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Gender categories and the configuration of space in a multicultural society: A reading of Abduralzak Gurnah's paradise

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ABSTRACT

This work, entitled “Gender Categories and the Configuration of Space in a Multicultural Society: A Reading of Abdulrazak Gurnah’s *Paradise*”, examines the disparate gender categories evident in *Paradise*, how they relate with each other and their struggles for reassertion in a multicultural context. Thus, the study identifies and classifies various gender expressions under three categories, viz gender binary, gender variance and gender fluid. It proceeds to bring out conflicts that arise as a result of non-conformists behaviour and patriarchal domination. Finally, it demonstrates how those who are marginalised or stigmatised can redefine themselves by creating a space in which they can express their gender identities freely. In view of the above, this work is predicated on the contention that human discrepancies create disparities between genders, thus necessitating the quest for a new space. The work also proves that the growing ambivalence in the concept of gender is deeply rooted in our Cameroonian classrooms. Written against the backdrop of the postcolonial and gender theories, the work concludes that in the gender continuum there exist other gender categories. These other categories, though absurd, are bound to exist because of diversity in cultures. Hence people need to be knowledgeable about this, and develop behaviours which will not degenerate into conflict, when confronted with such absurd categories.

RÉSUMÉ

Ce travail qui s'intitule « Gender categories and the configuration of space in a Multicultural Society : A Reading of Abdulrazqk Gurnah's *Paradise* » identifie la disparité entre les catégories du genre dans le roman *Paradise* ; comment elles sont liées les unes aux autres et leur lutte pour s'affirmer dans un contexte multiculturel. Ainsi, ce travail identifie et classe les expressions variées de genre en trois catégories : genre binaire, genre variante et genre fluide. Il va plus loin pour examiner les conflits qui se soulèvent suite aux comportements non-conformistes et à la domination patriarcale. En définitive, ce travail montre comment les personnes ou les apprenants qui appartiennent aux catégories du genre marginalisé ou stigmatisé peuvent se réaffirmer et créer un espace dans lequel ils peuvent exprimer leur identité de genre librement. Cette étude est basée sur l'hypothèse selon laquelle les différences humaines créent des disparités entre les genres, nécessitant la quête d'un nouvel espace. Elle montre aussi que ces différentes catégories de genres sont présentes dans nos salles de classes au Cameroun. Utilisant la théorie postcoloniale, la théorie du genre et la méthodologie pratique, ce travail arrive à la conclusion que, dans le genre continuum, il existe d'autres catégories de genre qui sont différents et s'opposent aux catégories existantes. Il est donc nécessaire de redéfinir le genre et de recréer un espace où les gens pourraient vivre sans conflit.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my husband and children.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this work, entitled “Gender Categories and the Configuration of Space in a Multicultural society”: A Reading of Abdulrazak Gurnah’s *Paradise*, is written by Harriete Fri Achoanoh, in view of obtaining a Postgraduate Teacher’s Diploma (DIPES II) in English.

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INTRODUCTION

The notion of gender for some time had enjoyed a unique definition mostly viewed from a cultural perspective. Every culture adheres to its own notion of gender roles and relationships. However, the process of globalization and differences in culture has made interdependence a crucial factor in contemporary human relationships thus bringing people of varied backgrounds together. As a result of this, the concept has received varied interpretations which are significantly different from its traditional notion and interpretation. Our cultural beliefs dictate that there are only two biological sexes corresponding to two genders. Moreover, males are expected to have masculine identification roles and are to be attracted to women. In the same light, females in turn are expected to have gender identification roles of women, and are to be attracted to men. These two models are thus considered as the norm, and any other combination of biological sex, gender, and sexuality is commonly considered unnatural or pathological (Mintz O'Neil, 145).

We are surrounded by gender lore from time immemorial. It is ever-present in conversation, humor and conflict. It is called upon to explain everything we do, from driving styles to food preferences. Gender is embedded thoroughly in our institutions, actions, beliefs, and our desires. The world swamps with ideas about gender, and these ideas are so common that we take it for granted that they are true; accepting common adage as scientific fact. As scholars and researchers, it is our job to look beyond what appears to be common knowledge and to find not what truth might be behind, and how it came to be common knowledge. This is precisely because gender seems natural, and beliefs about it seem to be obvious truths. Due to this, it might be important to step back, and examine it from a new perspective. But doing this requires that we suspend what we are used to and what feels comfortable, and question some of our fundamental beliefs. This too is not going to be easy because gender is so central to the understanding of ourselves and the world that it is difficult to pull back and examine it from new perspectives.

