Article DOI : https://doi.org/10.37284/eajass.8.1.2795

East African Journal of Arts and Social Sciences
eajass.eanso.org
Volume 8, Issue 1, 2025
Print ISSN: 2707-4277 | Online ISSN: 2707-4285
Title DOI: https://doi.org/10.37284/2707-4285

EAST AFRICAN NATURE & SCIENCE ORGANIZATION

Original Article

Insidious Trauma in the Consciousnesses of the Zanzibari Arabs: A Reading of Selected Works of Abdulrazak Gurnah

Seraphine Chepkosgei, PhD[1*]

[1] University of Eldoret, P. O. Box 1125-30100, Eldoret, Kenya.
[*] Author's Email: seraphine.chepkosgei@uoeld.ac.ke

Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.37284/eajass.8.1.2795

Date Published: *21 March 2025*

Keywords: *Insidious Trauma, Migration, Diaspora, History, Allegory, Zanzibari Arabs, Trauma and Selective Amnesia.*

ABSTRACT

This paper examines insidious trauma by closely studying Abdulrazak Gurnah's novels. It explores the complexity of migration within East Africa and to Britain by the Zanzibari Arabs represented in the novels, and glosses over their reasons for not going back to Oman in Arabia. The study purposively selected two of Gurnah's novels that provide narratives with insights into insidious trauma. From the study findings, it is concluded that Gurnah's fiction uses reverse chronology as a strategy that could lend insight into how the author reorganizes the Zanzibari Arabs' history to confront the insidious trauma manifested in the form of social and political oppression. The study demonstrates how characters strive to define their identity and sense of belonging amidst their struggles with the painful past and highly discriminative present realities. It is demonstrated that, though not always blatant or violent, the effects of insidious trauma threaten the basic well-being of the person who suffers it.

APA CITATION
Chepkosgei, S. (2025). An Analysis of Grammatical Errors in English Academic Writing: A Case of Tanzanian Undergraduate Students. *East African Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, *8*(*1*), 356-364. https://doi.org/10.37284/eajass.8.1.2795

CHICAGO CITATION
Chepkosgei, Seraphine. 2025. "An Analysis of Grammatical Errors in English Academic Writing: A Case of Tanzanian Undergraduate Students". *East African Journal of Arts and Social Sciences* 8 (1), 356-364. https://doi.org/10.37284/eajass.8.1.2795

HARVARD CITATION
Chepkosgei, S. (2025) "An Analysis of Grammatical Errors in English Academic Writing: A Case of Tanzanian Undergraduate Students". *East African Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, 8(1), pp. 356-364. doi: 10.37284/eajass.8.1.2795

IEEE CITATION
S., Chepkosgei "An Analysis of Grammatical Errors in English Academic Writing: A Case of Tanzanian Undergraduate Students". *EAJASS*, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 356-364, Mar. 2025.

MLA CITATION
Chepkosgei, Seraphine. "An Analysis of Grammatical Errors in English Academic Writing: A Case of Tanzanian Undergraduate Students". *East African Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, Vol. 8, no. 1, Mar. 2025, pp. 356-364, doi:10.37284/eajass.8.1.2795.

Article DOI : https://doi.org/10.37284/eajass.8.1.2795

INTRODUCTION

Insidious trauma refers to the ongoing, often subtle experiences of trauma that disproportionately affect marginalized groups, particularly women and minorities. It is a concept that underscores the cumulative nature of trauma born from systemic concerns such as racism, sexism, and classism. In the words of Root (1992), "insidious trauma is usually associated with the social status of an individual being devalued because a characteristic intrinsic to their identity is different from what is valued by those in power." According to Claassens (2020), insidious trauma accumulates over time through repeated exposure to microaggressions and systemic oppression. It shapes how people perceive themselves and their value in society, often leading to internalized oppression. Unlike overt trauma, insidious trauma may not be immediately recognized as harmful, making it difficult for individuals to seek help or validate their experiences.

