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Re-mapping the Postcolonial Heritage of Exile in Abdulrazak Gurnah's Admiring Silence

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Abstract

Being exiled entails significant dichotomy as best communicated by Edward Said (2000) in his *Reflections on Exile* "[exile is] strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience" (173). This dichotomy between appealing and terrifying lies at the heart of Abdulrazak Gurnah's narrative of exile and return entitled *Admiring Silence* (1996). The possibility of reconciling this dichotomy necessitates an examination of the current postcolonial condition and its impact on exile/return. Thus, the fundamental premise of this essay is to interrogate the current state of postcolonialism between narratives of resistance, "writing back", anger, dichotomies, and narratives of defeat. This uncertain position generates two exilic conditions: an exile, which promises return and emancipation in opposition to a futile exile which generates no possibility of return. A reading of *Admiring Silence* reveals the current state of the postcolonial condition through questioning the significance of the protagonist's journey between Zanzibar and England.

Keywords: exile, return, home, Gurnah, *Admiring Silence*.

1. Introduction

The cycle of literary movements records moments of blossoming and others of waning down and disappearing. Demarking borderlines of the beginning and the ending of a certain literary movement, however, is not an easy task to accomplish. Most often, at the end of a literary movement and before the beginning of a new one, there is a gray zone that expresses the transitional phase between two historical periods. To give a few examples, colonial practices existed long before the appearance of the term colonialism itself and its heyday during the nineteenth century. Samples vary from the history of European colonial practices, for instance, in the New World against American Indians while casting them out to the western frontiers. An unprecedented number of deaths and massive oblivion harmed the oral, traditional, and cultural heritage of native Indians. In the field of literature, Shakespearean plays like *The Tempest* (1610-1611) and *Othello* (1603) stamped early encounters with foreign and different races while the colonial era gained a name, shape, and strategy prior to imperial expansions in Africa and Asia during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

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Colonial writings of the orientalists express reflections on imperial expansions and encounters with the natives. The writings of the pro-imperialist Rudyard Kipling and the more ambivalent colonial narrative of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) present an example of the colonial discourse which is endorsed with racial prejudice. With the wave of independence, a new process of decolonization began as the concept of postcolonialism gained popularity, significance, and efficiency among the newly independent nations. The process of decolonizing was a painful and complex process for which postcolonial writing became a reservoir. Postcolonial literature and nationalist writers of the first period after independence particularly engaged fiercely in a counter-colonial discourse against the former empire. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Aki Kwei Armah's *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) are prime examples of this early form of writing within the postcolonial agenda.

The beginning of postmodernism in the late 1950s and 1960s, however, pushed forward a pertinent question to arise with a new wave of critics as well as writers in the literary postcolonial arena. The question revolved around the validity and significance of postcolonialism in the age of globalization, heterogeneity, and diminishing cultural, linguistic, and religious frontiers. Two fundamental positions divided postcolonial studies and caused much debate around the (in) validity of the term. The two positions of postcolonialism are going to be used to examine the exile experience found in *Admiring Silence* (1996) by Abdulrazak Gurnah (1948-) as follows:

1. Postcolonialism as means of resisting colonial discourse and hegemony, thus, exile promises return and emancipation.
2. Postcolonialism as a delayed future project, thus, exile promises no return and emancipation is rendered impossible.

Suggesting a pluralist reading of the term postcolonialism and its sub-section exile does not refute its salient contributions or enlarge its contradictory state as much as it opens a door for clarifying its objectives and tenets nowadays. To examine the current state of postcolonial studies and its interrelated relationship with exile, a close reading of the protagonist's exilic experience in *Admiring Silence* is crucial.

