



**LIVING IN A TRANSITIONAL ZONE: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF
DIASPORIC CULTURAL IDENTITY IN ABDULRAZAK GURNAH'S *GRAVEL
HEART***

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Abstract

This research conducts a Critical Discourse Analysis of diasporic cultural identity in Abdulrazak Gurnah's Gravel Heart, conceptualizing diaspora as life in a transitional zone shaped by displacement, silence, and negotiated belonging. Using Fairclough's three-dimensional model, the research analyzes textual features, discursive practices, and socio-historical contexts to understand how language creates diasporic subjectivity in postcolonial Zanzibar and in metropolitan Britain. The novel unveils the intersection of individual trauma with colonial histories, migration policies, and family politics to form discontinuous identities that do not lend themselves to assimilation and rooted-ness. Discourses of exile, memory, secrecy and authority are depicted to control belonging and at the same time allow instances of resistance and self-fashioning. The paper claims that Gurnah disrupts the essentialist conceptions of culture and identity by presenting the concept of diaspora as a dynamic and ongoing process instead of a state. Placing Gravel Heart in the context of postcolonial and diasporic discussions, the article shows how literary discourse reveals the invisible processes of power inherent in migration, home, and cultural difference discourses, in the world today.

Keywords: Diaspora, Cultural Identity, Transitional Zone, Critical Discourse Analysis, Postcolonial Literature

Introduction

Migration and displacement are the norms of social and cultural existence especially among the subjects who started to appear in the post-colonial world. Diaspora is no longer seen as a simple physical movement across the national boundaries but as a complicated, continuing process that redefines identity, memory, language, and belonging. In the case of diasporic people, the construction of identity in a transitional zone, a state that can be termed as a liminal space, is situated between the homeland and the hostland, the past and the present, the belonging and alienation. This is an unstable, hybrid, and negotiable zone in which subjects have to continually trade off between conflicting cultural, political and historical forces. Literature provides a critical platform on which these tensions can be dealt with and writers can give voice to the silenced voices of displacement and reveal the power dynamics of migration stories.

Postcolonial literature has been instrumental in challenging the legacies of colonialism that still linger and define the lives of the diaspora. The uneven migration patterns, racialized hierarchies, and economic disparities that result due to colonial histories are informing the modern migration. Consequently, the diasporic identities are hardly neutral or free will; they are organized in terms of institutional restrictions, cultural marginalization and historical trauma. In such a context, language is a vehement place of conflict, because it mediates



access to belonging, authority and self-representation. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offers a practical analytical perspective to the study of the operation of such power relations in literary texts, and demonstrates how discourse creates, normalizes or challenges the dominant ideologies.

The aforementioned issues constitute the bulk of Abdulrazak Gurnah's writings. Being a Zanzibari diasporic writer in Britain, Gurnah has addressed the issues of exile, memory, silence, and divided belonging. His fiction is opposing the celebratory or romanticized versions of diaspora and its focus on the emotional costs and ethical complexities. *Gravel Heart* is an example of this method because the novelist describes the life of a protagonist who was formed by the secrets of the family, the political persecution, and the consequences of the colonial rule in Zanzibar. The novel follows the journey of the main character through a troubled country to Britain, but the immigration fails to solve his feelings of dislocation, instead, it brings new types of marginalization, cultural alienation, and identity crisis.

This research explores *Gravel Heart* as a discursive arena where individual experience engages with larger socio-historical dynamics. The analysis of language, narrative structure, and representational strategies in the construction of the diasporic cultural identity is discussed by using the three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis, which includes textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice (Fairclough). Special emphasis is made on discourses of silence, exile, memory, and authority, both as processes of control and as the arenas of resistance. The discourses demonstrate the influence of institutional authority, family patterns, and colonial heritage on the subjectivity of the main character in the transitional space of diaspora. Moreover, *Gravel Heart* questions homogenous conceptions of cultural identity because it portrays diaspora as a process of contested and incomplete identification as opposed to the status quo. The theme of identity in the novel is created in a way of negotiation, contradiction, and tension, which is an indication of the fluctuating realities of diasporic life. Placing the novel in the framework of postcolonial and diasporic theory, this research shows the importance of CDA in the analysis of literature and how *Gravel Heart* reveals how power operates in a sophisticated way in the migration, home, and belonging discourses. By so doing, the research adds to the current academic debates on the topic of diaspora, cultural liminality, and the politics of representation in the postcolonial literature.