This paper examines insidious trauma in the selected works of Abdulrazak Gurnah. The paper specifically explores how characters attempt to navigate their painful pasts by employing selective amnesia. Selective amnesia means a situation in which a character chooses what to remember, and what to forget, so that what has been 'sifted' becomes what the character brings to bear on the conscious mind and, hence, becomes active memory. According to Caruth and Whitehead (1996), "The experience of trauma, the fact of latency … seems to consist … in an inherent latency within the experience itself, the historical power of the trauma is not just that it is only in and through its forgetting, that it is first experienced at all" (p. 465). From this statement, we can infer that it is only when memory is converted into experience that amnesia becomes a precondition for one to recover the truth from a past with some degree of immediacy that cannot be obtained from ordinary remembering.

Selective amnesia works by invoking a past encounter as experienced by characters and re-situating it in a context that can enable a reader to visualize and relate it to an easily identifiable situation. It therefore serves as a precondition to recovering the 'truth' from the past. For amnesic memory to convey the historical reality of an unimaginable occurrence, the author has to employ figures and metaphors that transcend the boundaries of fact.

METHODOLOGY

This paper is a product of a close reading of Abdulrazak Gurnah's two novels, namely *The Last Gift* (2011) and *By the Sea* (2001). These novels were selected purposively since the author deemed them relevant to the study of insidious trauma. Abdulrazak Gurnah's works were selected because they provide a lens for examining individuals dislocated from their identity through physical migration, the process of cultural alienation, and historical experiences. According to Abbas *et al*. (2023), Abdulrazak Gurnah's literary works are largely critical in their exploration of trauma, memory, and identity within postcolonial contexts. These themes provide a lens for examining the insidious nature of trauma as it affects individuals and communities. Thakur and Sahi (2024) refer specifically to Gurnah's *By the Sea* (2001), describing it as a text that intricately brings together the themes of trauma and memory, demonstrating how these elements are intertwined in the lives of its protagonists, Latif and Omer. These characters' struggles with their pasts significantly shape their present identities and relationships. To Thakur and Sahi, therefore, *By the Sea* depicts memory as a site of negotiation, where individuals struggle with their painful pasts while seeking avenues for healing. Therefore, for this paper, data was collected through a close reading of the selected texts to identify sub-themes on insidious trauma.

Article DOI : https://doi.org/10.37284/eajass.8.1.2795

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In Gurnah's *The Last Gift* (2011, p. 88-9), the metaphor of the disintegrating house that seems to be hiding something is one persistent nightmare that haunts Anna's life. This is an insidious traumatic experience that has shattered Anna's life to the extent that she cannot tangibly give evidence of her painful ordeals in the past. This is in tune with Laub's (1992) assertion that "The traumatic event, although real, took place outside the parameters of 'normal' reality such as causality, sequence, place and time" (p. 69). Anna seems haunted by her unassimilated past in which, rather than utilizing the past or memories to rewrite the present, she allows others to victimize her and her life is pulled back by certain bad memories, which are occasionally triggered by words or phrases that take her back to forgotten scenes in her family history (Gurnah, 2011).

She seemingly suffers from failures of memory because of the negative psychological and emotional tumult that her upbringing has brought to bear on her and leads her to inflect and distort these memories of their family as one of migrants who have no attachment to their roots. She comes to the realization that this nightmare resonates with something in her past that she had glossed over for a long time. She remembers how her father talked to her about the importance of self-respect, something she constantly ignored (Gurnah, 2011, p. 94). From what Abbas chooses to remind Anna, we can see that insidious trauma can occur when aggression is directed towards an individual or a group of people whose identity as black migrants does not enjoy the privileges of being British because the political "relationship of power and control are both established and sustained" (Root, 1992, p. 230, 240). This state of affairs informs the present circumstances of Anna's life, which, with time, becomes trauma-inducing and leads her into moments of self-exploration.

Anna presents herself as a person who is struggling to forget her black migrant identity and wants to hold onto the dream of being 'British' and to the adventure of her youthful escapades (Gurnah, 2011, p. 90-91). When she is invited to visit Nick's family for the Easter weekend, she realizes that Nick's family is utterly racist, as captured in the conversation between Anna and Uncle Digby, especially when he interrogates her about her origins (Gurnah, 2011, p. 116). The racial epithets that keep sneaking into the conversation between Anna and Nick's family are a form of racial degradation that reminds Anna that she is regarded as a lesser 'human' and that her definition of being British is done despite her race.

