

Sense of Guilt and Shame: An Interpretation of Abdulrazak Gurnah's Gravel Heart in Terms of Traumatic Neurosis



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Abstract: *This paper examines Gravel Heart by Abdulrazak Gurnah through a psychoanalytic lens. Its framework stems from the theoretical underpinnings of Cathy Caruth's traumatic neurosis to interpret the psychic state of the protagonist, Salim. It elucidates the reasons behind the character's trapped psyche, which leads to a constant sensation of guilt and humiliation. It also sees how his psychological trauma affects others and results in deteriorating consequences. The qualitative method of textual analysis is implied. The researcher has found that the worst impacts of colonialism are the reasons behind Salim's painful circumstances and his regret and shame over past wrongdoings. Acute helplessness shatters his personality, and his previously repressed worries manifest as traumatic injuries, which highlights the neurotic symptoms described by Caruth. The current study highlights Caruth's modified views on traumatic neurosis. In addition, this paper reconsiders the novel to urge society to reconsider human emotions in the contemporary era.*

Key Words: Gravel Heart, Abdulrazak Gurnah, Psychoanalytic lens, Cathy Caruth, Traumatic Neurosis, Guilt and Shame

Introduction

According to Caruth's theory, an accidental reenactment of events causes neurotic symptoms in an individual's personality. The psychological background of an individual reflects his relationship with his family and surroundings, which ultimately influences his psychological condition and behaviour. In the 17th century, a "physical wound," an "injury," or a "defeat" were considered to be trauma. The word "trauma" has an extended history, originally derived from the Greek word *wound*, which is related to an injury to the body.

Trauma has been divided into three distinct categories in prior studies: cognitive trauma, which first became understood in the late Victorian era between 1837 and 1901; war neurosis and post-traumatic stress disorder during the First World War; and sensual trauma in the current context. In the Victorian

age, trauma was studied under the theoretical pinning of hysteria. Later, the aftereffects of the First World War and Gulf War syndrome were studied. The third attempt to look into trauma is feminism-based and is concerned with the violent oppression of women in contemporary society (Horvitz, 2000).

In other disciplines, most notably in psychiatric literature, trauma is referred to as a subconscious brain wound leading to behavioural dysfunction (Unal, 2022). Eriksen identified trauma in medical and modern terms in 1860 as a "syndrome in patients experiencing because of the fear of railway accidents and associated their suffering with a shock or concession of the spine (3)." In an essay titled *Trends in Literary Trauma Theory*, Balaev (2008) explains that trauma is "an individual's psychological reaction to an unexpected happening that disturbs the foregoing thoughts regarding an individual's sense of self and the standards by which one interprets society." (150).

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Caruth modifies the Freudian concept of trauma in *Unclaimed Experiences* and argues that trauma is "a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind" (p. 3). A traumatic experience cannot be explained in words, and it restricts verbal articulation. A patient is unable to express the experience through words, so the past is used to justify the present, which ultimately has a strong impact on an individual's memory and identity (Zeinab, 2019).

In trauma literary studies, a neurologist named Paul Oppenheim invented the term *traumatic neurosis* after recognizing the indication of undetectable biological alterations in the brain that disturb a patient's cognitive ability and stating that the traumatic illness established a new disease entity (Lays, 2000 p3). Freud (1920) notices trauma as not bodily injury. He defines traumatic neurosis as "much preoccupied in their waking lives with thoughts of their accident. Perhaps they are more concerned with not thinking about it" (p13). In the absence of physical damage, traumatic neurosis results from mental, psychological, and sociological stress. Injuries in this neurosis have an emotional and symbolic nature rather than a physical one. This injury puts a critical body part, such as the head or heart, at risk (Parmer, 1954).

Traumatic neurosis has more applicability in law than it does in medicine. The term does not serve to describe a specific psychological reaction pattern. Instead, it identifies the factors that are directly responsible for the emergence of neurotic symptoms, even though their psychogenic origin is found in emotional anxieties that are unrelated to the immediately responsible incident (Lubitz, 1958). The Polish-British theorist Cathy Caruth, in her renowned publication, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), declares traumatic neurosis as unwitting reenactment of an incident that one cannot simply forget (p.2).

The researcher intends to explore the psychological condition of the main character, Salim, in the novel *Gravel Heart* by Abdulrazak Gurnah under the framework of *traumatic neurosis* proposed by Cathy Caruth. Caruth modifies Freudian concepts to justify her theoretical arguments. The present research takes its theoretical guidance from her 1996 publication, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. To present the notion in the psychoanalytical concept, Caruth argues that the mind cannot describe trauma in any other way; it can only be understood through recurring flashbacks that practically revisit the

traumatic event. As a result, a traumatic experience can threaten an individual's bodily and psychological well-being. A traumatic happening, interestingly, comprises a paradox in that even the most serious incident might not be completely known, and it may quickly turn into belatedness. Repeated viewing of a traumatic incident is characterized by belatedness and incomprehensibility. According to Caruth, trauma is always the tale of the wound that screams out and directs us to explain the reality that is contrarily hidden (p.4). The wound goes unspoken or unnoticed if there is no trauma. Caruth also emphasizes the notion of a double wound, suggesting that the wound results from the recollection of thoughts.

