

Araştırma Makalesi-Research Article

Unhomeliness, Self-Estrangement, and Labefaction in Abdulrazak Gurnah's Gravel Hearth

Abdulrazak Gurnah'ın Kumdan Yürek Adlı Romanında Yersizyurtsuzluk, Kendine Yabancılaşma ve Toplumsal Yozlaşma

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ABSTRACT

Awarded with the Nobel Prize in Literature 2021, Gurnah's *Gravel Heart* can be considered as a bildungsroman, which delineates the repercussions of colonialism on the individuals of once colonized societies. It tells the story of a growing young boy who both psychologically and geographically becomes estranged from his self and his hometown due to the impacts and outcomes that the colonial powers have left on the individuals of the country. Through narrating some details of the colonial era, having started in Zanzibar in the 1890, the novel mainly focuses on the consequences that a family experience after the Zanzibar Revolution in 1963. Through this novel, Gurnah gives a message that colonization has not ended but continues in another form called cultural colonization. In this respect, underlining the societal labefaction that emerged after the colonial period and instilled the feelings of hopelessness and estrangements in the psyches of the individuals of once colonized societies, this article tries to reveal the impacts of colonization on the self through highlighting the protagonist Salim's experiences and self-estrangement.

Keywords- *Self-Estrangement, Labefaction, Unhomeliness, Gravel Heart, Colonialism*

ÖZ

2021 Nobel Edebiyat Ödülü'ne layık görülen Gurnah'ın *Kumdan Yürek* adlı romanı, sömürgeciliğin toplum bireyleri üzerindeki yansımalarını betimleyen bir "oluşum romanı" olarak kabul edilebilir. Roman, sömürgeci güçlerin ülkenin bireyleri üzerinde bıraktığı etkiler nedeniyle, hem psikolojik hem de coğrafi olarak kendine ve memleketine yabancılaşan büyüme evresindeki bir çocuğun hikâyesini anlatıyor. 1890'da Zanzibar'da başlayan sömürge döneminin bazı ayrıntılarına da değinen roman, esas olarak 1963'teki Zanzibar Devrimi'nden sonra bir ailenin yaşadığı dağılmaya odaklanır. Gurnah, bu roman aracılığıyla sömürgeciliğin bitmediği, kültürel sömürü denilen başka bir biçimde devam ettiği mesajını verir. Bu bağlamdan yola çıkan bu makale, sömürge döneminden sonra ortaya çıkan ve bir zamanlar sömürgeleştirilmiş toplumların bireylerinin iç dünyasında umutsuzluk ve yabancılaşma duygularını zerk eden toplumsal yozlaşmanın altını çizerek, roman kahramanı Salim'in yaşamını ve kendine yabancılaşma sürecini ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Written in 2017, the book *Gravel Heart* is a story of a young man not dealing with love but embracing exile, migration, and betrayal in his life span. With its fiction based on real-life events, the novel brings its author, Abdulrazak Gurnah, the 2021 Nobel Prize in Literature. Several readers are presumably being misled when they read the opening remarks of the book. The book opens with the following statement: “The beginning of love is gratitude. After that, it depends on the capacity of the loved one, that is, on his virtue.” Quoted by Abu Said El Harraz, this opening remark leads the readers think that it is a pure love story. However, Gurnah mainly criticizes the colonizers, the dominant powers of the period, exploiting his hometown and their adverse effects even after they left. Due to its plot and settings, some claim that it can be regarded as an autobiographical fiction, for he is a veteran novelist born in Zanzibar in 1948 and having lived there up to 1967 when the Zanzibar Revolution had been on the agenda for 3 years. Nowadays, he has been working as a professor of literature in England and lecturing at Kent University. Having some significant similarities with Salim, the protagonist of the novel, in terms of lifestyle, Gurnah underlines that it is a fiction but he adds that he is writing about a lost life in which he had no choice but to leave his hometown back and live in another country (Nasta et.al, 2000). The novel has an anachronic style in which the events are told non-chronologically with the help of flashbacks as if the author was trying to remember the events, which is called memoir style.

Like many post-colonial writers, Gurnah aims at making himself heard and transmitting the oppression and tyranny in Zanzibar to the next generations all over the world, which is also known as post-colonial criticism defining formerly colonized countries, which economically or politically and culturally or socially have been subjugated by more dominant powers (Tyson, 2014). The only difference from his colleagues is that he does this criticism in English without feeling any kind of inferiority (Özkul, 2021, p.6). The history of colonization started towards the end of the fifteenth century. The leading countries of that movement were Spain, France, Portugal, and England but the most powerful force was the British Imperialists ruling and exploiting the one-third of the world which included India, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Africa, South America, The Middle East and Southeast Asia (Tyson, 2014, p.418). The exploit mostly started in Africa after the Berlin Conference in the name of *The Scramble for Africa* between 1880 and 1914. The European colonizers had a big plan for dividing the whole continent among themselves (Bonnici, 2004, p.6-7). Up to the 1900s, Africa was in the colonizers’ power. In the meantime, the African nation was exposed to the colonialist ideology that lines up with colonizers’ assumption that they were the only superior, sophisticated race but the others in the periphery were savage, barbarian, obsolete, and undeveloped (Tyson, 2014, p.420.). Thus, even after the colonization had been over, its adverse effects could be observed in society. Gurnah tries to draw a picture of the colonized society with the help of some fictional characters. Reading the novel, one can easily conclude that there is a story within another story, corruption in corruption, which is described as a vicious cycle in which the powerful one suppresses the weak one. Being one of the pioneers of the feminist movement in contemporary Africa, Fatma Allo speaks highly of Abdulrazak Gurnah and describes him as a role model for young authors in Africa and the greatest writer of Zanzibar who takes on mentioning colonization as a duty (2006, p.83).