2. Postcolonial Resistance Generates an Emancipatory Exile:

Abdulrazak Gurnah is a novelist, short story writer, reviewer, and professor whose imagination dwells on two consciousness: one is his African heritage and the other is the English metropolitan. He has been driven out of his home in Zanzibar because of escalated violence, civil unrest, and animosity against the Arab population as discussed by Boparai (2021) in his study of Gurnah's fiction (10). The writer gears his pen to depict the dilemma of homelessness and its outcomes like restlessness and identity misconstruction. Living in exile, Gurnah never turns his back to his roots or ignores to diagnose the political, social, and economic predicaments of post independent Zanzibar. Simultaneously, Gurnah makes use of his exilic experience to depict the difficult encounter and day-to-day misfortunes that blacks endure while living in former colonizer's countries. While England represents the present, Zanzibar is the past that always lingers in the memory of the exiled and prevents one from fully integrating. Boparai

notes, "The spirit of his narratives lies in their traversal of time. They oscillate between the past and the present" (2021, 14). Indeed, memory, as imagined and depicted by Gurnah, oscillates between the past and the present which cannot be divided.

Admiring Silence opens up from the point of view of the unnamed protagonist who sets the venture of comparison between the East and the West clear from the onset of the narrative. It is not a novelty that binaries shaped East/ West encounters since pre-colonial days, being an African immigrant exiled for more than twenty years in the heart of the metropolitan, however, gives the traditional tale a vantage point of view of an insider/outsider eyewitness. The unnamed narrator lives in London for no less than twenty years, where he establishes for himself a life or what seems to be a conventional life with an English woman and a daughter. The unnamed narrator ushers the narrative with his wanders, lamentations, and sometimes attacks at the wonders of industrial progress in the heart of empire, London, as compared to the periphery or "the dark places of the world" as he puts it (Gurnah 1996, 8). He accredits all the greatness and industrialization of Britain today to its dark history and the labor of its colonial subjects including the Irish and the Scottish who are their neighbors but never treated on equal terms as the British.

Much like the Pocahontas in the story he tells, the protagonist finds himself taking up the voyage to England where he lives for the rest of his life. While narrating Pocahontas's voyage into the imperial city of London, the narrator's confessional tone reveals an anecdote about historical narratives. He deliberately employs indirect speech as he says, "This is what was said of her [Pocahontas]", "It was a moment to be repeated again and again in stories of imperial adventure", "Yet nobody reported her [Pocahontas] complaining about it." (Gurnah 1996, 09-10). Pocahontas died tragically but the details of her life and involvement with the empire remain stories that are told and many times untold. As the narrator delivers reports about Pocahontas' involvement with the West and her experience in England, the use of indirect speech is purposeful and determines skepticism of grand historical narratives.

Historically speaking, Pocahontas' story and eventual exile in England paraphrase an early exemplary encounter of the colonials with the natives of the new world. Much of the violent ravishes and massacres that took place during this epoch were silenced and buried in overlooked ledgers of history, which resulted in oblivion, mistrust, and an untold version of history. History shows that only the powerful dictate and manipulate the narrative discourse according to the geo-political interests. Likewise, Pocahontas' tale has been romanticized frequently but as the narrator indicates, the truth of her life in England remains untold. Laura Wasowics (1996) argues, "The actual and apparent facts about the real Pocahontas are relatively few" (378). She adds, "From these fascinating pictures and convoluted texts [various revisited and recreated versions], we see an exotic creature whose official story, while sanctioned for youth, emerges as a web of contradictions." (1996, 415). Although Pocahontas stands as a symbol of unity between the white English culture and native Indians, the details of her Christian-English life remain few; a fact that the unnamed protagonist of *Admiring Silence* is insisting on.