Among the well-known authors of post-colonial fiction, Abdulrazak Gurnah is the most acclaimed novelist, winning the Nobel Prize in 2022. Gurnah is a Tanzanian novelist born in 1948 in Zanzibar, but during the 1964 revolution, he migrated to England as a refugee. Gurnah migrated to the United Kingdom in 1968 as an undergraduate and lectured there for many years before retiring in 2017 as a Professor of English at the University of Kent. Gurnah's experiences shaped his artistic endeavours and helped him succeed and build a strong career, as these works show his truthful assessment of colonial or post-colonial eras. Gurnah has abundant experience penning novels and other literary works that tackle universal human themes.

Regarding colonialism and imperialism, Gurnah rarely makes compromises on the principles or his convictions. He blends genuine feelings, truths, and a true representation of an individual's psychology. His fiction appreciates both human feelings and historical realities. His literary works delve into the traumatic conditions of immigrants, including neurological symptoms such as a sense of belongingness, relocation, naturalization, diaspora, and hybridity.

The selected novel is a post-colonial narrative published in 2017; narrated from the first-person perspective, Gurnah depicts the harsh realities of Western rulers and the intentions behind Western kindness, which led to unhealing wounds and personal trauma for the individuals. He has incorporated strong patriarchal forces and the abuse of power dominance, which rendered the characters helpless and left them with no choice but to submit to the corrupt dominance system. Salim's mother, Saida, feels disgraced at becoming a helpless victim of these occurrences, with no means to mitigate colonial

oppression. Saida's life had always been too simple until the revolution, much as Masud and Salim's had been, and now she feels worthless without the ability to cope with the circumstances. Saida is too ashamed of their insignificance to feel discontent or defeat. The irony here stems from Salim's mother, Saida, who abandoned his husband, Masud, in bleak stillness and embarrassment as she submitted to the Vice President's son to preserve her brother's life. Amir has been jailed for molesting the vice president's underage daughter in Zanzibar. The fact that Salim's father similarly traces colonial marks provides a significant opportunity to increase our understanding of the trauma inflicted by colonizers. Masud was affected by Saida's conduct, and he left the house because he could not endure the burden of her malicious act, which caused damage to his family. As a result of his embarrassment at being a coward, he became insane. All the characters are suffering from trauma and are constantly afflicted by guilt and shame.

Objectives of the Study

- To evaluate the reasons behind traumatic happenings that lead the protagonist, Salim, into endless shame and guilt, with reference to the novel *Gravel Heart* by Abdulrazak Gurnah.
- To analyze traumatic inflictions and tortured psyche in Salim's character and traumatic aftereffects upon familial relationships of the selected novel by Abdulrazak Gurnah [2017](#).

Research Questions

To tackle the phenomena mentioned above, the researcher has devised certain questions, which are as follows:

1. What are the reasons behind the major character's traumatic state of mind, which aroused an unremitting sense of guilt and shame?
2. What are the traumatic inflictions of the major character's trapped psyche and the traumatic aftereffects of unconsciously harming his familial relationships?

Significance of the Study

Psychoanalytical criticism is a debatable topic in literary and contemporary studies. This research study is significant because it comprehensively explains how traumatic conditions affect human nature and causes behavioural changes. The present research is subsequently significant as it draws attention to

modified perspectives on literary trauma theory. Besides this, the study highlights the key constructs of trauma theory, which renowned psychoanalyst Cathy Caruth embraces. It also helps the readers evaluate Gurnah's *Gravel Heart* from a new perspective as it directs society to readdress human emotions in the modern world. Drawing on Caruth's notion of "traumatic neurosis," the study explores how the major characters' past traumas continue to haunt them, shape their present experiences, and highlight the psychological impacts. This research will also pave the way for further research studies by exploring multiple angles to overlook the notions of trauma theory.

Literature Review

In psychoanalytic narratives, post-colonial fiction reveals the traumatic state of human beings facing tormenting conditions. The selected text, *Gravel Heart*, by Abdulrazak Gurnah, is inclined to put forth the traumatic state of the major character from a post-colonial perspective. Gurnah draws his narrative from the perspectives of postcolonialism and imperialism. He presents the characters with an unremitting sense of guilt and an exploration of shame, which leads the character towards ultimate death. The novel *Gravel Heart* recounts the narrative of strange family affairs. The protagonist, Salim, is sent to England by his Uncle Amir as compensation for a commendation his mother performed for him, which evolved into a cause of embarrassment for Salim. The requisition of local people's accommodations in Zanzibar by the British authorities and their local accomplices and the disappearance of those who opposed it left permanent wounds in his nation.

Abdulkadir Unal draws his critical study from the article "Plunderers of the Human Spirit: A Criticism of Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Gravel Heart* in Terms of Literary Trauma Theory (2022)". With the help of literary elements like dissolution, dialect, restatement, and intertextuality to infer the meaning of traumatic distress, he has studied Gurnah's novel through the concepts of trauma theory in a post-colonial context. Researchers investigated Gurnah's work from the perspective of renowned psychologists like Sigmund Freud, Cathy Caruth, Michael Balaev, and Irene Visser. It tends to bring forth how the characters experience trauma and what consequences are caused. It attributes the research to the traumatic influences of colonialism employed in literary fiction.