Being an adaptation of Shakespeare’s play *Measure for Measure*, *Gravel Heart* takes its name directly from the lines “Unfit to live or die. O, gravel heart.” of the play. In his preface in the book published in Turkey, Özkul (2021) compares Gurnah with Shakespeare in terms of story and writing style. Knowing that he is a lecturer in English Language Literature, one can easily assume that Gurnah admires Shakespeare and is presumably inspired by him. However, they have two different endings. The biggest commonalities of the two stories are the power relations and the exploitation of the weaker and needy by the dominant one. While the woman figure Isabella, in *Measure for Measure*, is asked to sacrifice herself in order to save her brother by giving her all to Lord Angelo, Salim’s mother Saida, in *Gravel Heart*, is exposed to the same thing in Zanzibar after so many years (Soleymanzadeh, 2021). Even the names chosen for the antagonists, Lord Angelo and Hakim, arouse the feeling of dominance, and power in the reader. The title of the novel, *Gravel Heart*, is likely to be interpreted in two different ways; the first is the one symbolizing the broken home of the protagonist, and the second one referring to the misery or heartbreak that the protagonist feels deep inside his heart when he learns the awful truth about his family.

Gravel Heart also has a critical approach that sheds light both on the colonial and post-colonial experiences of Zanzibar. The narrative style and the flashback technique used by the author provide a big opportunity for the reader to be able to compare the pre-colonial and the post-colonial situations of the country. In his article analyzing the contemporary post-colonial novels in English, Bonnici (2004) gives further explanations to portray the colonizers and to describe their attitudes towards The African nation as a colonized country. He defines that the European powers had a visible but extremely harmful effect on society regarding *labefaction* because of their biased attitudes and beliefs based on racial superiority. However, they had little information about the people and the country they had tried to convert. Mostly, the tribal community was seen as witchcraft by the Europeans (Bonnici, 2004, p. 26). Thus, they believed that they did everything for their sake and taught them how to be civilized. On the contrary to this belief, the situation was completely different. As the Zanzibar nation was mostly Muslim, it should be presumed that the community did not believe in those superstitions and witchcraft, and in terms of the development and education, Gurnah explains this issue saying “a noble and well-educated man who always used to mention justice, freedom, and self-fulfilment... He had training in Makerere University, Uganda, for 2 years and completed his education in Edinburgh, London, thereby graduating from the school of public health” (2017, p. 26). These events were happening during the colonization and they can be shown as compelling evidence for the educational background of the country. Furthermore, Salim’s grandfather’s remarks saying that “No one begged The British for coming here. They came here because they are greedy and cannot help filling the world with their existence” is another example of the people’s discontent with the colonialism in their country (Gurnah, 2017, p. 28.). Writing on the pre-colonial situation of Africa, Bekler claims that Achebe clearly defines the African Society as unique with their tribes and committed to their traditions although it was regarded as primitive and far from civilization. It is claimed that the African society was content with themselves, having faith in and respect for each other and their own traditions (2014, p.1).

The novel’s actual content is drawn from excluded individuals who have been estranged from cultures to which they appear to belong and are looking for an identity. The state of one’s feeling of having been deracinated and displaced is called *unhomeliness*, a term coined by Homi Bhabha. It is the sense of being in-between of two or more cultures. An unhomed person does not have the feeling of belonging since s/he is in a psychological limbo which generally ends in some psychological disorders and cultural displacement. Here, being “unhomed” does not mean being homeless. To be unhomed, as Lois Tyson states in *Critical Theory Today*, “is to feel not at home even in one’s own home because you are not at home in yourself; that is, your cultural identity crisis has made you a psychological refugee” (2006, p. 421). In this regard, anyone who reads this novel can easily realize that Salim has a strong feeling of unhomeliness.

Alienation, homelessness, exile, and labefaction are among the concepts which the writers of once-colonized societies mainly discuss and treat in their works. As it was with Salim, the protagonist of *Gravel Heart*, at the very beginning of his adolescence and later in his mature life, the feeling of not belonging to a significant country or culture results in either the individual’s rejection of the colonizer’s culture through criticism and satire or in his physical or psychological withdrawals in the form of various types of alienation.

Typically, the concept of alienation is associated with marginalized groups that have little influence over societal change, such as minorities, the poor, the unemployed, and others. The idea of alienation has fascinated and troubled numerous sociologists and philosophers, and as a result, it has had a turbulent past that dates back to Hegel. Even on its most fundamental aspects, there hasn’t been agreement yet because it is used widely across many disciplines. There is disagreement over the definition, and whether the phenomenon is a sociological process, a psychological state, or both, and uncertainty regarding the experience’s inevitable occurrence, as Iain Williamson and Cedric Cullingford highlight (1997, p. 263).