Anna struggles to remember certain aspects of her past and erase others. At the same time, she tries to weave the more appealing narratives into the history of their diasporic adventure. Hence, what she presents to Nick about her family is an identity that is ambiguous and full of certain historical implications about migrants and migrancy as captured in Nick's preconceived conclusions in relation to Anna's family (Gurnah, 2011, p. 235-6).

There exist several instances in which Gurnah has allowed historical scepticism to haunt the life of the novels and that of the characters. This works by transforming the problem of historical representation into a problem of individual memory. For instance, Maryam's life is haunted by a sense of historical uncertainty. She seems to have suffered and is still suffering, from profound insidious trauma about the ills perpetuated against her by her benefactors. This is in tandem with what Herman (1992) says about the impact of trauma on its victim: "Where the victims already devalued (a woman, a child) she may find that the most traumatic events of her life take place outside the realm of socially validated reality. Her experience becomes unspeakable" (p. 8). While she may not wish to tell her children everything, she can remember the intensity of the humiliating, traumatic events. This troubled memory recurs repeatedly despite her intense efforts to erase them from her mind. "She narrates her past experiences, firstly as

Article DOI : https://doi.org/10.37284/eajass.8.1.2795

a child born and abandoned at the steps of a hospital then as a child adopted by Mr. and Mrs. Riggs" (Gurnah, 2011, p. 21). Maryam uses these confessions about her past as a mirror that reflects to her children how their identity and pasts as immigrants are a culmination of several negative experiences of racism that bear as "insidious trauma".

In Gurnah's texts, characters manifest an intricate relationship between trauma and forgetting that is characterized by the acts of running away. In *The Last Gift* (Gurnah, 2011), for example, Abbas' life is characterized by several escapades that are, in most instances, due to circumstances beyond him. Abbas leaves home for the first time to study at a teachers' college many miles away (Gurnah, 2011). He puts up with the relatives of his sister's husband. His second journey is an attempt to run away from an arranged marriage, seemingly, forged by the family of a rich Arab merchant that wants to use Abbas to cover up for their having impregnated a slave girl (Sharifa) whom they had housed. Abbas soon realizes that the child she is carrying is not his and that he has been set up. It is this sense of deep betrayal by both his sister and in-laws that triggers his running away (Gurnah, 2011, p. 142-3). The case of Abbas leaving his 'pregnant wife' and stowing away, and his unwillingness to confront the past and re-examine the painful reality of subjugation by the rich Arab families leads to the perpetuation of a trauma that is unconsciously passed down from himself to his wife and the children.

Trauma of Adventure

In this paper, the trauma of adventure is taken to mean the process through which characters in the works explored introspect their inner lives to expose their innermost imaginings and forbidden realities about their relationships with Zanzibar, both before and after colonialism, and how their perceptions inform their interactions with their hosts in Britain. This in effect becomes a powerful tool in recovering a heightened sense of awareness of belonging and not belonging to both Zanzibar and Britain; an ambivalent situation that seems to lead to a crisis of identity that can be seen in their resilience in the face of racist attacks. This becomes a vista for the characters to share in a moment of truth that is both healing and revealing.

In the texts explored, the trauma of adventure results from political insecurity and ethnic suspicion due to the changes that accompanied the attainment of independence in Zanzibar. This political insecurity and ethnic suspicion generate a negative emotional impulse that can be read as a kind of insidious trauma which, according to Root (1992), provides a useful framework for understanding certain long-term consequences of the institutionalized sexism, racism and classism that systematically denigrate the self-worth of the socially othered who are rendered voiceless.

For a majority of the Zanzibari Arabs, their lives are characterized by social tensions that were accompanied by an equal crisis in and of memory. For instance, Gurnah's *By the Sea* (2001) captures the simmering political ambivalence as seen in the interaction between Latif Mahmud and Saleh Omar. Latif Mahmud seems in a state of unease; he seems to lack the wits to confront Omar Saleh about his role in the oppression and dispossession of his family back in Zanzibar (p. 110), This is captured in the tension-filled and mechanistic interaction between Latif Mahmud and Saleh Omar.