Another researcher, Anne Ajutu Okungu [2016](#), investigates Gurnah's works to identify the most prominent themes in his fictional writings. Displacement, migration, colonial power systems, and the immigration problem are all major themes in his works of literature. The researcher chooses his first eight publications to shed light on the consequences of colonialism and the unstable relationships of immigrants with their families, fear of relationships in new territory, social reluctance, and self-inferiority in a character's life. Gurnah also draws attention to critical historical experiences between East Africa, Asia, the Arab lands, the occidental nations, the subsequent colonial conquests, and how these conquests profoundly affected social relations. He employs a variety of narrative voices, including an unreliable narrator and a silent narrator who conveys his narrative through silence, which Gurnah regards as a strategy against disempowerment. The researcher concludes that Gurnah authentically narrates East African experiences as a writer and migrant whose life was disrupted by political scenarios and revolution. This study highlights the effects of a dominated system, the repression of minorities, racial discrimination, oppression, and its consequences as a rebellion against authority.

In a journal article titled "A Psychoanalytic Reading of Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Gravel Heart*," the author examines the novel from a psychoanalytic perspective depending on the theoretical framework of Sigmund Freud. It highlights various phases of the protagonist's life, implies his fears, and confronts his experiences as a young child. Per critical theory, the paper emphasizes defence mechanisms, such as the inferiority complex, fear of abandonment, and the guilt Salim and his parents feel for trying to conceal their misery. The article explored Salim's painful childhood experiences, which served as a barrier in his life and prevented him from leading an enjoyable existence. (Al Areqi, 2020).

Sulemanzadeh (2021) draws his dissertation's framework from the concept of Derridean hospitality to evaluate how the fusion of ideological implications and references, in addition to literary intertextualities, exposed friendliness and nuances in power hierarchies that have an impact on character relationships with one another as well as their correlation with the government and society. Additionally, it explores how the intertextualities of literature and family bonds contribute to understanding the politics of hospitality in *Gravel Heart*. The researcher's claim in another

research effort is an evaluation of Gurnah's work, *By the Sea* (2001) and *Gravel Heart* (2017), from an Afropolitan perspective and an assessment of cosmopolitanism in his literature. An Afropolitan framework of analysis is used to reveal Gurnah's interpretive consultation with three interconnected localized worldviews: Gurnah's analytical dealing with three interconnected localized viewpoints is revealed through an Afropolitan framework of analysis: (i) modern idealized studies of the Eastern Ocean region as a place of global exchanges; (ii) African citizen norms that maintain dual identity constructs of colonial and early post-colonial discourses; and (iii) post-colonial and neocolonial multinational relations on the East African coast specifically, Zanzibar. The protagonists' family mysteries in both novels, with their quietness and attention to multi-perspective approaches to similar previous happenings, work allegorically to highlight the significance of the temporal axis in Afropolitan examinations of modern identity constructs, as necessarily highlighted by cultural and national trans-borders. Saleh Omar in *By the Sea* and Salim in *Gravel Heart* are both compelled to migrate due to the consequences of colonial and post-colonial history in their personal lives. Regarding Afropolitanism, both novels address how attitudes towards African politics of self-identity and African rhetoric have evolved since the beginning of the century. The novels by Gurnah illustrate this concept of a distinctively African "way of belonging to the world, of being in the world" for the twenty-first century, characterized by two key characteristics.

To begin with, A particular focus on nativism, the pan-African encounter as a component of the African post-colonial (re)construction of self-identity, and a critical attitude towards traditional African discourse are all characteristics of Afropolitanism. The second aspect essential to redefining a modern African way of living in the world is the emphasis on the role of memory and historical memory as a tool to relativize and reveal the misinterpretation of absolute narratives. (Llena, 2020)

Muongeli (2019) centred on investigating the efficacy of interactive narrative techniques in portraying social integration. This study bridges the gap by emphasizing the interaction between narrative fragmentation and helping to establish a connection between fragmentariness in form and fragmentariness in context. The social abjection theory of Imogen Tayler and the theory of narratology proposed by Gerard Genette have been employed. The study

explores Gurnah's narration strategy, which included anachronic plots and multiple narration perspectives, using letters to bridge the gaps in narration and employing the technique of quietness to depict the deficiency of words to demonstrate degradation.

Mohammad (2022) analyses how one's psychological status has changed in response to difficult and painful events in one's family and life. Salim's psychology has been analyzed based on Sigmund Freud's lectures "The Path to the Formation of Symptoms" and "Fixation to Traumas in the Unconscious," which are taken as theoretical frameworks. Freud's theoretical arguments and fixation on past traumas have been utilized to consider the basic arguments. The main protagonist, Salim, has been marked by sufferings that have afflicted his cognitive development as a kid, an adult, and a grown-up.