Hegel uses two distinct German words *entausserung* (surrender) and *entfremdung* (a state of separation) for describing the theme of alienation. He, as Williamson and Cullingford assert, was much influenced by Schiller’s theological use of the term as a state of separation, and also by Rousseau’s discussion of alienation as a surrender of personal self and control. According to Williamson and Cullingford, Hegel’s discussion of alienation (or *entfremdung*) can be drawn out in two major senses: alienation-as-separation, and alienation-as-surrender. The first sense echoes Schiller’s writings and the second those of the social contract philosophers (Williamson 1997, p. 265). Hegel, as they claim, argues that “through self-analysis and contemplation, the human moves from an immature sense of universality to a powerful sense of his/her own individuality, but as universality is essential to all things spiritual, this process leads to an acute sense of self-alienation from one’s inner nature and the extremity of discord” (1997, p. 265). This is alienation-as-separation. They go on saying “recognition of this leads the individual to a second alienation process where this particularity is yielded back to the universality of the social

substance. This sense of universality is mature and the experience is one of actualisation, although Hegel remains vague on how this occurs” (1997, p. 265). This is alienation as surrender. To sum up, the issue that must be underlined in Hegel’s understanding of the theme of alienation is that for Hegel the theme of alienation has a positive nature. Thus; Hegel puts forward two different processes, “alienation-as-separation” being distressing but necessary for maturity, and “alienation-as-surrender” being positively peaceful and free from worry due to the fact that “it involves a conscious relinquishment or surrender with the intention of securing a desired end: namely, unity with the social substance” (Schacht, 1970, p. 36). Meanwhile, during those interpretations on the concept of alienation, as Williamson and Cullingford put it: “Seeman and other American sociologists and social-psychologists began to pay close attention to the concept, and it was this work that was to provide a valid paradigm for researches around the concept” (1997, p. 269). Melvin Seeman, in his paper *On the Meaning of Alienation*, tries to put this complex structure of alienation into an order by a five-fold classification: *Powerlessness, Meaninglessness, Normlessness, Social Isolation and Self- Estrangement* (1959, p. 783).¹

The final type of alienation is the sense of self-estrangement. Self-estrangement, also called self-alienation, involves dissatisfaction with oneself or losing intrinsic satisfaction with one’s work. Seaman explains self-estrangement as: “...the worker who works merely for his salary, the housewife who cooks simply to get it over with, or the other directed type who acts ‘only for its effect on others’ all these (at different levels, again) are instances of self-estrangement” (1959, p. 790). Kalekin-Fishman explains this type of alienation in a similar way saying: “Self-estrangement is the psychological state of denying one’s own interests – of seeking out extrinsically satisfying, rather than intrinsically satisfying, activities” (1996, p. 97). In this regard, self-estrangement can simply be identified as the individual’s dissatisfaction with the activities s/he is expected to perform. To be alienated in this sense is to be aware of a discrepancy between one’s ideal self and one’s actual self-image.

To sum up, alienation is the state of having the sense of estrangement or separation from one’s environment, social settings, work, products of work, or self. In other words, the term alienation, like anomie, may occur in the sense of powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, social isolation, and self-estrangement, all of which come to existence due to the lack of the convenience between individual needs or expectations and the social order.

Labefaction, meaning societal corruption, started with colonialism by taking a place in every part of life in the colonized nations. Impressing people psychologically, socially, politically, and ideologically during the exploitation, colonialism led to a metamorphosis in people to whom the colonizers, so to say, brought the civilization. These people turned into power-addict, hierarchical among themselves, devious, and immoral individuals disregarding their values and traditions at the end of the colonization. Taking the above explanations on alienation and labefaction into consideration, this article will try to put forward how Salim, the protagonist, experiences the sense of alienation stemmed from the labefaction which is the outcome of colonial past.

A. Gravel Heart

The novel starts with the protagonist’s hunger for love. Salim thinks that he is an unwanted son by his father. He firmly believes in this idea and feels satisfied with figuring it out at a very young age because when he grows up a little, he can see no difference between being raised by a father or growing up on his own. Besides, he has few memories together with his father and hardly remembers them. Although his mom and dad are married, they do not live together, which Salim always questions about. Salim’s uncle, Amir, lives with them since his mother, Saida, cares a lot about him and does not want to be separated from him since he is the only sibling that she has ever had. At first, his father, Masud, works for the government in the directorate of waters as a clerk for years until the situation gets worse. However, he does nothing except for sitting up in his room and works in a bazaar afterward. As he also comes from a Muslim family, he mentions that he used to go to Quran courses at the mosques every summer. The Zanzibar society has a faith in God and they live it by showing it in their daily lives and routines. Besides their religious beliefs, they have very oppressive but effective moral values such as respecting women and their marital status; therefore, they never let women have their photos taken. Because, they believe that “virtuous women should not do that. If someone else sees one of them in a photo, it stains their husband’s” honor (Gurnah, 2017, p.24). On the other hand, Salim describes his lifestyle and their environment plainly with these words:

¹This paragraph has been cited from the author’s another article titled “Alienation, Naipaul and Mr Biswass”. The URL of the article is: http://www.ijhssnet.com/journals/Vol_1_No_11_Special_Issue_August_2011/13.pdf

There did not use to be any pavement or any garden in front of the house; therefore, any guests of ours could get into the house directly....The roads were so narrow that only two bikes were able to pass through them at the same time....Any cars were not able to fit on these roads because it was not designed for this kind of purpose. In the case of carrying something, it used to be carried with barrows by people. People used to live their lives simply since there was not any mansion or big yard in the town. They did so before the streets got dirty and crowded when the streets were quiet and empty during my childhood. (Gurnah, 2017, p.18)

This description explicitly delineates the situation of Zanzibar socially and economically. It may be described as primitive or tough conditions but no one infers a meaning that the society was not happy or immoral at that time, based on this sole description, or they needed a more contemporary civilization. Salim's grandfather, who was on the father's side, was a teacher having worked in Salim's school, and then he had to quit his job in 1963, which was a year before Zanzibar Revolution, and immigrate to Dubai to work for a living. The impact of colonialism starts here with broken families. They know neither their ancestors nor their roots, which destroys the sense of belonging and leads to 'Unhomeliness' and having the feeling of alienation in all its forms. Closely related to the term 'Double consciousness', the term 'Unhomeliness' is a state of mind in which people lose their authentic identities never feel that they belong to a place familiar. It is not like being as homeless (Tyson, 2006, p.421). How does a person own his living place or even his nation without knowing his roots or his history? He never respects and aims at developing his country. Salim just knows him from the photo that his principal gives at school. He does not know his other grandfather, Ahmed Musa İbrahim, either, who is an anti-colonialist having worked in the health department and always criticizes the colonial system and the layout which was established based on the terms of control and threat. With his remarks "no one begged the British for coming here. They came here because they are greedy and they want to exploit everywhere.", he is involved in a political party and as a result of his activist behaviours, he is killed during the Revolution after being detained from home and being arrested (Gurnah, 2017, p.28). His mother and her brother, Amir, experience a tough life together after losing their parents. Salim learns all of these from his mother and she wants Salim never forget the pain and the oppression they had experienced.

While his mother continuously talks about them, Salim wonders about a completely different issue, his father. Why he does not live with them and why he has to take food to him every day are the issues hanging over his head. Although he asks about them to his mother, she prefers being silent. Salim's heart is just like the sand scattering around the different places, which also refers to the title Gravel Heart. He has no idea about what happened to his family and feels as if he were tied hand and foot. His only information about his parents' marriage is the fact that they were in their early 20s when they got married and they met at an event of the Youth section of the town. When his father leaves the family, Salim is only 7. Not until his mother explains that his father does not want them anymore does Salim keeps asking about him. Salim, on the other hand, never learns the truth except for one thing: his father hires a room behind a store in Mwenbeladu, a town in Zanzibar. From that day on, his mother takes food to him every day. One day his uncle, Amir, and his mother argue severely and this cooking and taking it to him will be Salim's duty. Uncle Amir never takes any responsibility related to his father; however, he always recommends Salim not be worried about his father and realize that it is not his fault. Salim, at his early ages, begins to feel the sense of estrangement having unsolved and mysterious events in his mind. Moreover, right after his dad leaves, Uncle Amir changes his job at a hotel and starts to work in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He also has a dream of being a big man such as an ambassador or a delegate in the future. His uncle, Amir, argues with his mother from time to time about their living place, by complaining and mocking about all the conditions they have. Having qualified to study International Affairs at Dublin University, Amir goes to Ireland. Not being content with the way they live, he moves there and the change in their lives starts with it. After Salim's father and uncle's departure from home, Salim and his mother stay at home on their own whereby they try to adapt to their new and sole lives. One day, his mother gives him a box full of books, which belongs to his father. After that day, Salim turns into a bookworm reading everything he finds. Once he ensures that he has read a book extensively from that box, he puts it back into the food basket and takes it to his father. Meanwhile, Uncle Amir returns from Dublin with the honour of completing his education; however, he is not alone this time but he is together with his girlfriend Aisha who is the daughter of the old prime minister of Zanzibar. Amir is assigned to somewhere else as a diplomat after their marriage. When Salim's sister is born, he goes to a secondary school. He starts to question the on- goings around him but the only thing he hears as an answer is the silence. He goes to see his father to the store his father stays in every day and waits for an explanation, but at the end of the day, everything is the same. Silence. When he is 14, he thinks that he is grown-up enough or feels as if he were a wise man. He thinks that he solves the situation of his father and sees him as a defeatist as he believes that his father is ashamed of all the things they

experienced. His mother Saida has an affair with another man, everyone knows it, including his father but no one, even their neighbours, say anything about this issue. When his mother gets pregnant, she mentions about who the father of the baby is for the first time. The man called Hakim, who is also the honourableness minister, is the father of Salim's sister. His mother wants Salim to meet him and be respectful toward him as Hakim wishes to get married to her. Upon hearing that wish, Salim asks disorientedly: "Why does he want to marry you? Is not he already married? Why does he want a second wife?" (Gurnah, 2017, p.55) Saida clarifies that he wants to see the baby and adopt her by marrying her although she underlines that she is already married. In her response, Salim asks his mother why she gives birth to his baby. Especially this event shows the immoral values of the Zanzibar Society although it is a Muslim society and they have Islamic beliefs and values. Everyone is aware of the problems in their society but does nothing to stand against this immorality. It is a society that have been paralyzed or alienated in the form of powerlessness and normlessness. We, here, can say that the power captures the moral values and reshapes them according to the rules of the oppressor. It may also be regarded as an example of the blind alley where the people in Zanzibar were suppressed during the colonial days when they were aware of everything but could not take any action against the powerful groups such as the colonizers. The speechlessness shows an acceptance of the defeat between the two polar: the powerful and the powerless.

