a postcolonial discourse, the theme of identity serves as a focal point for imagining the struggle of the colonized to reconcile their local heritage and history with the authority of the dominant culture enforced by the colonizers. According to Said (1993), the national re-establishment of society, affirmation of identity, and the emergence of new cultural practices initiated the battle against Western dominance worldwide in the non-European world and subsequently advanced it (p. 218). The primary topics of postcolonial novels are varied, but they primarily show local people's battles with the challenge of

forging their own identities, in addition to the shifting economic landscape and cultural ambiguity. As a result, after getting freedom from colonial rule, populations tried to build their nations while expressing their own cultural and national identities. Numerous books examine the psychological struggle between the lives of immigrants and formerly colonized people to maintain equilibrium in the face of conflict between their new political order and European standards of living. Additionally, one of the significant aspects of postcolonial novels that writers have covered in a wide variety of their writing is the issue of homelessness conveying the tension that immigrants endure in colonizers' regions and cities.

Hybrid identity for Bhabha comes from “interweaving of elements of the colonizer and colonized challenging the validity and authenticity of any essentialist cultural identity” (Meredith, 1988, p. 2). Bhabha (1994) also discusses that there is a third space which is “in between the designation of identity” and that “this interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains the difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (p. 4). A postcolonial novel finds itself engaged with questions and issues such as resistance, nationalism, diaspora and identity construction and its crisis. Instead of an ambiguous imitation, postcolonial authors create their works in a counter-discourse of pushback to the forms, styles, and topics of English literature.

Material and Methods

This study takes the novel *Gravel Heart* and many other relevant scholarly articles as a primary source, and books and essays on liminal spaces, liminality, and cultural identity as secondary sources. This is qualitative exploratory research that is concerned with thematic concerns of the primary source. For liminality and cultural identity, it takes Bhabhan perspectives on liminality and cultural identity. Choosing this methodology is deliberate attempt to link the purpose of this research i.e., investigating various challenges confronted by the immigrants in the host land and how they cope up with all those discriminatory issues.

Textual Analysis

In Gurnah’s *Gravel Heart*, Salim, the protagonist of the novel, is seen in a liminal space. He is always in confusion and in-between of acceptance and rejection of the new culture and life after moving to London. His parents leave him, and he knows that he is never going to return but he does not readily accept that fact. He leaves the old space but never enters the new one, thus, he is always hanging in that liminal space throughout the novel. He is happy to see the big house and his room but the confusion, the in-betweenness, lingers upon his mind. He is determined not to get discouraged, never be distracted from doing what he aims to do with his life here. “I allowed this resolution to overcome the slight feeling of panic I sensed at the edge of my mind. What was I doing here?” (Gurnah, 2017, p. 59).” These nervous thoughts reflect that he is still lying in that liminal space where he has left his previous state but not entered to or accepted the new one.

During his early stay in London, there are many situations where Salim finds himself in between something. His behavior and thoughts show that he has not readily accepted his new life. His uses of the phrases like “someone like me into the life of Europe” (p. 59) shows that he is still trying to figure out to adjusted to this new life and new space. His awkwardness in different situations gives reasons to people to laugh at him which shows us that he is still in a liminal space. He also mentions that his awkward behavior at the airport made Uncle Amir laugh at him and he mentions it to his sister, too. Salim is

haunted by London streets in his initial days as he is not used to this atmosphere, and he is not ready to accept the life he is experiencing in here. He is not familiar with the weather, winds, roads, and many other things. He is right now in the middle of something. He is in the middle of leaving his homeland and accepting this new life that he would have to live in London. At this point, everything is quite strange and unacceptable to him. "The overbearing shrillness of the strange air" (p. 61) around him makes him uncomfortable as these seemed unfamiliar and unfavorable. He was not even recognizing the air here.

Salim often shows himself in a liminal space where he is not only fleeing away from accepting his new life but also terrified and haunted by this new space, London. "London terrified me so much. The streets confused me. I could not make them out from each other. The buses and taxis and cars roared past and churned up my gut" (p. 61). He struggles to accept this new life in London. He feels like he is already tired of all this. "I felt as if the city despised me as if I were a tiresome and timorous child who had wandered unwelcome out of the dust" (p. 61). He is not coming out of his anxieties in the beginning. He feels like an alien in this new place. He is confused and tired. He does not know how he would adjust here and live like one of these people. Everything about London haunts him like hell. He does not feel familiar with this place at all. He often uses the phrase 'this place' for London which clearly shows that he has not accepted London as his own place.