In 2021, another research scholar, Sean James Bosman, reinvigorated the cliché figure of the cuckold into a complicated narrative device. His cuckolds act as nexuses through which he manifests some authorial regard in the novels *By the Sea* and *Gravel Heart*. Gurnah's intricate usage of numerous narrative conditions reveals the shallowness of this identity to scholars. The researcher constructs cuckolds as enigmatic characters to disclose power dynamics among numerous masculinities and the risk of casting others as doomed victims. This article delineates the analogy between the figure of cuckolds as it is generally portrayed in Gurnah's novel and how the author has proposed the trope. It takes guidance from the theories based on identity proposed by Stuart Hall and the representation of hegemonic masculinities proposed by R.W.C. Connell. The concept of the comforts of victimhood was developed in distinguished writings by Taro Iwata and Viet Thong Nguyen. In his other research paper, "Nor was there any roll for you: Unsetting Canonical Frames in Gurnah's *By the Sea* and *Gravel Heart*," he attempts to indicate how the Zanzibari-born British author's narrative unsettles the disempowering frames that his marginalized immigrant characters confront as they strive to establish new accommodations. To appreciate Gurnah's productivity with his intertexts, he draws attention to the efforts of Judith Butler to characterize Western canonical literature as a frame and the description of canonicity by Unkhi Mukherjee.

Oaikhena (2022) analyzed the influences and effects of colonialism and a poor leadership system in post-

colonial countries as aftereffects of the abrasive nature of colonial rule. It was done under the Orientalism of Edward Said— issues of migration, separation, displacement, oppressive governance, and resistance. Fadare (2022) also published a research article that attempted to examine Gurnah's novel under a post-colonial framework to reveal migration issues experienced by refugees in the diaspora, such as identity crisis, with a focus on both the distant and instant effects of revolution and its generated crisis, such as being unemployed and having trouble finding housing. Additionally, this essay concludes that the forced migration in the lives of Zanzibarians after the revolution, both at home and in the diaspora, is due to the worst leadership, misconduct, maladministration, family disintegration, and identity crisis.

Another study tries to address the issue of modernity using a trans-modern perspective and a narrative style that emphasizes the community's political and philosophical ideals. This study focuses on the novel form by using the Indian Ocean as an operating metaphor. The theoretical framework is provided by Enrique Dussel's clarification of trans-modern belief as an analytical development of different perception systems that oppose the Eurocentric positioning of modernity. The writings of Gurnah, which integrate political and philosophical trans modern thought with literary form, can finally indicate a hospitality that emerges out of a resistance to visionary and descriptive closures, even when they tell stories of violence, displacement, and fragmentation. Culturing a creative universe shaped by relational practices on a material, imaginative, and topographical level would be the ultimate objective of the trans-modern world (Datta, 2019).

Conceptual Framework

Caruth acknowledges trauma as "a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind" (3). She argues that a mental injury is different from a physical one. The gap in a brain's sense of time, inner self, and outer world is defined as an injury of the mind. It is not possible for human consciousness to fully comprehend it until it manifests itself again, repeatedly in victims' dreams and repetitive activities. Caruth claims that trauma cannot be located in a basic violent or unique occurrence in an individual's past but rather in a way that is not fully understood at the time of the incident. Trauma returns and disturbs the survivor subsequently (Unclaimed, 4).

She states that trauma is "the reaction to an accidental or overwhelming violent incident or events that are not completely known as they occur but repeat themselves in the form of flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena" (Caruth, *Unclaimed*, 91).

According to Caruth, trauma can be comprehended through repeated flashbacks that re-enact the traumatic incident because the brain cannot articulate it otherwise. As an outcome, a traumatic event threatens the individual's physical and psychic well-being. A traumatic experience has an interesting paradox: even the most threatening incident may not be completely known; the instance can turn into belatedness, the instance of appearing late. The repetition of experiencing a distressing experience is characterized by belatedness and incomprehensibility. "Trauma seems to be much more than pathology, or the simple illness of a wounded psyche," Caruth states, "it is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available" (p. 4). The wound would be "unspoken or unrecognized" without trauma.

In addition to Freud's definition of trauma as a "wound of the mind," Caruth emphasizes the "double wound," which refers to the wound caused by recollections of the original tragedy. Caruth's notion of trauma is notable for having four major traits. One of them is the existence of a 'traumatic experience' that results in a delayed response. In both her description and her instance of a soldier's experience, Caruth uses the word "sudden" to describe the shock associated with the traumatic event. One of the most prominent and common images of trauma in our century is that of a soldier who is confronted by sudden, massive death all around him and experiences it while unconscious, only to revisit it later in repeated nightmares. (Caruth 2016). As a result, trauma cannot be regarded as an ordinary occurrence. According to the definitions, a traumatic event is "the shocking and expected occurrence of an accident" (pg. 6). The third symptom of trauma is the repetition of the traumatic incident, which may be experienced in various ways with hallucinations, nightmares, and dreams. The final feature mentioned in Caruth's book is an appearance that is "often delayed, uncontrolled and repetitive" (p. 11).

Data Analysis

The selected novel, *Gravel Heart*, is a depiction of an

individual's tortured psyche, leaving the characters in utter despair and destroying their personalities. It explores the complexities of human nature, trauma, guilt, and shame in the lives of its characters. Drawing on the psychoanalytical framework provided by Caruth's book "*Unclaimed Experiences*," this study examines how the major characters in the novel grapple with their past traumas. The novel is narrated by Muslim nigger Salim, who feels dejected and unable to grasp the scattered environment of home. The home environment is disturbed due to the unwanted happenings, but Salim is unaware of it. All he can grasp is the stillness of his mother and the sudden disappearance of his father. Upon revealing his father's residence at another place, he feels ashamed of his father's appearance. Masud's frightened appearance and Saida's unwanted pregnancy urge him to find escape by shifting to England with his mother's brother, Uncle Amir.