Literature Review

“Critical Discourse is basically an analytical research technique which examines the way social power abuse or dominates. In Critical Discourse Analysis, the word critical is self-explanatory which discourse the hidden ideology and social power” (Kiren & Awan, p. 484). The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an academic practice that examines the language as a form of social practice that is integrated in the past and current social orders. It is interested in how discourse is involved in constituting, maintaining and disrupting individual and collective social processes. The investigation of ideology and power, particularly the way power relations are conducted in the personal and societal levels of using language is one of the most crucial elements of CDA. CDA analyzes how social action and identities of people are constructed and represented through verbal and textual means of discourse. It is also concerned with the dynamic interaction between the text and the society that is, how language reflects and also influences structure patterns in the society. In this point of view, CDA aims to reveal the power structure and ideological position, social locations of individuals and groups that are tacitly present or unchallenged in everyday communication.



Applying the Critical Discourse Analysis by Fairclough, Asadu et al. (2022) argue that the language used by Okri reveals the forms of power, violence, and inequality and legitimizes magic thinking as a social reality of life. The issue of postcolonial identity has been a major issue in the African literary criticism, especially in the works that have been created by countries that are characterized by political instabilities and social unrest. *The Famished Road* captures Nigeria's postcolonial identity crisis through the abiku motif, which symbolically reflects cyclical history, fractured nationhood, and existential uncertainty. Through forming an African consciousness, Okri restores Nigerian identity by uniting political struggle with spiritual meaning.

Masroor et al. (2024) use the Critical Discourse Analysis to discuss *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid to preempt the displacement as a traumatic postcolonial speech. Their qualitative-descriptive work places Nadia and Saeed in the role of representative refugee characters whose forced immigration is indicative of modern day circumstances of proxy wars, insecurity and trauma. The researchers demonstrate power relations, xenophobia, and nativist anxieties as the factors that construct experiences of refugees in the host societies. The dystopian world of the novel relates to the real-life situation of exile caused by war and points to profound social, emotional, and psychological outcomes of the displacement in a postcolonial society.

Kristianto and Wahyuni (2022) explore how identity crisis has been portrayed in the movie *Minari* using the Critical Discourse Analysis to analyze the experiences of Korean diasporas in the United States. They conduct their investigation on the main character, Jacob, whose identity crisis arises as a result of intercultural exposure, pressure of migration, and family demands. They show that identity crisis is expressed in discursive practices, non-discursive actions, and materialized discourse. The main trigger of identity conflict is immigration, and the symbol of minari represents survival and adjustment, which is the final realization of Jacob with his broken diasporic identity.

Gravel Heart by Gurnah has drawn a lot of scholarly interests due to its discussion of the diaspora, displacement and postcolonial identity. Goh (2017) praises the novel due to its refined prose and delicate treatment of the topics of immigration, family disruption, and memory between Zanzibar and London, asserting that the formal structure of the novel is standardized and that there are even cliché moments, but Gurnah has managed to portray alienation, cultural alienation, and the long-term consequences of being a stranger, silent, and unable to belong. Literary trauma theory, as presented by Unal (2022) emphasizes the long-term psychological traumas caused by colonial and postcolonial legacies, presenting post-revolution Zanzibar and post-revolution London as locations of material and spiritual plundering, with Salim, his exile, his shame, and his fragmentation being described through fragmented narrative voices, repetition, haunting, and allusion, as reflecting the neurobiological and disruptive aspects of trauma. Al Areqih (2022) uses a psychoanalytic approach to study the inner world of Salim and highlights early childhood trauma, family secrets, and abandonment as the factors that contribute to his low self-esteem and social alienation and demonstrates how unresolved shame, inferiority, and fear of intimacy cause him to feel that he does not belong in the world. Bhuyan (2025) extends the analysis to both gender and power, claiming that the sexual relationships in the novel are a reflection of the larger structures of oppression, and the disrupted storytelling reveals the voices of the silenced, the power of the patriarch and the effect of the political instability and colonial legacies on intimate relations, and citing Gurnah as a critic that sexuality, power, and identity



are all too closely intertwined in postcolonial societies. Likewise, Soni and Singh (2025) emphasize identity fragmentation and the loss of belonging by portraying Salim's migration to London, indicating that place-bound identity is disrupted during processes of displacement and globalization; the postmodern fragmentation of identity in the narrative reflects the instability of the self and the inability to find a grounding point, which illustrates how Gurnah recreates the experiences of the community while negotiating exile, loss, and the search for grounding. Together, these analyses indicate that *Gravel Heart* is a multifaceted examination of the issues of diasporic identity, postcoloniality, and psychosociality, predetermining the interactions of historical, family, and individual forces in forming identity.