Gender seems self-evident, and this makes its studies interesting. It brings the challenge to uncover the process of construction. It creates what we have so long thought of as natural and inexorable – to study gender not as given, but as an accomplishment; not simply a cause, but as effect; and not just as individual, but as social. The results of failure to recognize these challenges are manifest not only in the popular media, but in academic

works on language and gender as well. As a result, some gender scholars do as much to reify and support existing beliefs and promote more reflective and informed thinking about gender.

Studies in gender, and gender related issues, including multiculturalism have over years (and most recently) focused on the origin, evolution, and the growing ambivalence of the concept. The deceptive historical assumptions about the biological reality of gender, and the contemporary certainty that gender categories is nothing but a socio-cultural concept, has made it an enigma. Gender is not something we are born with, or something we have, but something we do (West and Zimmerman 86) –something we perform (Butler 55). This controversy brings about the discrepancies between masculinity and femininity, and its resulting consequences as portrayed in different cultural settings. With this in mind, gender analysis recognizes that women and men lives, their experiences, needs, issues, and priorities are different; that women's lives are not all the same; the interests that women have in common may be determined as much by their social position, or cultural identity; and that different strategies may be necessary to achieve equitable outcomes for women and men, and different groups of women. Gender analysis aims to achieve equity rather than equality. Gender equality is based on the premise that women and men should be treated in the same way. This fails to recognize that equal treatment will not produce equitable results. This is because women and men have different experiences. Gender equity recognizes that different approaches may be needed to produce equitable outcomes according to diverse cultures thus producing multicultural people. Multicultural human beings are not just those who have embraced multiple identities (a phenomenon that questions the veracity of national identity to its idealism); there are also those who are products of multiple cultures, such that they cannot fit into any straight jacket definition of their cultural identity, in relation to their gender. (Multiculturalism and the Politics of Gender 125). Because of this controversy, they are obliged to strive for reassertion.

Abdulrazak Gurnah, a Zanzibari writer, is predisposed with issues about gender, identity and displacement, and how they are shaped by the legacies of colonialism and slavery. Gurnah divides his time between Zanzibar and England: contexts which set the tone, define the themes, and the narrative techniques of his works. From his works, it is evident that the Zanzibaris are dear to Gurnahs creative mind. This dearness is anchored on the fact that all of Gurnah's eight novels – *Memory of Departure*, *Pilgrims Way*, *Paradise*, *Admiring Silence*, *By the Sea*, *Dissertation*, *The Last Gift*, and *Dottie*, offer new insights into relocation and raises new questions about gender, and what it means to be a stranger, or migrant, faced with

diverse cultures in inhospitable circumstances, and how such conditions call for a reconstruction of the self.

As a committed African writer whose literary works are motivated by the genuine problems of their society, and the African continent in general, Gurnah has addressed the posture and dispensation of the wide varying perspectives about gender in the East African society. His works add more tapestry on the East African history, and explore the power of memory, and the role it plays in the construction of our identities with brushstrokes of humour, pathos, and sympathy. He uses the western secularized space to imagine Muslim identity on his own terms, for despite the focus on transitional human values such as kindness and generosity, his works benefit from being read with its Muslim heritage in view. His narratives focus on Muslim men and their search for a new kind of masculinity, while his female characters create for themselves new and highly contingent subject positions. Thus he places characters in multicultural settings, caught in the web of diverse cultures, and this necessitates the imperative reconstruction of their identity, by reasserting their gender and gender roles.

The concept of gender has more often than not been misinterpreted, and misappropriated. People often use the word gender as a synonym for sex. Gender has also been misused as a synonym for women or female. In this vein, the following questions become imperative: What are the intricacies of gender reformulation, and how does Gurnah present them? To what extent do gender stereotypes imply that women and men are valued differently –that one group is better than the other? How do Gurnah's characters strive for reassertion within their socio-cultural context? What are the view and reactions of ESL learners as regards gender variations? These questions find expression in the course of the work.

This study examines how Adulrazak Gurnah, through his creative and literary vision, examines the differing notions about gender, and the ways in which these differences whether real or perceived, have been valued, used, and relied upon. The work also seeks to explore the somewhat absurd representation of gender in the scene of diverse cultures. This work also probes into the growing ambivalence over the concept of gender and the leeway towards configurating space within given cultural webs. Finally, this work investigates the perception of gender categories in a Cameroonian classroom, and the students' reactions to the growing changes.

The research basically hinges on Gurnah's *Paradise*. The text accounts for the textual evidence and analysis that are necessary for this study. However, references are made to critical and fictional material related to this work. The study is significant in that it expounds on the varying perspectives of gender, its role and relationships, and how it is contradicted by different cultures. It provides researchers with the lens to examine the different cultural traits exhibited by characters, and how these traits enforce or reinforce continuities in the making, formatting, and maintaining of gender differences. The present study is equally important in that it discusses the various strategies put in place by characters to reassert the split self in order to find balance in their lives. Finally, the work is also important in that it highlights the pedagogical relevance of Gender in an ESL classroom in Cameroon.