After years, he returns to Africa, knowing his mother's passing, and meets with his father, Masud, who has come to his senses. His father discloses that his mother became blinded by her brother's love and agreed to yield herself to the vice president's son, Hakim, to spare her brother's life. Her brother was jailed for his mischievous act of raping a teenager named Aisha. Salim left with no words and decided to return to England. He heard the news of his father's death and was left with nothing but pity and misery. His character leaves the reader curious about what might happen to Salim afterwards. The story of betrayal and dejection left imprints of pity, shame, and endless guilt in the characters' psyches and families, which were destroyed due to fear of loss and abandonment, such as Saida's fear of the brutal death of her brother, Masud's fear of shame upon doing the shameful act of his wife, and Salim's fear of rejection as he feels dejected by his parents throughout his life.

To tackle the first research question, the researcher explores the reasons behind the character's traumatic state of mind, which destroyed their personality. The reason behind Salim's traumatic state of mind is the strong rejection by his family. He was unaware of the reason behind his mother's traumatic conditions due to a mysterious hidden past. He strongly felt dejected when he realized his father's absence from home. When his father left, he was seven, too young to form memories of him. His fear of abandonment intensified over time. He recalls his father's smile and gentle laughter and how Salim used to sit on his lap, hug, and listen to a story. He states, "*I don't know if it was lying*

nostalgia or painful proper longing". (p.4). His mother informs him that his father has gone away for a few weeks. He suddenly registers his father's continuous absence because years have passed without his father's return. It makes him anxious.

Salim's condition justifies Caruth's argument that "the shocking and unexpected occurrence of an event causes traumatic neurosis." The sudden disappearance of his father depressed him. He feels disturbed and tormented, as it has worse impacts on his upbringing and mental development. He tries to hide his emotions, but it does not work. His childhood was robbed, and he felt that he had been betrayed. Salim shared a home with his mother, Saida, and her brother, Uncle Amir. The only way to relieve his unresolved emotions was to share his distress with his mother.

When Saida felt that Salim's anxieties were overburdening him and his patience had become unbearable, his mother disclosed that his father did not want them anymore. This statement turned Salim's fears into reality. Salim was dealing with everyday problems and recognizing that something different had occurred in their lives. He has no reason to disbelieve his mother. She reveals the obvious reality in harsh words, turning his feelings against his father. He started to blame his father for ruining his childhood and his mother's life. Salim's mental condition justifies Caruth's argument that "trauma is not a wound of the body, a simple healable event, but an injury inflicted on the mind." Salim despised his mother's sullen silence when she refused to tell him the reason for their separation. Her inability to cope with the situation makes Salim nervous and gradually distresses him. He wants to meet his father to overcome his anxieties. His mother makes him feel that his father is only responsible for ruining their lives, and the condition of his mother does not allow him to discuss his father any further. He could not resist his endless feeling of loss, which cannot be healed.

Salim's experience of guilt and shame is further complicated by his displacement from his homeland and his struggles to assimilate into British society. He feels a sense of dislocation and alienation from both his Zanzibari roots and his adopted British identity. This sense of displacement exacerbates his feelings of guilt and shame as he struggles to reconcile his past actions with his present identity. Subsequently, Caruth's concept of "traumatic neurosis" provides a useful framework for understanding the characters'

experiences in "*Gravel Heart*." Caruth argues that trauma produces an "impossible history" that the individual is unable to acknowledge or process fully (Caruth, 3). The traumatic experience remains unclaimed, and the individual is left with a sense of disconnection and detachment from their past and present selves. This disconnection is reflected in the experiences of Salim and other characters in the novel.

To tackle the second research question, the researcher tends to evaluate Salim's tormented psyche and trace the traumatic aftereffects on his familial relationship. Caruth claims that "victims of traumatic neurosis facing the same condition after a long time cause grave motor symptoms that cause disastrous consequences and disturb the structures of the brain. Salim knew his father had moved to a rented apartment far from their house. She prepares lunch for Masud regularly and asks Salim to share a meal with him. Salim walks in the fierce early afternoon sun to deliver the food basket. He wanted to search for reality to learn what truly happened. He lost all his desires after he lost his family. He was completely out of his senses and disinterested in meeting with his son. Salim understands that something wrong has happened, which is shameful to explain. He narrates his feelings as follows:

"I was ashamed of his abjectness and lethargy because even at the age of seven, I knew how to be ashamed. I could not bear the way people looked at him. I wished my father would disappear without a trace, forever". (p.25).

He was unable to convince his father to stop acting, so defeated that he lost the desire to live and ruined his life. His father's unresolved emotions directly affected Salim's mental development. He still has a soft corner for his father, but his father's appearance is shameful. It elicited intense distress in Salim's personality. He could not restrain his shameful tears while seeing his father's appearance and refused to pass the food basket.