Whenever Salim writes to his mother, he always shares how he feels awkward and alien in this place. He tells her mother about his adventures and strangeness that he cannot discuss with anyone here in London. He avoids taking buses and trains because he thinks "it's better than struggling with all those people on the buses or the underground" (p. 63). He is not scared of the crowd but scared of the London crowd. London crowd is new to him. He does not know people here. Everyone seems unfamiliar and a stranger to him. He does not accept them as his own people or people of his state because he does not own this place. This liminality of Salim's character does not let him begin his new journey. It makes him take a lot of time in getting out of this in-betweenness or this liminal space. He also writes in his letter to her mother "to be honest, I think I am scared of the press of people" (p. 63). He is not very familiar with this life and cannot accept everything at once. The press of people makes him feel like he is getting crushed by something. He is already lurking between acceptance and non-acceptance and this press makes him think about it more seriously. He relates his long journeys with his small rides at his own place. He recollects in his letter "how it used to take me ten minutes to ride to school" (p. 63). He has left his homeland but not its memories. These memories follow him everywhere in London and make it more difficult for him to accept this new tough life here. Salim hangs in this liminal space as he stands on the threshold of leaving his old life and accepting his new life which is a difficult thing for him to do because he cannot get out of his nostalgia about the old town.

Salim knows that he has encountered many things but still there is a lot to come his way that he will have to face. He knew that by now this life is not going to be easy, but he will be accustomed to it when he will come out of his liminality and accept everything completely. He is "working out the way...learning to live" (p. 65). Salim's learning process is not ended yet, but it is about to end. As he starts going out to work, he meets new people, he finds out new activities and an escape from home. He begins to love his job which is helping him to make new friends and getting more comfortable with this new place.

Gurnah in his *Gravel Heart* addresses the issue of cultural identity through African immigrants who live in the same house and have their own clashes. The writer unveils all these hardships through the experience of Salim and other immigrants with whom Salim lives. He depicts how the question of cultural identity hits them when they are exposed to

the world outside where there is a different culture, religion, and lifestyle. The characters have feelings of ambivalence that reflect their ambiguity and their alienation in a host country. The author expounds in his fiction on how cultural identity has a major effect on the lives of immigrants and how they deal with it and organize their lives in a new state. The postcolonial immigrants face the dilemma that they belong to another country, but they are trying to groom themselves and their lives in another one. They relate their lives with their past and their homes but cannot go back to that. The only option they are left with, is to accept the West and its lifestyle but are unable to do so completely. Even if they perfectly follow western culture, they are still recognized by their native land. In between all these problems, post-colonial immigrants struggle to find their cultural identity in a place that simultaneously combines several nations and cultures, allowing for a free exchange of ideas and cultural representations. A mapping of space that deviates from conventional depictions of national space and identity, results from the characters' observations of their culture and the culture of the host land.

Gravel Heart depicts the life of African immigrants in London with the focus on the protagonist Salim. In London, Salim is caught between two different cultures, and faces difficulties even after spending years in this host country. The story of Salim is a story of self-discovery and realization. He learns "to live in London, to avoid being intimidated by crowds and by rudeness, to avoid curiosity, not to feel desolate at hostile stares and walk purposefully" (p.66). He further learns "to live with the cold and dirt, and to evade angry students at college with their swagger and their sense of grievance and their expectations of failure" (p. 66). Simultaneously, he fears "the silent empty streets at night", and always hurries home when he leaves work, crossing the street as soon as I glimpsed a group of people on the pavement ahead" (p. 66). Salim is on his journey of self-discovery. Salim encounters the strange looks that people give him when he walks on the streets which makes him realize that he is not one of them. Students at college expected him to fail because for them Salim belonged to a strange world, and they looked down upon him. Salim often had to encounter these things that question his cultural identity.

While engaging with other people who have different backgrounds and worlds but related to him in some ways, Salim finds a new way to discover his cultural identity. He acknowledges that he does not have to depend on power relations to enter this new world. He discovers a place where he can construct his own identity "in relation to varied and often contradictory systems of meaning" (Bhaba,1994, p. 38). Salim encounters new ideologies in this new place where Eastern and Western cultures collide with each other. Throughout the novel, he is found moving to and fro between two cultures but cannot connect with a single one and is in a continuous quest for his lost identity.

Gurnah uses Uncle Amir to show prejudiced assumption about the identity of immigrants in London. In his view they are amused to be good for nothing. He like other London residents believes that immigrants migrate to other countries just to flee from their responsibilities and waste their lives doing useless things and illegal activities. This criminal image is attached to immigrant identity always and they cannot get rid of it easily. When Salim tells Uncle Amir that he wants to leave, he taunts him. He believes that immigrants are unemployed because they are not talented enough to get employment. They spend their time in useless activities instead of doing something fruitful. He offends at Saleem, "you preferred to spend your time with those immigrant loafers" (p. 76). This is stigma attached to the immigrants' identities because even after being a part of the host land the natives here do not own them and consider them inferior. They are *other* and they remain *other* for them.