This interaction is enriched by the way Saleh Omar allows Latif Mahmud to express his anger through Saleh Omar's speech. The speech is characterized by a few sentences, punctuated by movements and silences (Gurnah, 2001, p. 153). This momentarily allows Saleh Omar to be judged by his accuser (Latif Mahmud). It also reinstates the reality of the insidious traumatic impact that uncovers the effects of Saleh Omar's past actions in all their personal and cultural specificity, and can be interpreted in the context of far-reaching ethical context, which, according to Brown (1995), may be revolutionary in terms of its ability to "challenge the status quo" and

Article DOI : https://doi.org/10.37284/eajass.8.1.2795

to "participate in the process of social change" (p. 100-112).

As Omar and Mahmud exchange greetings, words dissolve into silence. Furthermore, even though they would rather forget their past, one realizes that trauma rekindles narratives that drive them to that very past. From Saleh Omar's recollection, there is a sense in which the ebony table (p. 158), which would otherwise have been a trivial piece of furniture, must be spoken about. Though the ebony table remains inaccessible, it can be equated to the unsurmountable and uncanny past. This trivial piece of furniture ought to have no place in their present world (Britain), in which their concerns are about finding a new meaning for their racist discrimination and alienation. Yet, it can only bring about healing if they resolve their suspicions, which have become a source of the seeming insecurity that hangs like a shadow over Latif Mahmud's family and which would later fuel Omar Saleh's imprisonment (p. 163). This is an event that Saleh Omar has moved beyond and yet he cannot and must not forget. However, for Saleh Omar to overcome this past, he must surmount the place and meaning of the ebony table that generates tension between the two families. He thus convinces Latif Mahmud to reject beliefs that are no longer credible (Gurnah, 2001, p. 158).

To attain a sense of healing and ease, Saleh Omar chooses to introspect into his inner life. He attempts to bring out those elements of silence that have all along been a source of disquiet between him (Omar Saleh) and Latif Mahmud. Saleh Omar is also accused by Latif Mahmud of oppressing his fellow Africans and is guilty of allowing Nuhu to pervert other boys (Gurnah, 2001, p. 155-6). At the end of their deliberations, Saleh Omar manages to expose his innermost imaginings and forbidden realities that inform their discussion. This revelation becomes an inspiration that opens a window for the two characters to share in a moment of truth that is both healing and revealing. By adventuring into their wounded and disoriented past, which has been clouded by ignorance disguised in everyday circumstances and stirred by psychical uncertainty, the two manage to attain both psychological and social freedom. As such, Latif Mahmud is able to forgive Saleh Omar by overcoming his own conscious acts of contempt that have all the while been ingrained in his mind. He realizes that his contempt for Saleh Omar was based on ignorance.

For the Zanzibari Arabs, ethnic hatred, a consequence of insidious trauma filled with suspicions, has rendered them incapable of trusting one another. As such, according to Vickroy (2014), they are unable to "exert control over one's environment, to have a sense of one's own worth and to recognize one's ability to serve as an autonomous agent" (p. 122). This state affairs led to revolutions, which, according to Bissell (2011), altered the meaning and practice of politics and political discoursing in Zanzibar and eventually resulted in the exit of some of the Zanzibari Arabs.

For the characters in Gurnah's fiction, there is a constant struggle to 'synthesize' an identity from disconnected narratives about who they are and where they come from. This situation is best captured in the character of Abbas in *The Last Gift* (2011). Fortunately, Abbas succeeds in confronting his trauma of fleeing from Zanzibar through introspection into his life and times in Zanzibar. This is captured in the audio recordings in which he confesses about his past (p. 249). Through these confessions, Abbas undergoes a catharsis. He finally manages to contextualize the realities of his life in Zanzibar by working through his past and successfully redeems himself from living in fear of the unknown (p. 258). His ability to confront the forces that drove him away puts an end to his anxiety. Though he does not live to re-narrate them to his family, his trauma is mitigated and he is rescued from degradation and disregard. Besides that, his wife and children are better able to plan for their future by first identifying with Zanzibar as their 'home' (p. 232) and then by having Jamal and Hanna plan to visit Zanzibar (p. 279).