Uncle Amir had a jolly personality, which Salim and his mother adored. He feels fatherly love while living with him. They grew closer after he gave him his favourite toys. After his father left, the house was completely covered in unexpected silence. He finds solace in his uncle's company. He always admires and sometimes envies him. Uncle Amir says that his father is doing something wrong that needs no more attention. Uncle Amir called Masud "*a feeble-minded man*" (p.41). Salim minded Amir's suppressed opinion

about his father and wanted to defend him from disregard, but he was helpless. Whenever Salim visits Masud, his father remains silent, sitting still with folded hands and far-gazing eyes. His peers bully him because of his father. People refer to Salim as the son of a person who went insane, which makes him feel ashamed. He had a fatherly instinct not to reply and meekly turned away with shame. Salim's words illustrate the situation:

"I thought my father was a spineless and defeated man humiliated into silence and craziness, that he had lost his mind or had lost his nerve, and I thought I had an idea why he had turned out like that I thought my father was shameful, the owner of a shameful, useless body, and had shamed himself as well as me." (p. 33)

Masud was in a state of sudden traumatized shock, and he was unable to cope with his unresolved emotions. The state of trauma in Masud was so intense that he was unable to express anything. He was unable to forget the reasons that destroyed his personality. Salim was fourteen years old when his sister Munira was born. When he was told about Munira's father, he was very depressed and envious. It was continuously hitting his mind that his mother had betrayed his father and was having an affair with another person, Hakim. He was annoyed at this heartbreaking news. He could not restrain himself, and he was overwhelmed with negative feelings for her mother. His suppressed anxiety turned into aggression, which made him disobedient and unable to hide his disdain. Salim's condition is also representative of the neurotic symptoms proposed by Caruth. He believed Munira had stolen my mother's love, just as Hakim had stolen my father's love of life. As he narrates:

"Once she sent me out to buy a tin of powdered milk for Munira's feed, and I returned with a can of fly spray...Munira was yelling at her, and I played that prank on her...I carried out various acts of sabotage. I destroyed the fridge, cut the ariel wire for the new TV, and stole or hid anything else that I thought was a gift from his mother's lover." (p. 37)

Salim burst out to Saida, revealing the reason for his Baba's departure. His insensible behaviour was also responsible for the directness of his unanswered questions and his determination to blame his mother. Salim walks from home and returns in the dark; he becomes rebellious. Her actions revealed her inability to cope with the situation. Her tears revealed her anguish. As Salim narrates Saida's helplessness:

"Her eyes were bright and glistening, threatening to spark into a rage or fill with tears. It made me reluctant to ask further questions, although I did, again and again, and she did not speak into a rage...I asked her why Baba did not want us anymore; she sucked in her breath as if I had hit her or else made her hands into fists and turned away, refusing to look at me or give me an answer. It was the time that my mother's unhappiness began. (p.24)

Uncle Amir, now a top diplomat in London, invited him to move there to pursue his education. The offer relieved him because the home environment was so miserable that he could not endure living there with Munira. He left the house because he thought his mother could not do anything about his angry conduct. He wanted to pursue his own choice to study literature, but he set aside his personal desires and complied with his uncle's advice. He could not let go of the events related to his parents in the past, not even after moving. Even after leaving that location, he cannot escape the feeling of panic. Because of what he had done to his mother, he felt guilty. He was missing his mother's love and thought it was perverse to punish her for her betrayals. He was horrified, perplexed, frightened, and confused.

Salim felt guilty and ashamed as a result. He believed he had no freedom to make decisions because he depended on his uncle. It increased the sense of embracing him and blaming his parents for his mental disability. Being his uncle's dependent made him feel ashamed. Aunt Asha's disrespectful treatment caused feelings of repression, and it bothered him mentally. The quiet, empty streets made him nervous, and he started to miss home and feel depressed. Finally, Salim expresses his anger at his lack of interest in business. Neurotic symptoms turned his personality into a vicious one. He left his uncle's home and labelled himself as an ungrateful child. He preferred to live alone to experience a sense of freedom. He had friends from their broken past, whom Uncle called "loafer immigrants" (p. 63). They were depressed and oppressed, just like him. His roommate, Peter, invites his girlfriend, Fran, whose family was also abandoned by her father. It also caused him great distress and reminded him of his traumatic past. Salim felt sympathy for Fran after recalling traumatic thoughts. He narrates:

"Fran put up with their cruelties and did not defend herself, which seemed oddly forbearing. It was as if she knew something I did not know and knew what Peter really meant. It was difficult to be fond of him at such

moments. I wondered if his mockery was to do with his own unspoken shame, and to forestall any suggestion that he had strong feelings for Fran or that he did anything more than tolerate her. We did not talk to each other about intimate pain. We managed those kinds of things on our own." (p.73)

Salim's virginity became unbearable to tolerate, but his past was too disturbing to initiate his future with a woman. This situation also justifies Caruth's argument that "traumatic neurosis is the unwitting reenactment of an event one cannot simply leave behind." He could not resist getting rid of his troubled past. The idea of indulging with women troubles him and reminds him of his parents' broken relationship. He was achy from his parents' absence. He could not shake off the painful longing of his father's unwantedness, his uncle's rage for him, and his mother's conspiracy to get rid of him and marry her lover, which distressed him. He communicated with her mother via letters but could not hear her voice. He never confessed his misbehaviour before his mother, not even in letters. Most of the letters went unsent due to his reluctance and communication gap. Salim's mental illness backs up Caruth's claim that "a sudden, unexpected shock caused fright in the neurotic patient." Salim's misery was deep, and these feelings created fright in him, which continued to haunt him later in nightmares. He had mild panic attacks, and his misery was so deep and tragic. As he narrates his feelings,