The narrator's retelling of Pocahontas story goes hand in hand with the postcolonial aim to rectify colonial narratives as did many postcolonial writers like Jean Rhys in her novel of "writing back" (to borrow Bill Ashcroft et al.'s term) *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), which "is considered a remodeling of the

mad voiceless character from *Jane Eyre*" (Laboudi 2021, 798). The narrator of *Admiring Silence* attempts to objectify the colonial discourse by giving justice to the natives when he confesses, "History turns out to be a bundle of lies that covers up centuries of murderous rampage around the globe" (Gurnah 1996, 10). Indeed, the retelling of history coincides with the postcolonial project to rectify the colonial unjust discourse that deems the subaltern as the "other" and inferior. At a certain level, *Admiring Silence* is the story of reversing historical narratives and misjudgments of colonialism. Pocahontas' story coalesces actually with the protagonist's exilic story in a more refashioned and contemporary replica. Much like Pocahontas' experience of exile in England, the unnamed narrator leaves the homeland and the culture he is familiar with and heads to the foreign country which is England. In the host country, he peruses the little luxuries that student life can offer him and befriends an English woman named Emma who has been attracted to him. The nature of their relationship is complicated for they come from different backgrounds (religious, cultural, language. . .). Their encounter and forthcoming relationship symbolize the meeting of the East-West axis and the tensions that will result from this meeting. In his relationship with the English white Emma, the black Zanzibari protagonist sets out to rectify many prejudices against his race. In fact, he makes it clear that the striking cultural and social differences mattered less when they were younger but with the passage of time, these differences were separating them more and more as the emotional distance grew larger between the Western woman and the Eastern man.

Through employing the narrative of exile, Gurnah engages in a counter colonial discourse which clarifies through a close textual reading of significant details about the life of the protagonist and his relationship with Emma. It is Emma, the female partner, who proposes cohabiting instead of marrying and the narrator never objects but agrees joyfully. By not marrying Emma following a traditional ceremony, he does not legalize their life together according to civil or religious orders, which makes their union a fragile one. Such type of relationships outside marriage is not unusual during the colonial days when British colonizers disregarded traditional customs of the violated natives. Woodson (1918) argues:

> " it was enacted that whatsoever English, or other white man or woman, being free, should intermarry with a Negro, or mulatto man or woman bond or free, should by judgment of the county court, be committed to prison and there remain during the space of six months" (344).

Several other penalties were imposed in the colonies to prevent interracial relationships and preserve the purity of the white race from mixgenation. The protagonist reverses the role of the weak colonized to reenact the colonial attitude of being an African man who immerses in a free relationship with an English woman. Although he loves her, he conducts a very careful strategy of life in order to make advantage of his exile as Emma enables him to get inside the most "white" English places that he can never get access to by himself. The means of indulging in the English white society vary between the voyage, language, job, and personal relationships. Accordingly, the narrator turns his exile in England into a reversed colonial mission from south to north.

The fact that the unnamed narrator lives full twenty years in England reveals his utter adaptation to the Western standards of life. In addition to the fact that he succeeds in graduating from an English

university, the choice of a teaching career is purposeful and indicates a reversal in terms of roles as the former colonized becomes a teacher of the former colonizers. Although he dislikes his job as a teacher of English language, mastering the colonizer's language and teaching English pupils indicate the sense of equality that the African protagonist acquires. At the same time, the African who teaches the English reverses the colonial equation of superiority versus inferiority. Tracing the protagonist's experience of exile in England, the reader can spot clearly instances of empowering the former colonized. In view of that, the exilic condition of the African protagonist becomes purposeful echoing the postcolonial's aim to reverse colonial narratives as Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge (2005) argue, "'Postcolonialism' has not disappeared, but lags well behind its dominant partner, 'postmodernism.' " (382)

The narrator's exile in the metropolitan records many instances of resistance. He develops the habit of teaching his daughter Amelia, who resembles her mother, the meaning of robbed hopes and his native people's history, which lingers in his thoughts all the time. He tells her that this is "the savage critique of Europe" (Gurnah 1996, 16). By pushing his daughter to the edge of anger, the African father engages in a confessional-provoking strategy. He explains that after their conversation, the daughter ends up uttering all colonial prejudices against the black father like what happened when she aggressively addressed her father "intolerant, ungrateful, a fundamentalist, a raging mujahedin, a pig and a bastard" (Gurnah, 1996,16). The narrator is fully aware of the differences between him and his English female companion and daughter who is a typical English young daughter. Accordingly, he never misses a chance to pinpoint these differences between his race and the English one as means of blaming the English colonizers for their violent oppressive colonial history and all the damage they caused in dark Africa. The protagonist believes that his stay in England is necessary especially when he refrains to accept the Secretary Amur Malik's offer of a high position in his home country "Of course they [English people] needed me there. It helped them know who they were" (Gurnah 1996, 127). The narrator shows a firm commitment to his strategic role in England.