Despite the theme of diaspora, trauma, and postcolonial identity being covered in *Gravel Heart*, majority of the studies discuss the themes separately and seldom explore how the diasporic cultural identity is created using the discourse and narrative strategies. The current literature does not consider how the colonial legacies, migration, and power relations influence the sense of belonging, marginalization, and cultural hybridity. This gap can be filled with the help of a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach that will present the way identity is negotiated and produced through the interaction of personal, familial, and historical forces in postcolonial literature.

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This research is based on the combined theory of the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) suggested by Fairclough and the postcolonial theory in order to analyze the formation of the diasporic cultural identity in the novel *Gravel Heart* by Abdulrazak Gurnah. The framework conceptualizes identity as a discursively constructed and historically situated and constantly negotiated process, formed by colonial legacies, migration and displacement.

Central to research is a three-dimensional model of CDA by Norman Fairclough that conceives discourse as a type of social practice functioning on the text, discursive, and social levels. “[CDA] entails working in a ‘transdisciplinary’ way through dialogue with other disciplines and theories which are addressing contemporary processes of social change” (Fairclough, 2012, p. 452). model allows one to analytically examine how language produces and reflects social realities in a systematic way. It is a “realist social ontology, which regards both abstract social structures and concrete social events as parts of social reality” (Fairclough, 2012, p. 452). At the textual level, the study concentrates on linguistic options, narrative voice, metaphor, stylistic devices, and silences in which the experiences of exile, memory, alienation and cultural hybridity are expressed in *Gravel Heart*. The level of discursive practice focuses on textual production and interpretation processes, such as the narrative perspective, intertextuality and the interaction of the novel with the postcolonial and migration discourses. At social practice level, the story is framed within the framework of wider sociohistorical and political influences, including colonialism, postcolonial political violence, migration and family dynamics, which define diasporic subjectivities..

The postcolonial theory is used to complement CDA, because it predicts the long-lasting social, cultural, and political impact of colonialism and imperialism especially in the former colonies of the Global South. Postcolonialism deals with the issue of criticism of colonial power, the unveiling of Eurocentrism, and the analysis of the current problems of the disadvantaged groups that experience cultural dislocation, inequality, and political dominance (Sharma, 2024; Qasim et al., 2024). The postcolonial has become less time-geographically centered and encompassed a variety of non-European locations and focused on decentering Europe by critiquing Eurocentric knowledge regimes (Albrecht, 2019). Developed in part as a



response to the shortcomings of Western critical paradigms, postcolonial theory offers the instruments of analysis which are more appropriate to deal with the cultural heterogeneity and socio-political complexity of the postcolonial literature (Ashcroft, 2001). It also acknowledges anti-colonial movements as one of its key contributors of its political and intellectual roots (Rukundwa & Van Aarde, 2007).

“The question of identity remains a controversial issue of post colonialism” (Asadu et al., 2022, p. 106). Postcolonial identity is perceived as dynamic and changing as opposed to fixed and essentialized. Since the formerly colonized people and communities face the histories of oppression, reclaiming the suppressed voices, and re-negotiating their role in the modern world, identity continues to be in the constant state of flux (Hassan and Qasim, 2025). This notion is consistent with the diaspora theory that takes identity as the fluid and relational and influenced by the historical discontinuity and the cultural shift. Hall’s (1990) notion of cultural identity as a process of *becoming rather than being* illuminates the fragmented and evolving selfhood depicted in *Gravel Heart*, where identity is shaped by memory, loss, and difference rather than stable cultural inheritance.

One of the main postcolonial theories that will be used in this research is the theorization of hybridity, liminality, and the Third Space by Homi K. Bhabha. Bhabha (1994) defines hybridity as an active and continual process that is created between unequal power relations between the colonizer and the colonized. This is what makes the hard colonial binaries unstable and questions ideas of cultural purity, showing identity as contingent and unstable. Hybridity is therefore a critical approach that interferes with mainstream colonial discourse and reveals the artificiality of cultural identity (Al-Qassab, 2025). Hybridity is closely connected with such notions as mimicry and ambivalence where the colonized imitate the language and the customs of the colonizer partially. Although the purpose of mimicry is acceptance, its incompleteness creates slippages, which undermine colonial authority and reveal its contradictions (Hassan and Qasim, 2025).