"Sometimes I panic when I think I will never see you again and that this is what you want, but then the panic passes, and I return to my labours because there is nothing else, I can do. Sometimes, I hear your voice in the dark. I know it's you, your voice slightly hoarse as if you've just woken up from a nap, but I know it's you." (p. 82)

Caruth's argument that "dreams continue to haunt for survival later on" is backed up by Salim's character. He suffers from nightmares and has become a more traumatic person as a result. He had unknown fears for his mother, and flashbacks directly affected the structure of the brain. As he fears:

"Had he begged in the streets? I am sure he never did that, but I saw him approaching people with outstretched hand, a vivid image that I dreaded recalling and could not dismiss. And I woke up in the middle of the night to the echo of a cry that had escaped me because I feared the self-hurt my mother would inflict on herself in her silent guilt. I must die

... because I have done wrong and cannot put it right." (p. 99).

He became the centre of attraction for an Indian girl named Billie, who shared childhood emotions similar to Salim's. She was the only girl with whom he shared his sorrows and gained sympathy. Despite his strangeness, blackness, and ordinariness, she loves Salim. One day, she declared that she was breaking up with him to maintain family honour and societal norms. He felt a feeling of betrayal, as did his father. The same thing happened to him, which resulted in a traumatic mental state. Her betrayal tormented him. She chose his family over him. He says: *"Once she had made her escape from me, she rejected all my attempts to reach her or be with her again... I felt rejected and misused by this severity."* (p.125). It justified Caruth's argument of a traumatic awakening to the past event. He felt the same distress as his father. His rejection was unbearable for him, and he reminded himself of the depressed condition of his father. He was in a constant state of shock, as evidenced by the following words:

"I felt her rejection as a bodily nausea, a carnal sensation of revulsion and depletion... Even when I cooked, I often could not eat. I could not sleep for longer than two or three hours and then woke up in a misery.... the silence of the flat was oppressive..." (p.128).

Salim addresses his father in his imaginary world and misses him a lot. His solitary walks remind him of his unfriendly treatment. He compares his condition with that of his father and misses him. He still remembers him, and his memory never fades. He recalls his parents' sorrows, which may have caused him to feel a pang of guilt and a stab of grief. As he narrates:

"My father's sadness had hardened over the years, and his silence was impenetrable, and I was too young and did not have the self-assurance to break it. awed by his misery, by his lethargy, by his self-neglect, and I imagined how deep his disappointment at the loss of my mother's love must have been to live like that with such resigned dedication" (p.44)

Salim gathered the courage to converse with his mother but could not hear her. He could not get over the shame. He cares for his family but does not dare to express his love. One day, Uncle Amir calls to inform him that his mother has passed away. Stunned news turned his fears into reality. He only reacted to this news by keeping himself silent. He regretted not mourning her and felt embarrassed not to contact her.

He was speechless with guilt. He waited for so long, but now it was too late. His helplessness was allowing him to treat him with contempt. He could do nothing but regret and feel guilt throughout his life. He returned to his home and met Munira, who was now seventeen. He also received word of his father's return, who had been taken to Kuala Lumpur by his father, Maalim Yahya, when everyone mocked him when Salim migrated to London.

Upon reaching the village, he was received by his sister Munira, who warmly welcomed him. He no longer waits and reaches to meet his father, Masud. He was sitting on a bench, his thin body resting on the ground, reading a newspaper. Masud narrates the untold events and discloses the mysterious past of how his family was destroyed due to unrestrained and limitless love, which turned into disastrous consequences and destroyed family relations. His father, Maalim Yahya, took care of him and helped him recover from his psychic injuries. He had a sensible appearance when meeting Salim and successfully kept himself together. Saida had a brain injury, an embolism, as a result of her trauma, but she never shared it with her son, not even in letters. She was too mortified; she married Hakim to save herself from the shame and give Munira her father's name. She was completely helpless, and her trauma led her towards death. She declared punishment for herself and could not muster the courage to force her husband to come into her life. She was ashamed and met a tragic death. Masud was also completely heartbroken by narrating the story of his troubled past and also died minutes after Salim boarded a flight towards his journey back to London. As Masud narrates,

"Whenever I saw her, I struggled to prevent myself from breaking down with grief. I should have fought for her, but I did not have the strength to overcome those two shameless men who had taken over her life. I was not sure if she even wanted me to try. ... I knew that she had already given me up". (p.208).

Salim was a victim of his parents' past traumas, and due to his parents' inability to control their unresolved emotions, he had deteriorating impacts on his life. He had left with nothing and boarded a plane back to England. Similarly, Salim's uncle Amir embodies the consequences of unclaimed experiences on a larger societal level. As a member of the Zanzibari elite, Amir is complicit in the violence and corruption that plague the island. He embodies the contradictions and complexities of post-colonial identity as he seeks to

balance his loyalty to his country and his family with his complicity in the violence that perpetuates its instability. Uncle Amir's character is depicted as the embodiment of colonized mentalities and has nothing to do with emotions and feelings. Upon hearing the humiliating offer, he pleaded with Saida to yield herself, as it did not matter to him anymore. He is such a vicious character in the novel. He states:

'They will hurt me here, 'he said, pleading. They may keep me here for decades...or worse...even kill me. You don't know how hard that man is; how can it be wrong to save a brother's life? however he thinks of it, you can say that you are doing a noble and courageous thing, saving your brother's life.' (p.205)

As Salim truly narrates about him, Uncle Amir has no time for shame. *It would have seemed like self-pity and selfishness to him, a weakness. He would have turned what sought to shame him into an insult, blustered, and hit out at it as a man should. (p.213)*

In addition, the work accurately depicts the character's emotions and sensations, resulting in an unending sense of guilt and humiliation. The traumatic effects on characters have negative implications. They are unable to save themselves from the guilt-ridden thoughts that have transformed them into neurotic patients and will eventually lead to death. It concentrates on the self-centred activities of Uncle Amir, who are indicative of British colonizers whom one cannot resist and have made into tortured personalities. The characters' helplessness was mirrored in their submissiveness. They do not show concern for the emotions of colonized people.