Article DOI : https://doi.org/10.37284/eajass.8.1.2795

In other instances, trauma manifests as high levels of hostility as a result of anger turned inwards. This is personified in Abbas, in Gurnah's *The Last Gift* (2011), who is driven into a rage by the thought that he might die in a 'strange' place (p. 154). The anger is made conspicuous in the way he rants out at Maryam, calling her names: "You moron, you whore" (p. 154) and in the way Abbas shows signs of suspicion when he evades the questions that seem to force him to speak about his 'home' (p. 37). His anger derives from a bottled-up sense of guilt for leaving Zanzibar and migrating to Britain which has curtailed his freedom. The actions and dispositions of Abbas are consistent with Lacan's (1998) idea of *objét petit á*, which "is the object cause of desire and is in itself unattainable – it only looms somewhere on the horizon and can never be incorporated back" (p. 103). Therefore, what Abbas experiences in Britain and what he desires to regain from his past in Zanzibar become elusive and, hence, render his life in Britain devoid of meaning and full of nostalgia (Gurnah, 2011, p. 278).

One realizes that, for a long time, (H)Anna has lived in denial about the reality of racism in Britain. She is not ready to accept the history of her family as migrants who are victims of past historical injustices of slavery and colonialism. She is unable to appreciate the reality that, given her family's history and race, they will hardly receive fair treatment in Britain. She is equally uncertain of a positive reception in Zanzibar. This narrative bears an overarching meaning that is captured in Jamal's PhD dissertation, which speaks about migration patterns (p. 156) and in the short story he has written, titled 'The Monkey from Africa' (p. 279).

Other characters use exigency from the decisive trauma as a response to the demands of living in the present. This is seen in the way (H)Anna, in *The Last Gift* (Gurnah, 2011), confronts her father's haunted past life and re-lives it vis-á-vis her present life (p. 265). After his death, she listens to the audio recordings about her father's past and, by intruding into her father's cloistered world, she can reconcile herself with his past. This enables her to mourn him as well as end any tacit denial about him. She therefore succeeds in overcoming the precipitated trauma, which had rendered her life unfulfilled. This echoes Caruth and Whitehead's (1996) postulation about trauma: "Trauma manifests in salient ways such that the original event is not experienced fully at the time, but can only be experienced belatedly when it possesses the trauma survivors in the form of traumatic memories, and for the survivors, it becomes the symptoms of a history that they cannot entirely possess" (p. 45).

For (H)Anna, in Gurnah's *The Last Gift* (2011), trauma emanates from the occasional racist phrases used in school by her teachers (p. 45) and, later on in life, Nick's uncle Digby and Laura's husband remind her that she is not British (p. 118). This is crowned by Ralph's (Nick's father's) reminder that she is black and will only give them a "little jungle bunny" (p. 227). These allusions to a racist past trigger certain memories in (H)Anna about her past, especially about how her mother Maryam was treated by Dr. Mendez who referred to Maryam as an "absurd hypochondriac" (p. 96) and how Nick reminded her of "her pathetic race's inability to take charge of their lives" (p. 149). (H)Anna instead desires to erase such memories, as seen in her defiance of the racist slurs uttered by Nick's father when he touches on the integrity of her father, Abbas, who had been referred to by Nick's family as a bigamist (p. 228). This reaction shows how traumatic suppression explodes into actions that defy the use of language (Gurnah, 2011, p. 227).

By observing (H)Anna's use of body language, Nick's family read a kind of hatred that (H)Anna has all along kept hidden and has never intended to speak out about. For (H)Anna, this reaction is the product of long self-examination and reflection and her bodily gestures, therefore, represent her confrontation with her fear (trauma) of being defined as 'black and immigrant'. This reaction is a form of healing and a way of coming to terms with

Article DOI : https://doi.org/10.37284/eajass.8.1.2795

her black migrant identity which she cannot afford to run away from.

To overcome trauma, the characters must express and share feelings and memories related to their personal, traumatic event(s). This is seen in Abbas, in Gurnah's *The Last Gift* (2011), who manages to bring up a close-knit family as a way to pit affection and to memorialize recollections against the ravages of trauma induced by racism and discrimination. He advocates for a better life for his children in Britain by not aligning them with either Christian or Muslim activities in school (p. 114). He sensitizes his family members to resist any physical violations by their hosts. This is seen in the way he constantly reminds Maryam and their children that they should never fear anyone nor allow anyone to take advantage of them (p. 50). In so doing, Abbas attempts to regain some modicum of dignity for the migrant that was lost as a result of the humiliation brought about by racism in Britain.