Such dynamics meet in the concept of the ‘Third Space’ of enunciation by Bhabha that provides a discursive space of in-betweenness where hybrid identities are continuously being formed and cultural meanings are being renegotiated. ‘The Third Space’ is a kind of transitional zone where definitive cultural meanings are destabilized, and novel forms of belonging are created. “It deconstructs the binary of the self and the other, the colonizer and the colonized, or the East and the West” (Bhandri, 2022, p. 171). The concept of diasporic identity is expressed through this Third Space in *Gravel Heart* as an in-between formation which is created by displacement, cultural negotiation and opposition to dominant discourses. The collective identities, such as diasporic and national identities, are therefore perceived as hybrid constructions that occur due to the continuous process of interaction, adaptation, and contestation (Bhandari, 2022).

In a nutshell, the selected critical framework offers the opportunity to analyze the linguistic practices as a whole when combining CDA, postcolonial theory, and the theory of diaspora to connect the linguistic practices with historical, political, and ideological organizations. It shows how the diasporic cultural identity in *Gravel Heart* is not represented in isolation but rather discursively created using language, narrative practices, and sociohistorical circumstances, which makes the diasporic subject exist in a state of constant flux, negotiation and becoming.

Textual Analysis



Gravel Heart addresses the problem of immigration through foregrounding the psychological and emotional turmoil of the diasporic subjects, the citizens of transitional spaces, who live between the home and the host cultures. The character of Salim is used by Abdulrazak Gurnah to portray the aspect of diaspora not as an achieved process of settling down but as a long process of being in-between, where belonging is never completed and identity is always in a state of flux. When analyzed through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the story of Salim reveals how language, memory and metaphor create a diasporic subjectivity in the colonial and postcolonial discourses, which are power-laden. His move to London places him in an intermediate place where cultural belonging, racialized difference and historical displacement overlap. The journey of Salim does not only mean physical moving but continuous discursive bargaining of fragmented identity and cultural displacement because of colonial inheritance. Gurnah (2017) introduces migration as a process of continuous negotiation of identity that is not stabilized but is continuously renegotiated as a psychological and ideological process. Even though Salim is literally taken out of Zanzibar, his psychological and cultural connections are still deeply rooted in the past, which does not allow him to be fully integrated into the host community. London becomes a threatening and foreign discursive place, which can be seen by the fact that when Salim questions himself: “I allowed this resolution to overcome the slight feeling of panic I sensed at the edge of my mind. What was I doing here?” (Gurnah, 2017, p. 59). This statement shows a dichotomy between the will and confusion, which demonstrates the instability of the diasporic subjectivity in the transitional spaces of migration.

Gurnah (2017) portrays psychological dislocation by fragmented sense of self of Salim which is worsened by the lack of belonging in the new country and an extremely ambivalent relationship with his father. The father figure represents a generation caught between the Zanzibari precolonial and the colonial modernity, which is disrupted by the colonial past, and how the colonial past breaks colonial families and cultures. These discontinuities unstable Salim making him incapable of accepting inherited cultural values with the social truths of England. This alienation of the existential world is expressed when Salim recalls, “the city despised me, [and I felt] as if [I] were a tiresome and timorous child who had wandered unwelcome out of the dust and rubble of his puny island ... where boldness and greed and swagger were required for survival” (Gurnah, 2017, p. 61). London is also constructed discursively to be a hostile world, inhabited by power, materialism and exclusion through the use of language metaphorically and it supports Salim as being marginal in the host society socio-cultural hierarchy. Salim’s repeated reference to “someone like me into the life of Europe” (Gurnah, 2017, p. 59), is a sign of his extreme consciousness of difference and otherness based on race. Through the prism of CDA lens, such lexical decisions indicate the ideological frames that govern belonging and institutionalize exclusion. In this regard, identity is created through discourses that signify the diasporic subject as always external. The sensory estrangement captured in “the overbearing shrillness of the strange air” (Gurnah, 2017, p. 61) also represents the fact that Salim cannot adjust himself to the cultural beats of London, even the surroundings seem hostile to him. Such linguistic formations predict the psychological expenses of displacement and internalization of marginalization in transitional areas.