Conclusion

This research study gradually focused on the research questions while analyzing the selected characters of the novel. The selected novel, *Gravel Heart*, as a post-colonial narrative, emphasizes individuals' inability to resist tyrannical rules, which leads the characters to traumatic conditions and disastrous outcomes. The researcher has explored the traumatic epoch of human lives by focusing on the novel as a portrayal of individual emotions and a tortured psyche. The current study revealed the characters' chaotic and miserable experiences, which led them to ultimate death, utter despair, and loss. The current study examines the causes of the traumatic events that led the characters on an endless journey of guilt and shame.

The central theme of the study is the unremitting sense of culpability and mortification that the researcher explores. The study argues that the characters in the novel experience a perpetual sense of remorse and shame that is linked to their past histories of trauma and violence. The study examines how the characters' attempts to bury their pasts and move on are futile, as their traumatic experiences remain unprocessed and unclaimed. The study highlights the importance of recognizing and addressing past trauma to achieve healing and growth, individually and collectively. Ultimately, the study suggests that "*Gravel Heart*" offers a poignant exploration of trauma's complex and enduring effects on individuals and societies.

The current study examined characters' traumatic inflictions, tortured psyches, and emotional ambivalence. This study also insisted on evaluating the traumatic effects on familial relationships and their inability to cope with unresolved emotions. The selected novel also depicts immigrants' traumatic conditions and sense of longing. It also demonstrated the dependent lives of immigrants. They had to adopt Western ideologies to advance in society and be materialistic. Western rulers are pathetically unconcerned about human emotions. They simply choose to devastate natives' lives.

The first research question deals with the reasons behind Salim's distorted psyche. The findings of the question take a stride towards the worst impacts of colonialism on the natives. Their inability to tackle the powerful government was a true indication of their submissiveness. Saida's inability to show reluctance against the demands of the vice president's son, Hakim, was the main reason for her trauma, which turned her emotions into endless guilt and shame. Her parents' terrible deaths pulled her towards the fear of losing her brother, so she had no choice but to yield herself in front of Hakim until his satisfaction. Masud's feeling of rejection was the main reason for his traumatic condition. He was in sudden despair and stillness, and his silence was terrifying. The state of trauma in Masud was so intense that he was unable to express anything. The reason for Salim's trauma was his lost childhood, his parents' love and the jolly moments of his childhood. He was directly affected by past happenings and his parents' traumas. Caruth's theory aided in tracing the traumatic inflictions on characters and the negative effects on a character's life, resulting in an endless feeling of guilt and shame. Their plight was evidence of the Westerners' devious

intentions, which Gurnah called "plunderers of the human spirit."

The second question of this research deals with Salim's traumatic inflictions and highlights the effects on familial relationships by the selected characters of the novel. The findings of this question deal with Saida's inability to say anything. She was mentally distorted to the point that she had a brain stroke. The unexpected happenings destroyed her psyche and her emotions so much that she could not even have a healthy conversation with her son. She lived alone and unwillingly accepted to marry Hakim to legitimize her relationship with him when she was bearing his child in her womb. Her endless guilt destroyed her mentality, and she could no longer face this trauma and finally died. Masud faced a terrifying kind of trauma as he lost his senses and wandered and roamed on the roads like a neurotic person. He could not even manage to say a word. He accepted a strong rejection and allowed himself to be humiliated into silence. Salim's trauma was his inability to accept his stepsister, and he acted mad and insensible. Thus, in the findings of this research, the researcher evaluated the tortured psyche and emotional ambivalence of the characters.

The findings highlight that parents' mistakes and traumas were directly affecting the life of their child, Salim. Saida could not say a word to her husband due to her guilt over being wrong, and they separated and ultimately died due to a brain stroke. Masud felt humiliated and left himself at the mercy of time. He managed to bear his senses but lived alone in the guilt of his wrong choice to marry Saida. He also died a few days after Saida's death. Salim left for England and decided to never return to his homeland. However, he left readers wondering what happened to Salim. He lost his childhood love and familial comfort and was betrayed by his girlfriend. It left Salim's psyche with unresolved emotions, but he was helpless and did not put anything right.

In contemporary literary studies, psychoanalytic criticism is a contentious topic. This study is significant because it provides a comprehensive view of human nature's traumatic conditions, tortured psyche, and behavioural changes. The current study is significant because it draws attention to modified perspectives on literary trauma theory. Aside from that, the study focuses on the concept of trauma theory, which renowned theorist Cathy Caruth advocates. This study also paved the way for future research by looking at trauma theory from various perspectives.

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