Ferooz, who is a migrant and suffers from a physical disability, in *The Last Gift* (2011), transcends his physical disability (p. 273) which has been a source of social trauma and self-pity because it undermines his sense of confidence. He defies disability by working hard to earn a decent living and ends up with an accountancy firm in Britain (p. 267). In this sense, Ferooz wrestles a space for immigrants and speaks to the fact that immigrants can rediscover their potential and change their social status from that of the oppressed to one of equal status with their hosts. Similarly, Maryam, in *The Last Gift* (Gurnah, 2011), is yet another example of those migrants who have learnt to defy the already defined course of life, as marked out by the racist background that has persistently locked her away from the public gaze (p. 40). When she chooses to run away with Abbas, she emerges as one potent with the kind of daring disguised in naivety (p. 43). Her migrant status does not deny her a chance to raise her family that, as much as it struggles with who they are, can identify with Britain as 'home' (p. 51). Maryam's desire to find a 'home away from home' is in tandem with Brah's (1996) use of the term 'homing desire' which can be interpreted as the desire by a migrant to construct a home in their new diasporic location. "It can be explained as a process in which migrants are not nostalgic for roots nor is it as the desire for a 'homeland'; it is, instead, a construction of 'multi-locality' within and across territorial, cultural and psychic boundaries" (Brah, 1996, p. 193).

The Uncanniness of Diasporic Adventure

The uncanny is about how the perception of space, or a phenomenon that is new, foreign, and/or hostile to a character, corresponds to how their psyche associates it with an earlier space or phenomenon that was once known or familiar to them. This situation generates a sensation of uncertainty that results in disorientation, which does not necessarily manifest in the consciousness of the character. In this context, the uncanny is about how the diasporic subjects perceive and appreciate the ambivalent nature of Zanzibar, as both 'home' and 'not home'. It is uncanny because their definition of home is a space presented as both familiar and unfamiliar/strange and is reinforced by its significance in blurring the geographic boundaries of what defines one's idea of 'home'. It also enables the determination of the various ways in which these narratives represent the diasporic adventures of the Zanzibari Arab community, which has suffered some appreciable degree of dispossession, e.g. of both their material and communal roots. These dispossessions resulted in traumas that have a bearing on the ambivalence with which the characters experience and relate to Zanzibar as 'home'.

In the texts under study, the Zanzibar mainland and the Indian Ocean serve as metaphors for stability and instability. The land is canny and can be read as the signification of stability; it is a metaphor for security and the knowable that one can identify with. On the other hand, the Indian Ocean points to the uncanny and embodies the unstable because of its vastness, the fluctuation of the tides, and the various winds that define the 'flow' of the Monsoon

Article DOI : https://doi.org/10.37284/eajass.8.1.2795

winds. It is also uncanny because these oceanic phenomena lack a definite form as seen in the way the Zanzibari Arabs lost their trade dominance in the Indian Ocean world due to colonialism and the coming of independence. Independence, ironically, triggered the political uncertainties that were marked by revolutions and attempted coups. In *By the Sea* (Gurnah, 2001), Omar Saleh embodies the consequences of racial hate. His release from detention renders him hopeless (p. 123). He thus opts to seek asylum in Britain as a way of identifying with something unfamiliar rather than stay and get haunted by his hate for his tormentors (p. 5).

Ironically, Britain, to which he migrates, does not offer him the security for which he longs. In fact, for Omar, Britain remains a site of uncertainty as he is gazed at with suspicion: first, by the immigration officer Kelvin Edelman (p. 5) and finally by Celia (p. 43) who constantly taunts him about his skin colour, his use of the washroom, and even his name. In his first encounter with the immigration officer Kelvin Edelman (p. 5), the latter takes away Omar's Ud-al-qamari, which bears a strong historical significance for Omar. The Ud-al-qamari traces his family's history as a community that traded in the vast Indian Ocean world and went as far as Persia, China, India, and Bangkok, among other places. It also has a history of the dispossession of his grandfather, Jafar Musa, by the British (p. 23).

This very act of dispossession is the beginning of Omar's scepticism of Britain being 'home'. Subsequently, his hesitation is seen in his refusal to speak English, claiming that he does not understand it (Gurnah, 2001, p. 6). The narrative goes back and forth as a result of involuntary impingements of shocking memories, which sometimes could be willed, or purposively brought up, on the part of Saleh Omar, and which are assembled as recollections during his journeys. Edelman, therefore, becomes a symbol of freedom for white immigrants but a symbol of oppression for black migrants (p. 11). It affirms the belief of racism as captured in the coldness with which the white people treated the black immigrants and alters his earlier perceptions of what it means to be African in Britain. Omar Saleh, in *By the Sea* (2001), like Abbas in *The Last Gift* (Gurnah, 2011), realizes that Britain could never be 'home' because it does not guarantee stability, security and freedom from fear.