Postcolonial writers deem the past as an important part of the identity of the colonized or the exiled; the past must be always remembered and relived. Gurnah depicts the exiled African protagonist as being constantly attached to his past while living in England. The narrator never breaks his relationship with his roots and family, whether through memories or his continual conversations with Emma, her parents, or his daughter Amelia. Letters also are not many but constant between him and his mother who informs him about the social and political state of his homeland. In his relationship with English people, the narrator deliberately exaggerates and lies about his family and homeland. The more Emma asks about his past, the more he keeps silent or lies to her, which irritates her even more. Through doing this, he provokes her, and maybe he enjoys it as he confesses that lying to her "made me happy" (Gurnah 1996, 30). At some point, the narrator's discourse is sarcastic which reflects his disgust of colonial prejudices and racial stigmatization. The English doctor, who represents science and the progress of medical advancement in the British civilization compared to Africa, diagnoses the protagonist based on racial prejudgments stating openly that the protagonist's black race is the prime factor of his heart problem. The English doctor declares, "Afro-Caribbean people have dickey hearts […] and they are prone to high blood pressure, hypertension, sickle-cell, choler, phlegm, melancholy and hysteria." (Gurnah 1996, 12). This is

an excellent example of a racial encounter between the English doctor and the African patient. The latter prefers to be silent rather than defending himself and his black race. Kaigai points out, "Silence is used as an agent of empowering" (2013, 132). Indeed, this silence is a reminiscence of sarcasm as a way of mocking the doctor's prejudice to link the physical heart problem with the racial skin color.

The narrator's silence becomes an admirable strategy to him as well as others. With his muted reactions and conversations, the protagonist grows the seeds of submission and acceptance in the others. For him, however, silence is a tool of sarcasm, which makes it admired in both cases as the title of the novel fairly indicates. The silence strategy that the narrator conducts in his relationship with his father-in-law Mr. Willboughby, for instance, transforms into a mechanism of irony. The narrator never attempts to change the predefined colonial prejudices about blacks that the old English man keeps rehearsing and instead of defending himself and his black race, the narrator's tone and few words imply an exaggeration of colonial prejudices. In fact, he is aware that prejudices and stereotypes that are set for centuries cannot be changed through conversations. Kaigai contends, "even as the narrator seems not to be talking, he happens to be loquacious and offers profound critiques on vital matters." (2013, 131). Following reversals, mocking tone, and sometimes silence, the unnamed black narrator uses these strategic tools during his stay in London, which reminds one of Tayeb Salih's protagonist in his *Season of Migration to the North* (1966), who implements the same strategies of exaggerations and mocking. Many of the lies that Gurnah's narrator invents lead to more lies and his life in England came to be associated with lies in his relationships with English people particularly. These lies run through the pages of *Admiring Silence* to become a motif. From a postcolonial point of view, the purposeful lies echo lies of the colonial discourse and the propaganda that the colonizers skilfully invented to justify the white civilization mission in darker territories of Africa. Accordingly, from a postcolonial point of view, the narrative of *Admiring Silence* marks many instances of reversing colonial discourse and objectifying the decolonized, which makes the exile experience of the narrator significant, purposeful, and even strategic. Mocking out the racial discourse of Mr. Willboughby, the doctor, his wife and daughter is reminiscent of empowering the decolonized's narrative.