Salim's admiration for his uncle does not fade as he grows older; rather, it grows because he has doubts about him and his relationship with his mother. In a few years, Amir will be a senior diplomat at the London Embassy. In order to help Salim learn about life and pursue an education there, he wants Salim to move to London and live with him. He claims that he works to repay his obligation to Saida in an effort to persuade her. Salim becomes even more suspicious after hearing those statements, but he is unable to comprehend why Amir is critical of his father and attributes his weakness to him. When Salim's journey is decided, he goes to see his father for the last time and tells him that he will go to London to live together with his uncle. His Father, Masud, keeps being silent on it at first. But then he says to Salim that he will not come back again. His words influence Salim deeply: "Listen to me. Open your eyes in the dark and be grateful for your blessings. Do not get afraid of the dark corners in your mind; otherwise, your anger will make you blind." (Gurnah, 2017, p.65). And he also adds that he should be grateful because the beginning of love is gratitude. And the final advice from Masud, that he should keep his ears close to his heart is the one Salim does not make sense of at all. However, he starts his life with his uncle, Amir, and his wife, Aisha.

In Salim's new life, Amir seems to have a voice on Salim because he decides for him what to study or do and what to become in his future life. Although it irritates Salim immensely, he cannot do anything because he is overwhelmed with his responsibilities and indebtedness to his uncle. During the colonial time, people are suppressed and hushed up so much that they believe it will be ungratefulness if they disagreeably behave toward the helper in their lives; as a result, they hand over the reins of their lives easily. This is also regarded as an impact of colonial time in the post-colonial period. Amir sends Salim to a school in order to study business management because he thinks that welfare is attained through money. On the other hand, What Salim wants is to study English Literature. Neither he participates in his classes nor he does do his homework, thereby failing the class after his two-year stay in London. Because, he has the feeling of estrangement and alienation after 3 weeks in London. He feels a kind of inferiority as he is taught in the post-colonial era. According to the colonialist ideology, colonizers are at the center of the world, defining themselves as civilized. But the others are savage, primitive, and undeveloped (Tyson, 2006, p.419). His thoughts about being in London shows that Salim feels primitive and savage. Through his remarks, "After 3 weeks, I started school. I went there timidly and shiveringly because I was scared to death of London.... It would insult my pride, too. I used to feel as if the city hated me and I were an unwanted boy" (Gurnah, 2017, p.76), he is trying to express his uneasiness in a completely foreign country.

It could also be viewed as a colonial impact on people's emotions. While advising him, his aunt-in-law, Aisha, reminds him that this is not only for Salim's sake, but also for his mother's. She blurts out something strange, claiming that his uncle is attempting to repay his debt. What department? Salim has no idea what she's talking about. She starts to mention her and Amir's youth and his stay in custody because of the fact that it is related to Amir and Aisha. Aisha's powerful brother, Hakim, sends Amir to custody but thanks to Saida, he is allowed to go out. When Hakim understands that Salim's mother falls in love with him, he approves of everything about Aisha and Amir (Gurnah, 2017, p.89). These are the ones that Aisha tells but Salim wonders whether his mother has a chance to choose or not. As a colonial impact, it is presumed that people may have seen many scenarios like that in colonial societies. Powerful men can easily take possession of somebody else's wife or daughters just because they have the power and money in those times. This is the most concrete evidence for the labefaction as

an impact of the colonial situation. People lose their perception of what is correct or incorrect during the colonial period after all those things they experience. Thus, it causes societal corruption, also known as labefaction. Following this argument, Salim discovers himself and speaks aloud about his life plans. He tells his uncle that he wishes to study English Literature instead of Business Management and he will restart everything by enrolling in a different department. Amir is enraged and describes Salim as naughty and inept. At the end of the confrontation with the problems, Amir dismisses Salim from the house. In the meantime, Salim writes to his mother all the time but does not send most of the letters. However, Saida always gets information via his brother, Amir. Salim starts to stay at a private house called the Organization of United Africans, where all the tenants are from Africa. Salim experiences the feeling of freedom in this house as he decides what he will do for the first time in his life. Furthermore, he finds an opportunity to use his mother tongue, Swahili, and communicate through it here at this house, which makes him very happy. Having passed a year in this house, his performance at the school develops and he starts to study Literature as it is his own decision and he finds himself in an unanswered love, all of a sudden, at this house. While all these happen, his uncle, Amir, becomes an ambassador by moving to Rome with his family, yet the relationship between Amir and Salim gets worse since Amir blames Salim for being thankless and immoral. This situation makes Salim think about the real reason for being taken to London but ensures that it is not about receivables and payables between his uncle and his mother. He believes that something more powerful must be. In the meantime, his father goes back to his family's living place, Kuala Lumpur, and his grandfather goes to Zanzibar and takes his son on his own. Thus, Salim writes a letter to him, expressing his happiness for not being alone and unhappy in Zanzibar.