This work operates on the contention that human discrepancies create disparity between genders, thereby necessitating the quest for a new space. The work also proves that the growing ambivalence in the concept of gender is deeply rooted in our Cameroonian classrooms.

The key terms used in this work that necessitate appropriate definition are: gender, configuration of space, and multiculturalism. This research acknowledges the fact that there exists no clean-cut or universally acceptable definition of these concepts. Borgatta E. F and Montgomery R.J in *Encyclopedia of Sociology* say "Gender is the division into two categories "men" and "women", through interaction with caretakers, socialization in childhood, peer pressure in adolescence and gender work, and family roles. The article posits that women and men are socially constructed to be different in behaviors, attitudes and emotions - the gender social order is based on and maintains these differences"(154). According to Reeves Hezel and Baden Sally in *Gender and Development: Concepts and Definitions*, gender also refers to the "distinctive patterns of idea, beliefs and norms which shape the way of life and relations of males and females as groups in society" (45). Included in these patterns of ideas are expectations and characteristics, as well as aptitudes and likely behaviors of manhood and womanhood. Hesse S.G and Carger G.L in *Working Women in America*, on their part, say this about gender: "Gender is determined socially; it is the societal meaning assigned to men and women. Each society emphasizes particular roles that each sex should play, although there is a wide latitude in acceptable behavior for each gender" (4). This implies that gender is seen as a social construct, with each society ascribing to its own norms. This implies that there exist generally acceptable roles and attitudes which pertain to each gender.

Defining gender from a collective point of view, Hesse and Carger subscribe to the view in “Health Canada Gender-based Analyses Policy” that gender refers to the array of socially constructed roles and relationships, personality traits, attitudes, behaviors, values, relative power and influence that society ascribes to the two sexes on differential bases. It goes further and posits that gender is relational - gender roles and characteristics do not exist in isolation but are in relation to one another and through the relationships between men and women, boys and girls (1). As far as this work is concerned, ‘gender’ refers to the social construction of male and female. It includes the ways in which the differences between men and women, whether real or perceived, have been valued, used and relied upon to classify men and women, to assign roles and expectations to them. Hence gender category is the social distinction of masculinity and femininity.

The next term is configuration of space. Configuration is defined by the online *Oxford Dictionary: Language Matters* as an arrangement of elements in a particular form, figure, or combination and a term in psychology which means an organized whole that is perceived as more than the sum of its parts and also known as gestalt. Similarly, the *Macmillan Dictionary* online define it both as a term in computing which refers to the way in which the different parts of something are arranged and as the way that the different parts of something form a particular shape. It therefore refers to patterns and arrangements. The *Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary* define configuration as a relative arrangement of parts or elements; a functional arrangement; something (as a figure, contour, pattern, or apparatus) that results from a particular arrangement of parts or components; the stable structural makeup of a chemical compound especially with reference to the space relations of the constituent atoms (1). Finally, *Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia* views space as an arrangement of functional units according to their nature, number, and chief characteristics which affects systems, functions and performances. In this work, configuration is used to mean the act or instance of creating or arranging into a desired, workable or functional form or state.

Space, according to *Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia*, is also defined as a boundless three-dimensional extent in which objects and events have a relative position and direction. *Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary* views it as a period of time and its duration; a limited extent in one, two, or three dimensions; a distance, an area, or a volume; an extent set apart or available, for example parking space; the distance from other people or things that a person needs in order to remain comfortable. For example, people are not very happy when others

invade their personal space; a boundless three-dimensional extent in which objects and events occur and have relative position and direction; a physical space independent of what occupies it —called also absolute space; the region beyond the earth's atmosphere or beyond the solar system; and finally, and perhaps most useful to this study, the opportunity to assert or experience one's identity or needs freely; an opportunity for privacy or time to oneself.

In the context of this work, space is used to mean the opportunity, time, freedom to assert one's gender identity and needs freely or the scope to live, think, develop the kind of gender category that one wants.

Put together, configuration of space means the acquisition and preservation of a physical and psychological area one needs within which to live or operate in personal freedom.