3. Postcolonialism as a Delayed Project and Exile/Return is Impossible

With the passing of time, the twenty years that the narrator spends in exile take on a different dimension. A close textual examination of the narrative reveals that the narrator's exilic experience is a complex one. At the beginning, the protagonist's exilic experience is ruled by silenced anger and rigid divides between him and the English society, in contrast to the later phase which is characterized by resilience, acceptance, and sometimes defeat. The movement of the narrative from resistance to resilience is reminiscent of critical development in postcolonial writing. The first wave of postcolonial writers emphasizes the separation and marks of difference between the East and the West, as Monika Albrecht (2020) explains, "By privileging difference over similarity, such comparable and similar phenomena have been systematically ignored by the postcolonial mainstream" (30). This difference, upon which the first wave of postcolonial writers insists, makes integration difficult in the host country of exile. The second

wave of postcolonial writers, however, overlooks the dichotomies that separate the metropolis from periphery, and at the same time they lack what E. San Juan Jr (1995) calls "revolutionary power of native agency" (107). In this context, Gurnah's *Admiring Silence* follows a line of criticism against the postcolonial's first stream of anger and strong divides between East and West.

Gurnah fingerpoints the failure of anger and resistance in the building up of the newly independent nations. Gurnah portrays a protagonist who grows to be sick, tired, bored, and less aggressive to his English entourage. While the English society's discriminatory practices revive the colonial discourse, the African protagonist's reactions register the blossoming of a new attitude of acceptance. The detour of the narrative from resistance to resilience clarifies with the protagonist's first return journey to his homeland after twenty years of exile. Because it is a narrative of exile and return, the textual space appears to be divided into two phases. The first one takes place before the narrator's first visit to his homeland after twenty years of exile, and the second one takes place after the visit. In fact, the narrator's troubles start to emerge partially after his daughter's birth. While the period that precedes Amelia's birth was stable and comfortable to some extent, the coming of the daughter meant a total break up of this stability. The reasons of this unrest are prompted by economic and marital ones but the most threatening ones are racial as the daughter represents a descendant of interracial relationship and unmarried parents "confused offspring of mixed parentage (meaning European and some kind of hubshi)" (Gurnah 1996, 73). The racial stigma is evident and reminds one of the colonial days where the black race is always deemed inferior to the white one.

Upon his return to Zanzibar, the narrator's indecisiveness about the meaning of exile and the significance of return grows larger. The protagonist shares with many other characters throughout Gurnah's fiction what Boparai calls "[the] grapple with their pasts or dilemmas related to identity" (2021, 14). The new government has facilitated the return of its exiled sons and daughters in order to help in the rebuilding of the newly independent country. Upon his coming to the airport, the narrator feels that his past, present, and future coalesce during the moment of arrival. He remembers the past chaos that his country was undergoing , and he does not see much difference in the present state while the future appears unclear and thoughts are confused. During his short stay, the narrator feels like he is caught in a non-belonging state between the metropolitan and the original homeland. Simon Gikandi (1996) contends, "This temporal gap, the distance between Africa and England, is also the mark of a double crisis: a crisis in the economy of a narrative that is no longer structured by the positivity of home and a crisis in the teleology of empire that, without its power, prestige , and authority, can be mediated only by a rethoric of decline and decay" (194). This is the dilemma of the exiled in its most complex forms that Gurnah gives a detailed picture and frame to.

While the narrator struggles with his memory to recall people he used to know in the past, his estrangement becomes evident in his home especially with his uncle/stepfather. The novelist gives the reader a record of the narrator's past life and the family's history to understand the dilemma that he finds himself caught in during his visit. The narrator's father was also a teacher who is estranged from his family because of his constant dependence on the family's uncle, Hashim. The father used to give money to the nationalists secretly in support of the national cause. With time passage, he was alienating himself

even more because of his inability to control his family affairs. Ultimately, he disappears without return. Rumors spread that he left for England 'a country that he loved'. The son's fate was no different from that of the father as he goes to England with the help of his uncle Hashim who makes it possible for him. Like the father, the son becomes a teacher unable to control his family affairs. Uncle Hashim pushed the narrator's dependent father to leave which is the same fate of the son who is estranged from his biological family because of an uncle who does not treat him on equal terms with his sons and daughters. The narrator's feelings of orphanage motivate his desire to exile himself. As such, both of the father and the son leave home due to feelings of estrangement while the unanticipated return of the narrator reminds him of all these dreadful memories.