The long-term emotional impact of displacement is also stressed by Gurnah (2017) as Salim constantly feels the yearning to be in his native country that has already disappeared in its original shape. His mobility between England and Zanzibar does not lead to any resolution



but rather contributes to the instability since neither of the spaces provides a safe feeling of belonging. The oscillation is an indication of the postcolonial diasporic situation whereby the subjects are still in a suspended state between two worlds of culture. This fragmentation is increased by the fact that Salim recognizes the paternal rejection early on in his life: “My father did not want me...” (Gurnah, 2017, p. 3). This autobiographical trauma is similar to the postcolonial experience of loss, silence, and disconnection as a whole caused by historical violence and colonial disruption.

Memory is an important discursive location in the novel, which facilitates the construction of identity and culture. Salim reflects, “I had taken a little bit after him in shape and complexion. [Which] connected me to people and events that my father’s silence had cut me off from” (Gurnah, 2017, p. 14). Here is one of the instances when memory allows one to belong and at the same time, alienates. The non-linear narrative form of the novel, which is characterized by changes of time and disjointed memories, reflects the fractured identity of Salim and supports the concept of diaspora as a state of discontinuity and unclear pasts. The introduction of the other voices, especially the narration of Uncle Amir, expands the discursive discussion of the generational memory, silence, and the legacy of the colonial rupture.

The novel is a compelling dramatization of the changing sense of diasporic consciousness by way of the life of Salim who migrates to London thereby placing him in a transition zone characterized by constant liminality. His experience as an immigrant is an expression of the postcolonial subject negotiating his way of belonging in a space that is organised by cultural alienation, racial hierarchies, and asymmetries of power historically enshrined in power. In a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach, the story of Salim shows the way language mediates this struggle, which creates a diasporic identity as a flux, tentative, and in a state of constant negotiation instead of being determined. Migration is not a direct movement towards encompassment but a continuous process of psychological and discursive displacement. Salim admits it, “London terrified me so much. The streets confused me... The buses and taxis and cars roared past...” (Gurnah, 2017, p. 61), expresses not only the cultural disorientation, but also another level of existential anxiety associated with the sense of displacement. The excessive sensorial images are discursively working to create the host city as an unfriendly and repressed place. This linguistic surplus may be interpreted through CDA as a form of revealing how urban space is ideologically coded in such a way that the immigrant body is marginalized, resulting in fear, vulnerability and alienation. The fact that Salim felt that “the city despised me as if I were a tiresome and timorous child...” (Gurnah, 2017, p. 61) anticipates the struggle of the postcolonial immigrant to be recognized in the metropolis centre. The metaphor infantilizes the migrant subject, reinforcing power relations that position him as inferior, out of place, and culturally deficient. This definition of alienation echoes postcolonial critiques of marginalization whereby diasporic subjects are still identified as outsiders even though they are physically present in the imperial core. The fact that Salim continually refers to London as this place is also a discursive device of distance within the sense of refusing to or incapable of internalizing the host culture as a place to belong. Language, in this case, is also a central location of identity forming, and we can see how it is through discourses of exclusion and otherness that diasporic subjectivity is created. With these linguistic devices, Gurnah (2017) reveals ideological limits that govern the inclusion in the host society. The feeling of alienation that Salim has experienced over time also portrays the psychological and cultural division that migration generated. His letters



to his mother serve as discursive spaces of memory and emotional refuge which allow him to express vulnerability that is otherwise unpronounceable in the host society. His remark that it is “better than struggling with all those people on the buses or the underground” (Gurnah, 2017, p. 63) means more than social uneasiness; it is a withdrawal strategic in the face of an alien social order. The London mob is further transformed into the symbolic representation of cultural otherness, further enhancing the marginal status of Salim in the transitional space of the diaspora. This withdrawal highlights the negotiation between self-preservation and adaptation that the diasporic subject carries, which is the main theme of postcolonial identity formation.

Gurnah (2017) also illustrates identity crisis by showing that Salim is constantly obsessed with memory and nostalgia. His recollection of mundane details, such as “how it used to take me ten minutes to ride to school” (Gurnah, 2017, p. 63), serves as a discursive marker that helps him feel connected to a lack of cultural continuity. But these memories as well keep him in the past so that he cannot fully experience the present. Nostalgia therefore works in a two-sided fashion, as a comforter and a restraint, the state of the diaspora in being caught between loss and desire. The fact that Salim admits that “I am scared of the press of people” (Gurnah, 2017, p. 63), symbolically describes the stresses of assimilation and the fear of losing their culture in the foreign land. The press of people can be interpreted through CDA as indicative of the norms of belonging that are coercive and threatening to take over the migrant self.