Salim continues his life in London with loads of questions in his mind but he is aware of the fact that he has to live his own life despite all the complications he experiences. He wants to get a role in a theatre play but he gets a refusal from the director. He has a few girlfriends for sexual purposes but he is never able to go further and improve his relationships due to the racist view and bias toward his nation and his skin colour. In his letter to his father, he confesses his pain and sorrow or even hate for his living place but he cannot name the reason for it. (Gurnah, 2017, p.141) After graduation, he rents a house and goes on living in London. Because he thinks that he needs to save money and stand upright in front of his stepfather before turning back to his hometown. On the other hand, he is afraid of running adrift in London's fussy life and turning into one of the slaves of Britain. He also learns that his mother is ill and has some tests taken to learn what happens and feels anxious. During a new phase that he starts to live together with his girlfriend, called Billie, Salim uncovers the worst secret of his life to a foreigner who is not one of his family members for the first time. He speaks about his father and mother hesitantly but then he hears unforgettable remarks saying that humans should talk about the things that hurt them. His girlfriend is half-English and half-Indian. Billie's mother meets Salim one day in their house and Salim does not get information from Billie for a couple of days. Just because Salim is a black African, Billie's family does not approve of their relationship and she leaves him in tears by forwarding her mother's words: "A negro is always a negro no matter how kind s/he is" (Gurnah, 2017, p. 171). He loses the woman he loves due to racism although he is not able to understand the difference between an Indian and an African. They both share the same destiny and this seems ridiculous to Salim. This issue is mainly based on the notion of 'othering,' which is one of the other colonial terms. Ashcroft defines the term 'othering' as follows:

The colonized subject is characterized as 'other' through discourses such as primitivism and cannibalism, as a means of establishing the binary separation of the colonizer and colonized and asserting the naturalness and primacy of the colonizing culture and world view. (Ashcroft et.al, 2001, p.199)

Not only do colonizers do this discrimination towards the colonized nations, but also a colonized country is highly likely to see itself as superior to the others just because of the perception management which the colonists made in time. Upon witnessing massacre news in New York, Salim hears a different language towards the Muslims. They all use the bad words in the same sentences such as terrorists and barbarians to refer the radical Muslims. In his letter to his mother, he expresses his pain with these words: "I feel as if I were more foreign to everything, anymore. I hate this place but I stay. I feel as if I were a betrayer but I do not know to whom I betray."

(Gurnah, 2017, p.173). He does not feel any sense of belonging to London but he is not able to give up it, either. In his book *Critical Theory Today*, Tyson defines this dilemma with a new term called “double-consciousness” which is often associated with an unstable sense of self. His cultural identity is stuck in this dichotomy: The living place or the hometown (Tyson, 2006, p.421).

This migration is not Salim’s choice, and so he finds himself in a psychological depression from time to time. We can also show this issue as an impact on the colonial situation. Leaving their hometown or being forced to do it are the main obstacles in their adaptation to a new environment. Then, Salim learns that his mother passes away at the age of fifty-three a day before Christmas. As he is not at home and stays with a friend in her house, he learns it four days later. Her funeral is arranged without Salim, which makes him feel unemotional for a short time. It has been years since he did not see his mother but now, he does not have any chance to do it. Two days after learning his father’s coming back, he calls his sister and tells her that he will visit her in Zanzibar.

His return starts with the questions in Salim’s mind. He is thinking of where to stay, when to see his father, how to react to his stepfather...etc. These feelings indicate that he has been alienated from his hometown. He books a room for himself and lets his sister, Munira, know about it. Munira takes Salim from the airport and behaves as if she knew him all her life long. She embraces his brother. Salim gets puzzled when he sees how much she resembles his mother. She takes him home which inherits from his mother but originally belongs to his stepfather, Hakim. For this reason, Salim feels disturbed by the possibility of seeing Hakim. He thinks that Hakim should not be the first person to be seen after returning. He goes directly to see his father. After all those separate years, Salim and his father do their best to catch up with the lost years. For an alienated self, it is so hard to embrace the past. In a couple of days, his father, Masud, begins to tell all the things Salim wishes to learn. Masud starts with his father Teacher Yahya’s story as a teacher in colonialist public schools. His father did not know the Latin alphabet but still worked as a teacher for the public schools. To convince the people in Zanzibar, the colonizers had to accept the inclusion of Islamic Education into the curriculum. People were afraid of the possibility of brainwashing their kids as they expected all kinds of cunningness from the British as colonizers. He emphasized that colonial education was only possible with the help of such clergymen, hodjas as his father, Teacher Yahya, which is weird and ironic. He also tells that after the Zanzibar Revolution, many things changed and many people were dismissed from their jobs. Their new rulers, German Democratic Republic, and their brothers in Czechoslovakia were feeling responsible for fixing the educational system. The Chinese took their hospital and The Soviet Union was counseling the African Army. People used to be denigrated in every field and they did not use to feel secure in their hometown anymore. After the Revolution, the government’s policy was wild and punitive; as a result of this, people had to flee to save their lives. In the light of Masud’s life story, the political, economical, and social situation of Zanzibar is revealed and anyone interested in colonialism can easily estimate the damage given to the country and its society. The government seized these people’s houses, goods, money, and even their identities. Censorship captured all parts of life such as the movie industry, education, and mass communication.