The feelings of estrangement become even more evident outside the family home as the narrator expresses his disappointment with the aftermaths of independence. Instead of peace, a new uprising takes place, which dismiss the promise of freedom and prosperity of the new country. Chaos dominates the new state while arbitrary imprisonment and murders rule the place. The narrator confesses his disappointment with the new status quo of nationalism as he explains:

> They wanted to glory in grievance, in promises of vengeance, in their past oppression, in their present poverty and in the nobility of their darker skins. To the nationalist rhetoric of their opponents, they proclaimed a satirical reprise of their despised Africanness, mocked the nationalists for their newfound conscience, and promised them an accounting in the very near future. All of which came to pass with incredible promptness. (Gurnah 1996, 57-58)

The anarchic circumstances of post-independence turn gradually to be the new usual norm of life that people should acquaint themselves with; a situation which Gurnah skillfully portrays and condemns in *Admiring Silence*. Kwame Anthony Appiah (1991) explains, "the novels of the second, postcolonial, stage are novels of delegitimation: they reject not only the Western imperium but also the nationalist project of the postcolonial national bourgeoisie… the basis for that project of delegitimation cannot be the postmodernist one: rather it is grounded in an appeal to an ethical universal" (353). The nationalists restrict people's freedom with harsh political measures and criminal violence against the population. Accordingly, the narrator's feelings of disappointment and betrayal of the nation fuel his indecisiveness about the meaning of the return to home, which becomes impossible for him at this stage. Accordingly, he rejects the prime minister's offer to come back to his nation and refrains from the delusion to help rebuilding his country through translating world literature to make it available to ordinary people.

The narrator develops feelings of doubt and hesitance regarding the true meaning of return, the significance of exile, and the postcolonial project as a whole. Anne McClintock (1992) plainly declares, "the term 'post- colonialism' is, in many cases, prematurely celebratory" (87) as she discusses different cases of former colonies who are still bound to their colonizers in many ways while other nations did not yet reach the stage of 'post- colonialism', like Palestine and Northern Ireland (87-88). She confirms, "Different forms of colonization have, moreover, given rise to different forms of de-colonization" (1992, 88). Indeed, colonialists left Africa but their colonial thoughts of superiority never alter. Mr. Willboughy

as a case in point is a huge admirer of empire stories and a pro-imperialist who believes that colonialism has been good all the time. He confesses to the African narrator "It was a blockhead idea" to leave Africa, give it independence instead of ruling it directly and plainly (Gurnah 1996, 64). Mr. Willboughy's racial and imperial credos echo those of the narrator of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (2008), who deems colonialism justifiable because of the "unselfish belief in the idea" (09). The post-independence socialist state brought about chaos and loss which is not very much different from the damage caused by colonizers.

The new state of the supposedly independent nation exposes the fact that the colonialists' departure remains a physical one not real. Undeclared ties with the former colonizer remain to govern the independent state for long because the new African leaders are unwilling to cut these ties. Anne McClintock (1992) argues that postcolonial's "premature celebration of the pastness of colonialism, runs the risk of obscuring the continuities and discontinuities of colonial and imperial power" (88). She adds that since the 1940s onwards, different forms of imperialism took shape "(military, political, economic and cultural). . . that makes the historical rupture implied by the term 'post-colonial' especially unwarranted". This "rupture" justifies the fact about the lasting effects of colonialism and its continued new forms that foreground the seeds, and methods of postcolonialism (89). Hence, the agenda of postcolonialism becomes impossible to emancipate the colonized and make return after exile possible. Kwame Anthony Appiah (1991) confirms, "the novels of the second, postcolonial, stage are novels of delegitimation: they reject not only the Western imperium but also the nationalist project of the postcolonial national bourgeoisie… the basis for that project of delegitimation cannot be the postmodernist one: rather it is grounded in an appeal to an ethical universal" (353). This is well reflected through the narrator's insights about home and return when he confesses "as if home and belonging were anything more than a wilful fiction when there was no possibility (at that time) of them being real again" (Gurnah 1996, 76).