Even though Salim slowly understands that to survive, he has to adapt, that he should “work out the way... [and learn] to live [in the host country]” (Gurnah, 2017, p. 65), this motion does not solve his identity crisis. Rather, it affirms the ambivalence of the diasporic life, in which accommodation is accompanied by acculturation, loss, and discomfort. Gurnah (2017) further develops this investigation with the living conditions of African immigrants as a community and depicts the shared space as a diasporic microcosm. These shared spaces are transitional spaces in which fragmented identities that are constructed through nostalgia, economic precarity, and cultural displacement meet. *Gravel Heart*, through the experiences of Salim, is eventually the cultural identity of diaspora that is dynamic, hybrid, and unsettled: it is created in the liminal spaces where memory, displacement and adaptation meet under the long-lived influence of colonial pasts. From a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, the novel exposes the ideological forces that dictate belonging in postcolonial migration situations by showing how diasporic identity is constructed in language, metaphor, and the structure of narration.

Gurnah (2017) foreshadows the intricacies of the cultural identity formation in a postcolonial, diasporic environment through the experiences of Salim, who is physically there, in the West, but symbolically connected to his homelands. Diasporic identity in the novel is in flux, which is determined by conflicting cultural discourses and the inability to belong entirely. Although the postcolonial migrants can use Western ways of living and customs, they are still discursively described by their roots. The result of this tension left in the air places them in a state of continual liminality, neither of the homeland nor the host country. According to a Critical Discourse Analysis, identity is not a fixed identity but a discursive construction that is generated when power relations, historical memory and social exclusion play their roles. The encounters of Salim in Zanzibar and England are a representation of the disorienting effects of colonialism and modernization, and the fixed adherence of his father to Zanzibar and its traditional values are a representation of a precolonial past that was not easily



changed. This generational struggle brings out the complexity of identity formation within a postcolonial world that is shattered by colonialism. Born during the dissolution of conventional forms, Salim finds himself caught between two mutually exclusive worlds, one in which he can not possibly be wholly integrated and the other in which his father is clung to the past in a culture that is becoming more and more out of touch with the present day. Salim is also afraid of losing culture as his resistance to exile shows. Faced with the possibility of migrating, he says, “This was my country... I would stay here and wait for life to return” (Gurnah, 2017, p. 184). This statement is discursively employed as a form of resistance in which Salim is desiring to remain part of the past despite historical disruption. Yet his family’s eventual resignation exposes the emotional toll of displacement and the fragmentation of familial bonds under postcolonial disillusionment.

Following the fluidity of the diasporic identity, Gurnah (2017) follows how Salim gradually and reluctantly adapts to life in London and it shows identity to be a process and not a state. Salim learns “to live in London ... not to feel desolate at hostile stares and walk purposefully” (Gurnah, 2017, p. 66). He also learns “to live with the cold and dirt” and to evade hostility at college (p. 66). Such incidents depict how diasporic subjectivity is created by way of daily interactions with space, language, and social power, which is consistent with the idea of discourse as social practice developed by Fairclough. Adaptation in this case does not mean belonging but it is a survival mechanism in a hostile social environment. Regardless of such adjustments, the adaptation of Salim is not complete and full of fear. He admits his continued dread of “the silent empty streets at night” and his instinctive avoidance of groups of people (Gurnah, 2017, p. 66). These textual elements predict the psychological aspect of displacement, in which vigilance replaces security and survival replaces belonging. The constant looks of interest and judgement help Salim to be conscious of himself as a stranger, and this is a reminder that discursive activity in the host society is always a reminder that he is different. His identity construction is therefore made in a transitional space that is more influenced by exclusion than acceptance. The description of Salim also demonstrates the extensive influence of dislocation on the self, both family and culture. The identity of Salim appears as a result of the conflict between the cultural heritage inherited and the need to meet the requirements of the colonial and postcolonial modernity. The loss of continuity of cultural heritage in the motherland and the disorienting demands of the host nation add to the disunified state of the postcolonial identity. Here, hybridity is not an empowering factor but rather an uncertain factor. The life of Salim is a classic example of an in-between state, of identity that is in the process of negotiation but never completely fixed.