In the meantime, Masud’s father immigrated to Dubai to work and get organized with his family. Only Masud did not accept to leave his country, regardless of the possible outcomes. Indeed, Masud underlines that the main reason for not leaving was Salim’s mother, whom he met in a debate organized by The Youth Section and fell in love with at first sight. The government used to let only one political party head the country, and correspondingly one Youth Section, whose aim was to include the youngsters in their party and take their support by allowing them to express their opinions. What’s more, that party was the one having killed Salim’s father. They fell in love with each other in one of those organizations. According to Masud, Saida was so beautiful that she became a byword for her beauty, and on the streets, people were showing her to each other. And he adds:

In those years, the new owners of the government used to go after the women they desired without showing any sign of shame, maybe they used to do it on purpose to make the women embarrassed. They used to mention their conquest and their spoils of war boastfully among themselves... Sometimes women couldn’t say no because the men were too persistent. The women were afraid of their loved ones or the risk of being reduced to their families’ needs... Those were the time when you could not sleep comfortably if you had a beautiful daughter... (Gurnah, 2017, p.230).

He keeps telling his story by saying that they got married at a young age. After a year, Saida got pregnant to Salim. After Salim’s birth, Amir moved to their house as he stayed alone after their aunt died. Saida was falling over his brother by caring for him at any time because he was the only person staying alive from her family. All

those painful memories helped the siblings get closer to each other. Amir used to study at a high school and work as a vocalist in a bar at the same time. Besides his family, Masud also looked after him, providing him with anything he needed from clothing to books. When he was almost 18, Amir started to sing songs in a band, working at a club. All he thought was clothes, money, and music.

Masud adopted him as if he were his brother. For the following months, Amir continued to work in the band and sing songs; therefore, he frequently stayed overnight outside the house. Feeling discontent with his absence at home, Masud decided to talk to Amir and warn him about the dangers of the nightlife. During the conversation, Amir preferred to keep silent for a while, at first, just by nodding his head; but then, he tried to explain to his brother-in-law by telling him that there was no point in talking about this because he thought that he had been behaving very carefully. Moreover, he added that he would not dishonor him by being a trouble-maker. After that talk, Salim's father says that life was going on as it should be but something which he could not name was disturbing him a lot. His struggle to earn a living was getting worse and worse day by day those days. He could not earn enough to pay the rent and look after the family. Amir kept the money he earned just for himself, let alone for helping him. His wife, Saida, cared for his brother so much that she used to defend him rigorously no matter what the result was. Then, one day the government said that it was time to bring TVs into homes. Unfortunately, people were not ready for this as they could not afford their basic needs accurately. Being selfish, Amir insisted on buying a Tv without figuring the money issue out. Pretending not to hear his sister's words, he suggested that Masud ask for money from his father living in Dubai by also asking him why he did not go there with them. Perplexed with the question, Masud answered him back with those remarks;

Because I did not want to live as a refugee in somebody else's country. Because I did not want to live among the people whose languages I do not know and the people who underestimate and insult me with their money. I wanted to stay at the place where I know what is expected of me and I never forget who I am. (Gurnah, 2017, p.242).

Through the sentences above, it is easily understood that a man frightened of losing his own identity stands against the formerly colonized nations. Based on the idea that the notions of double-consciousness and unhomeliness may combine in decolonized nations and show their impacts on the people, the feeling of rejection manifests itself and leads to counter-acting. Rejecting all kinds of colonial movements is highly likely to cause colonized people to embrace their own culture in a pre-colonized time (Tyson, 2006, p.422). Many African writers writing in their mother tongue may be cited as an example of this issue. When he witnessed his father's unhomeliness feeling, he got afraid of living the same thing and insisted on staying at their hometown as he did not want to live the feeling of inferiority in a foreign environment. He rejected the colonial movement in a decolonized era in his country although he was severely exposed to the humiliation by his wife and his brother-in-law.

By looking at Tyson's definition of the term *unhomeliness*, Farahbaksh and Ranjbar analyze Bhabha's handling of the subject in his works of art. The cultural identity chaos caused by the dichotomy such as the place where people are born and the place where they have to live makes people mix both cultures and turn it into hybridity. It may be discernible that people feel anxiety and sometimes even severe depression in this process rather than power and authority (Farahbaksh & Ranjbar, 2016, p.3). These kinds of psychological ups and downs induce people to lose their perception of moral values defined in their own society, which in turn causes labefaction.