As the narrator loses faith in everything that surrounds him and represents his home country. The narrator's sense of belonging becomes shattered as he develops serious doubts about his state of being and presence in his homeland after twenty years of exile. Gurnah portrays the story of pain and the difficulty of return for the exiled when the sense of belonging is locked inside a state of in-betweeness. The middle position of the protagonist parallels the state of postcolonialism itself and its struggles between the politics of emphasizing divides and emancipation. Ahmed Aijaz (1994) argues that postcolonial writers are caught in a state of "belonging" which is in fact a non-belonging (130). Seeking some kind of reassurance, the narrator decides to go back to exile and his former life which seems at this critical moment to offer more affirmation than his homeland. Upon his return, however, the narrator is shocked to find Emma leaving him followed by his daughter. Unexpectedly, he becomes a lonely man in a land that he realizes that it is no more his. The narrator comes to learn that home is no longer home "both his original homeland and England" and his dilemma, fears, hesitation become outspoken. As such, the narrator's exile experience generates no futile return as Srilata Ravi (2014) contends, "since of the middle of the last century, 'return' narratives by postcolonial subjects have gradually evolved from resistant and combative texts to introspective mediations on identity and alterity." (297) Being a narrative

of exile and return, Gurnah's *Admiring Silence* negotiates the exilic condition and questions its significance. This state of uncertainty disavows the promise of national emancipation which requires resistance of the colonial subject. Hence, the postcolonial agenda to emancipate the colonized turns to be uneven.

Besides being a story of exile and return between Africa and England, *Admiring Silence* is the story of all the exiled and the fact that Gurnah does not give a name to his protagonist is evidence of the universal dimension that the novel embraces. The narrator is unnamed because he stands for all refugees, exiles, and immigrants who leave their home of origin for the host country and remain caught in a mid-situation of non-belonging. This precluded situation finds parallels with the conflicting condition of postcolonialism nowadays between resistance and resilience. In addition, this universalized dimension echoes the mythical dimension of Homer's *Odyssey*. It is a narrative that follows the hero's journey home and return in similar terms to Odysseus' journey to his homeland in Ithaca and his estrangement from it after so many years of voyaging. The narrator of *Admiring Silence* travels to a false paradise and refrains from return for twenty years. The motif of the journey is present throughout the narrative and Gurnah gives a deep insight into the plight of the exiled. The narrator becomes a modern Odysseus who is absent from his homeland Zanzibar/Ithaca for twenty years. Both of Odysseus and the narrator endure hard tests during their exiles. Like Odysseus, the narrator leaves behind him a wife and heir. Emma becomes the modern version of Penelope who degrades her husband and cheats on him very much like James Joyce's portrayal of Bloom's wife in his modern version of *The Odyssey* in *Ulysses*. Unlike Odysseus's reunion with Penelope, the modern sacred marriage has been violated through cohabiting in Gurnah's modern version of *The Odyssey*. The narrator becomes the archetype of the modern hero who is lost and defeated and his main heroism resides in the everyday and the trivial. The narrator is a disgraced Odysseus and his exilic tale presents a microcosm of all diasporic people and their tragic failures in the host nations. Gurnah condenses the many years of Odysseus into a twenty-year life experience torn between his African childhood and English adulthood. As such, *The Odyssey* is about wars and invasions while *Admiring Silence* is about the legacy of wars and invasions: colonialism.