The Last Gift (Gurnah, 2011) represses and expresses highly charged information about the beauty and dreadfulness of life in Zanzibar. This ambivalent attitude, in terms of what Todorov (1981) posits, "generates the hesitation that defines the fantastic" (p. 169). Abbas, in *The Last Gift* (Gurnah, 2011), therefore, maintains distance as a narrator by locating himself both inside and outside the uncanny and this doubling adds a further uncanny effect to the narrative.

By making use of the African tale structure that has an opening formula in *The Last Gift*, Gurnah (2011) appeals to the use of 'orality' as a framing device that serves the uncanny, imaginative expansion of the creativity of both the narrator and his audience. As each story ends, the next follows as a flight attempt from the unfamiliar. This, in a way, enables both the narrator and the audience to discover and experience the reality of these narratives that bank on the unimaginable.

CONCLUSION

Gurnah's novels studied in this paper portray the inability of the Zanzibari Arabs to enjoy the freedom they had sought in their migration to Britain because they were confronted with racist attitudes and behaviours by their hosts. Gurnah's fiction presents the effects of insidious trauma on the characters through actions, such as characters turning to anger, suspicion, distrust, loss of hope, depression and a general sense of atrophy. It also presents struggles against discrimination and selective amnesia bound to the question of race, socio-economic marginalization and gender.

By laying emphasis on the place of the Zanzibari Arabs' identity in the face of these un-integrated

Article DOI : https://doi.org/10.37284/eajass.8.1.2795

experiences of revolutions and violence, Gurnah, through fiction, reveals that the traumatic rupture caused by the post-independence violence and betrayals can manifest through the psychological pain embodied in the characters.

REFERENCES

Abbas, H., Abbas, A., Iqbal, A., & Khalil, P. Z. (2023). Echoes of Haunted Memories and Nightmares: Understanding Trauma in Gurnah's Afterlives. *University of Chitral Journal of Linguistics and Literature*, *7*(II), 99-105.

Bissell, W. C. (2011). *Urban design, chaos, and colonial power in Zanzibar*. Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press.

Brah, A. (1996). Cartographies of diaspora: Contesting identities. London: Routledge.

Brown, L. S. (1995). Not Outside the Range: One Feminist Perspective on Psychic Trauma. In C. Caruth (Ed.). *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (pp. 100-112). Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.

Caruth, C., & Whitehead, A. (1996). *The unclaimed experience: Trauma, narrative, and history*. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP.

Claassens, L. J. M. (2020). Reading trauma narratives: insidious trauma in the story of Rachel, Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah (Genesis 29-30) and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. *Old Testament Essays, 33*(1), 10-31.

Gurnah, A. (2001). *By the Sea*. London: Bloomsbury.

Gurnah, A. (2011). *The Last Gift*. London: Bloomsbury.

Herman, J. (1992). *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence--from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*. New York: Basic Books.

Lacan, J. (1998). *The seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book IX: The four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis* (A. Sheridan, & W. W. Norton, Trans.). New York.

Laub, D. (1992). Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening. In S. Felman and D. Laub (Eds.), *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. New York: Routledge.

Root, M. P. P. (1992). Reconstructing the Impact of Trauma on Personality. In L. S. Brown & M. Ballou (Eds.), *Personality and Psychopathology: Feminist Reappraisals* (pp. 229-265). New York: The Guilford Press.

Thakur, M. K., & Sahi, N. K. (2024). The Struggle for Reconciliation: Trauma and Memory in Abdulrazak Gurnah's By the Sea. *International Journal of English Literature and Social Science, 9*(6), 103-112.

Todorov, T. (1981). *Introduction to Poetics*. University of Minnesota Press.

Vickroy, L. (2014). Voices of Survivors in Contemporary Fiction. In M. Balaev (Ed.). *Contemporary Approaches to Trauma Theory*. (pp. 130-151). New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