And the story goes on with Amir's being taken into custody for an obscure reason. Masud tells nonstop but gets relaxed at the same time. He continues to tell by remembering that Saida stopped for a moment when she learned it. Because she remembered his father's being taken from their house similarly and never coming back again. When Saida hit the panic button, Salim decided to go to Amir's workplace, the Mercan Hotel, to learn what was going on. Via some important contacts, Masud learned that Amir got arrested because he raped a minor girl. She was not an ordinary girl but was the daughter of the Prime Minister. Masud says that he completely got shocked when he figured out the goings-on. Upon hearing the bad news, Saida decided to go to the Vice President's office and find out what happened to Amir, indeed. When they went there, they were faced by the son of the Vice President, who is also the raped girl's brother, Hakim. He was a powerful, strict, arrogant man using his power and authority who trusted in his blood ties and he underlined that Amir committed a big crime and would suffer the consequences. Afterward, he dismissed them from his room. This event can be regarded as an evident proof of the country's justice system as it is seen as a nondemocratic system in which you have no options but to obey. And people seem desperate before the power. Masud stops telling here for a moment and expresses his downheartedness

because he cannot witness the rest of the story. He says that all the things happen when he is at work. From this story on, he says that he will tell everything from Saida's mouth.

In the morning a secretary of the vice president dropped by his house and told Saida that the vice president was waiting for her in the office. When she went there, she was offered an option by Hakim, saying that there was only one way to save Amir, which passed through Saida's ways. That way was to have a sexual relationship with Saida not once but no matter how much he wanted. In turn, he was going to release her brother. Feeling hurt by being insulted, she refused this proposal without thinking for a moment by saying that she had already been married. However, Hakim made it very clear about the fact that there was no other way of setting Amir free. Then Saida went to see his brother in jail and told Amir everything and heard the following question: "Will you?"

While discussing with her husband, Saida lost all her moral values because all she could think of was her brother. She had lost all her family members and she felt the cruel loneliness somewhere deep inside her. She would do anything to save her brother. She did, though. She accepted the immoral offer and did what she was expected of herself. Many times. For the third time, she went and Masud understood that he would not be able to put up with it and he said that he left the house. By telling the whole story, Masud jerkily cries for the first time with his weak and fragile body. When it comes to Amir, Salim understands why his uncle had tried to help him or wanted to seem like that. While Salim's life breaks into pieces, Amir's life shines bright, which is unfair. Hakim never gives up on Saida and they get married when Salim is away, in London.

When his father asks him whether he wishes to stay or not, Salim hesitates for a moment. And then he says that he wants both to stay and to go back. On one hand, his life in London calls him in order to exploit him until he is over, on the other hand; his roots but his stained fate greets him. He says that he has lost his freedom as he feels the notion of unhomeliness very strongly in his bones. At the end of the story, Salim compares his own story with Shakespeare's play *Measure for Measure*. Critics regard Gurnah's work as a modern version of the play. The resemblance between the two works is that a character compromises his or her moral code to save the life of a relative. The Duke of Vienna departs for a while in the play, leaving Angelo in charge of the city. Angelo sentences Claudio to death for an immoral act. Angelo declares that if Claudio's sister Isabella had sexual relations with him, he would forgive him. Isabella agrees to risk her life to save her brother's. The play does a good job of explaining Saida's undesirable preference. Thus, Salim continues to question immorality in his family. In a Muslim society, where honour and obedience mean everything, it must be acknowledged that the colonized society has been suppressed by the power and authority and the people have lost most of their moral and cultural values. The story ends with Salim's return to London and his father's death on the same day as his arrival to London.

II. CONCLUSION

Gravel Heart is not only a story of a broken family; but also of a broken, fragmented society losing its moral and cultural values. Even during the post-colonial era, the impact of colonialism still goes on and people are dragged into the labefaction. Datta addresses the problem of transmodernity in Gurnah's novels, but this one, *Gravel Heart*, refers to the deterioration of the society by grounding it on the notions of unhomeliness, alienation, and labefaction. The protagonist, Salim, hovers between the two different cultures, and he struggles with the adaptation problems. While Amir, who personally experienced the colonial effects following the Zanzibar Revolution, suffers from loss of identity, he also witnesses the impact of the power over the community, and instead of standing against the colonial power exploiting his own country, he chooses to collaborate with them and contributes to his own society's labefaction. It is reasonably assumed that against the dominant powers, nothing even religion, morality, and conscience can take a stand. The conflict for power has been poisoning mankind for a long time as anyone in a society or a country tries to take control over others politically, economically, or even psychologically. In Zanzibar, this situation is explicitly seen because the post-colonial era still goes on to make people feel the colonial impact and show them in their behaviors, beliefs, perceptions, and actions.

Reading *Gravel Heart*, one can easily recognize that there is a reciprocal relationship between colonialism and labefaction, having some adverse effects on colonized societies. As long as the colonizers find collaborators in a society, they will be able to interfere in their assets and exploit them. These political collaborators, in the course of time, cause a social labefaction, which naturally becomes a cultural code of the society. In this respect, Hakim, the minister is the collaborator, who executes a new form of colonization, namely; neo-colonization. Because, the foreign colonizers have paved the way for him, he has become a minister, thus he can exploit the ordinary people. In such a cycle it is likely that most of the individuals of once-colonized countries experience moral and psychological degeneration.

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