The novel closes with a deceptive note of hope when the narrator receives a letter from his family which includes a request to return home. He reads in the letter "*Come home*, Akbar said, as he closed his letter. But it wasn't home anymore, and I had no way of retrieving that seductive idea except through more lies. Boom boom" (Gurnah 1996, 176). The narrator is aware that his birthplace is no longer his home after twenty years of exile in England which also constitutes no home because Emma and his daughter left him. Consequently, he finds himself all of a sudden solitary which drives him for the first time to reconsider his ties to this place that he considers home. Ultimately, the ties that bound him to England turn to be very fragile. These ties are constructed via silences or what Okungu calls "fabrications, lies and omissions" (2016, 113) that lead nowhere but ruin. Being a postcolonial novel, its ending in a suspended state of silence solidifies the futureness of the postcolonial project which requires an active and long decolonizing process. A process that would involve everybody with different shares of responsibility toward the emancipation of the country of origins. The narrator has a responsibility to his homeland to

fight against bribery and corruption and never surrender. The narrator's stepfather is an example of a character who represents the ideals of a good nationalist; nevertheless, he smuggles everything possible. He is an example of hypocrite people who reveal corruption beneath honesty and good will. Akbar is also guilty because he supports and even drives the narrator to accept Amur Malik's proposal in order to make benefit from the newly independent situation. The head of the state and representatives of the parliament are no less to blame. As such, different characters share a part in the decay of the newly independent country and the resilience of the postcolonial state. Gurnah depicts the narrator at the end of the novel making a decision to study plumbing and get rid of the filth of the fake English life he lived for long. This filth is not so different from the one found in Africa with the state of blocked toilets he describes.

Conclusion

The current analysis provides a reading of Gurnah's *Admiring Silence* from a postcolonial perspective, highlighting the exilic experience of the unnamed protagonist. The analysis shows that the notions of exile and return coalesce with the state of postcolonial studies. If postcolonialism lives to its founding steps of resistance, exile generates return and emancipation, but if postcolonialism deviates from resistance as a goal, exile and return become futile rendering emancipation impossible. Just like the postcolonial agenda of writers who negotiate sometimes resistance and other times resilience, the twenty years of the narrator's exilic experience end in silence which is, though admired as the title fairly points out, is passive. Emancipation necessitates positive change, active actions and sufficient courage to step outside the chains of colonialism and its aftermaths. *Admiring Silence* breeds neither return nor emancipation which execute the libertarian dream of the former colonized.

إعادة رسم خريطة المنفى كإرث لما بعد الاستعمار في رواية *(الإعجاب بالصمت)* لعبد الرزّاق قرنح

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الملخص

تنطوي حالة النفي على ازدواجيّة معتبرة كما عبر عنها إدوارد سعيد في كتابه تأملات حول المنفى 2000 " المنفى مقنع بشكل غريب عند التفكير به ولكن مروع عند العيش فيه" (173) ، وتمثل هذه الازدواجيّة بين الجذب والرعب العنصر الرئيسي لرواية المنفى والعودة *(الإعجاب بالصمت)* الصادرة عام 1996 لعبد الرزّاق قرنح، وتستوجب إمكانيّة المصالحة في هذه الازدواجيّة التدقيق في الوضعيّة الراهنة لما بعد الاستعمار وتأثيرها على المنفى والعودة؛ لذلك فإن الفرضيّة الأساسيّة لهذا المقال تكمن في مساءلة الوضع الحالي لما بعد الاستعمار باعتباره وسيلة معرفة تنطوي على كلٍ من سرد المقاومة "خطاب الرد" والغضب والانقسامات وبين سرد الانهزاميّة، وتولد هذه الوضعيّة المترددة حالتين من المنفى: المنفى الذي يعد بالرجوع والتحرير، والمنفى الذي يؤدي إلى اللاعودة. وتكشف القراءة في رواية *(الإعجاب بالصمت)* عن الوضعيّة الحاليّة لما بعد الاستعمار من خلال التدقيق في جدوى رحلة البطل من زنجبار إلى انجلترا من عدمها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: منفى، عودة، بيت، قرنح، *(الإعجاب بالصمت)*.

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