Language has been used as one of the key discursive indicators of the displacement of Salim. He recalls learning “to cope with English that was broken and wrong” (Gurnah, 2017). Here the novelist shows the inadequacy of language as a survival strategy and as a marker of non-belonging. In terms of CDA, language in this case is an ideological frontier, which controls the accessibility to social legitimacy and supports hierarchies of belonging. Salim’s adaptation, therefore, is less an embrace of integration than an act of endurance, underscoring the muted resilience and alienation that characterize the postcolonial immigrant experience. In college, the expectations of failure by peers further situate him in racialized and cultural hierarchies of devaluing immigrant subjectivities that reveal the perpetuation of marginalization by institutional discourses. Gurnah (2017) builds upon this criticism by the character of Uncle Amir, whose disdain of immigrants is an internalized colonialism. The fact that Amir accuses Salim “to spend [his] time with those immigrant loafers” (Gurnah,



2017, p. 76) shows how stigmatizing discourses are propagated even among the diasporic communities, recreating exclusion and otherness. This labeling reveals the use of power in the language to control identity and belonging.

Three years later, Salim writes to his mother after being in London, and the letters indicate a change of attitude towards reflexive self-awareness instead of resolution. He reflects, “I have worked hard and learnt a great deal... about myself and about other people... I have learnt that I am timid and cautious” (Gurnah, 2017, p. 93). This point marks a transition toward perception and not resolution: identity is rebuilt through living, fear, and survival and not retrieved by the past. His self-realization changes in line with the conception of identity. With the learning of Salim to locate himself relative to diverse and frequently conflicting systems of meaning, identity takes the form of fluidity, relationality and negotiation in what Bhabha (1994) says is the third space, in which cultural meanings are constantly being reenacted. Salim is even more alienated intellectually, which also contributes to his state of the diasporic liminality. He admits, “Some of the material I was asked to read estranged me... I was caught between admiration and contempt” (Gurnah, 2017), which shows the incongruence between the hegemonic colonial knowledge and the realities of the postcolonial subject. This estrangement in the view of Critical Discourse Analysis reveals how academic and institutional discourses are biased towards Eurocentric epistemologies, which places the diasporic learner as a consumer and critic of knowledge that both draws him and leaves him out at the same time. The involvement of Salim in these texts turns out to be a place of ideological struggle, with respect to intellectual authority and anger at its closure. His figurative explanation of identity as a maze accentuates the ambiguity of negotiating cultural memory, family bonding, and displacement. This visuality does not define identity as a forward movement but rather as a disordered process that is influenced by uncertainty and fragmentation. Salim reflects, “I loved the feeling of belonging and being one of many” (Gurnah, 2017, p. 178). This statement foreshadows the sense of emotional loss that informs his diasporic life. The role of memory in this case is discursive in that it serves as a source of solitude and a recollection of irreparable dissatisfaction. Gurnah (2017) uses the broken mind of Salim to symbolize diasporic cultural identity as something unsteady, mixed up, and in constant motion. Living in an intermediate space between the homeland and the host culture, Salim is the symptom of psychological, cultural, and discursive conflicts created by the postcolonial displacement. His experiences confirm diasporic identity as a solution but not as a synthesis but rather as a struggle and a process of constant renegotiation, which is predetermined by the power, memory, and historical inequality.

Conclusion

This research has discussed the *Gravel Heart* by Abdulrazak Gurnah using a Critical Discourse Analysis to show how the cultural identity of the diaspora is made in the areas of transitional zones created by the influence of colonial past and present power dynamics. The novel, through the experiences of Salim, is a diaspora not as a solved movement of belonging but as a persistent state of liminality where identity is always thrown away and is constantly in a state of flux and negotiation. Linguistic estrangement, spatial alienation, intellectual dislocation, and memory are identified as some of the critical sites of discursivity in which exclusion and selfhood are produced and how dominant social and institutional discourses control belonging by objectifying the postcolonial subject as always other. The conflict between generations and internalized hierarchies in the novel reveals how colonial dislocation breaks the continuity of cultures and makes hybridity not a source of



empowerment but uncertainty. Finally, *Gravel Heart* predicts diasporic identity as a contentious and active process by stating that postcolonial subjectivity is not determined by assimilation or repatriation but by ongoing negotiation in liminalities where history, power, and displacement intersect.

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