Salim after three years of his stay in London writes to his mother about his experience in London and how he has shaped his cultural identity by living with different people and by listening to their stories. He tells his mother that he has discovered himself which means that now his cultural identity is constructed and clear to him: "I have worked hard and learnt a great deal, especially this year, about myself and about other people...I had now understood how fear and trouble can co-exist....I have learnt that I am timid and cautious" (p. 93). In this letter, Salim narrates his whole journey of discovering his cultural identity to his mother. Gurnah does not fail to illustrate Salim's journey of self-discovery. It was never easy for Salim. Gurnah here gives a true image of immigrants' struggle for identity and settlement in a host country.

Conclusion

Colonization is a very complex phenomenon that has deeply affected the minds of people who experienced it. Gurnah illustrates the perplexity of situation of people in his fiction very creatively. He depicts how people suffered because of colonialism and lost their cultural values in this. Before colonialism, they did not have luxurious life but a peaceful one. Colonialism introduced them to terror and snatched away their freedom. He portrays the true picture of the violence practiced at that time. He introduces his readers to pure colonialism and its aftereffects also. The writer digs out the past and shows it through the stories Saida narrates to Salim to build the foundation of his story. His argument is somehow related to Said's argument. He believes that so called colonialists did not come to educate, they just came to pretend that they are bearing the burden of illiteracy of natives. As Said has also mentioned Europeans' assumptions that natives are animals having no culture, religion, or language (Said, 1993).

Gurnah, later, shifts his focus from colonialism to the afterlives of the people of Zanzibar. In part two of his fiction, he only focuses on Salim's experiences in London. Liminality, a concept that was introduced by Victor Turner and later described by Bhabha shows a person in the middle of something. At many points he reveals that Salim has not crossed the threshold that exists between two places. Gurnah expresses Salim's reluctance to accept the new culture and London life in the beginning. Salim's thoughts and descriptions of fabled London life show his confusion and nonacceptance of this new world. Salim complains about almost everything as he steps out of his house. The weather gives him chills, the crowd and noise scare the hell out of him, and the quiet street freaks him out even though he is scared of people standing on the corner. At many points, he is confused about what he is doing there. The way the author portrays Salim's migration shows how every immigrant experiences this liminality in the host country. Salim keeps on comparing his life at home and host land. Ultimately, he is seen in a liminal space where his in-betweenness seems like it will not end. Gurnah through these pictures of Salim's life in London shows him in a liminal space where he has a long way to go for the acceptance of what he has brought i.e., his identity and culture. Salim is also seen to have anguish for Uncle Amir who brought him there. The writer reveals in the fiction the situation of immigrants through Salim's dealing with liminality.

Through Salim, Gurnah mentions the dilemma of immigrants and how they struggle for their culture and identity. No matter how hard they try to save their culture, it still gets hybrid and new elements of the new culture they interact with continue to become a part of their lives. The dilemma begins when immigrants realize their connection with their roots and homeland. Butler (2001) states the relationship with homeland does not end with the departure of the initial group. Not only does it continue, but it may also take diverse forms simultaneously, from a physical return to the emotional attachment as expressed artistically, to the reinterpretation of homeland cultures. These feelings add to

the conflicts of immigrants, and they get arrested into the issues of identity crisis. A person acquires his identity from his native land and when he is dislocated and starts living in an unknown culture, it becomes very difficult for him to survive. For his survival, he tries to assimilate himself into the new culture he is introduced to. In this process of assimilation into new culture, an immigrant feels like he is divided into two parts. He has traits of this new culture now, but he cannot overlook the norms and culture of his native land, also. He faces an identity crisis and ends up questioning his own identity.

Recommendations

The current study is an attempt to investigate Gurnah's fictional world in *Gravel Heart* in terms of liminality and cultural hybridity. Gurnah has portrayed the postcolonial experiences of both the immigrants and native people living in their native land. The migrants face identity crisis due to living in the host country while the natives feel so while residing their own homeland that still has after-effects of colonialism. The situation faced by the people of Zanzibar may be applied in general to all the people of the countries that have once been British Colonies. The similar framework may be applied to other fictional works written by postcolonial writers who reflect the same experiences in order to investigate how the characters are transformed as an effect of the events and that happen in their different segment of lives and leave an everlasting impression upon them.

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