Any discussion of multiculturalism must include a definition of culture, since culture literally refers to a multiplicity of cultures. Hofstede in *Cultures and Organization: Software of the Mind* notes that culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, beliefs, experiences, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, notions of time, roles, religions, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving. He goes further to say that culture is the sum total of learned behaviour of a group of people that are generally considered to be the tradition of that people and are transmitted from generation to generation. Also, the *Stratford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* states that multiculturalism is a body of thought in political philosophy, about the proper way to respond to cultural and religious diversity. Also, in *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, multiculturalism describes the existence, acceptance, or promotion of multiple cultural traditions within a single jurisdiction usually considered in terms of the culture associated with an ethnic group. This can happen when a jurisdiction is created or expanded by amalgamating areas with one or more different cultures, or through immigration. It further posits that Multicultural ideologies vary widely (5), ranging from the advocacy of equal respect to the various cultures in a society; to a policy of promoting the maintenance of cultural diversity; to policies in which people of various ethnic and religious groups are addressed as designed by the group to which they belong. Charles Taylor in "Multiculturalism and The Politics of Recognition" says multiculturalism means different things to different people. For some, it is directly linked to the politics of recognition and of difference. In this regard, it concerns an appreciation of the

necessity to deal with diversity in ways that affirm the values of different cultures, and to respect the various claims made by the minority groups. Adam Kuper in *Culture: The Anthropologist Account* contradicts this view by positing that

Multiculturalism concerns an explicit policy of protecting particularistic local cultures in the form of cultural pluralism. To him, since multiculturalism is not a homogeneous concept or practice, it is important to differentiate between multiculturalism as a practical response to diversity, and as an aspect of social philosophy advocating particular values with respect to cultural differences. There is no unifying theory of multiculturalism, and its respect for difference find expression in a variety of political, social, and cultural approaches to problems of diversity. (10)

Diversity is not a new thing in Africa and multiculturalism is premised on challenges to hegemonic cultures occasioned by the large-scale migrations of people, who may experience alienation, marginalization, and exclusion in the host country.

As far as this work is concerned, “multiculturalism” is the co-existence of diverse cultures, where culture includes racial, religious, or cultural groups, and is manifested in customary behaviors, cultural assumptions and values, patterns of thinking and communicative styles. Since no living culture is static, a change in a people’s economy or in their dwelling place through trade and migration will cause people to organize themselves differently to meet the new set of circumstances. Thus gender categories and the configuration of space in a multicultural society is looking at ways in which characters redefine their personalities as Africans, and individuals in foreign cultures as survival strategies.

This work consists of field work and textual analysis. The field work is done through a questionnaire to find out students’ responses on the different gender categories. It is also sort to see the different categories, to which students adhere to and their perception on the growing ambivalence in the concept. The target population is Literature in English students of Lower sixth Arts in Government Bilingual High School Yaounde (GBHSY). The questionnaire was administered to 60 students, made up of 45 girls and 15 boys. These students were chosen based on their level of education and maturity.

The postcolonial and gender criticisms will center this discussion. Proponents and exponents of the postcolonial theory include: Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, Bill Ashcroft, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Gareth Griffith, Salman Rushdie, Chinua Achebe, Ama Ata Aidoo, Ayi Kwei Armah and Ngugiwa Thiong'o. Postcolonial theory according to Deepika Bahr "Introduction to Postcolonial Studies" is a form of critique that

Allows for wide-range investigation into the power relations in various contexts . . . the impact of colonialism on the postcolonial history, economy . . .the cultural productions of colonized societies . . . the agency of marginalized people and the state of the post colony in contemporary economy. (par 1)

This definition intimates that postcolonial theory encompasses a wide variety of issues from historical to contemporary. Concepts such as gender, identity and culture are therefore embedded in postcolonial theory more so due to their complicity with colonialism in disfiguring the worldview of the postcolony. Also, within the postcolonial framework, we can examine how "difference" helps in defining gender and culture both in pre-independence and post-independence Africa. This is because, as Bill Ashcroft et al puts it in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, postcolonial critics and theorists need to consider the full implications of restricting the meaning of the term to "after colonialism" or after independence. All postcolonial societies are still subject in one way or the other to overt or subtle forms of Neo-colonial domination. The influence of colonialism is greatly imbedded in our cultures. One area where this is evident is in gender categories. Traditional notions of gender are slowly eroding as new categories are fast coming up as a result of colonial influence. Also, colonialism has also given rise to new identities based on distinct sexual, racial, linguistic or religious characteristics, which differences most often lead to discrimination and hence conflicts in multicultural societies. There is also the continuing unequal treatment of indigenous people in settler/invader societies. All these and more testify to the fact that postcolonialism is a continuing process of resistance and reconstruction (2).

In this light, Ashcroft et al define postcolonial theory as a theory which

involves discussions about experience of various kinds: migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place and response to the influential master discourse of imperial Europe such as history,

philosophy, linguistics and the fundamental experience of speaking and writing
by which all these come into being. (2)

Cotey Binns, in his article, entitled “The Idea of Education and Postcolonial Discourse”, agrees with Ashcroft, but adds that

Notwithstanding the different time periods, different events, and different effects that they consider, all postcolonial theorists and theory admit that colonialism continues to affect the former colonies after political Independence. By exposing a culture’s colonial history, postcolonial theory empowers a society with the ability to value itself. (par 3)

Bill Ashcroft et al’s definition of postcolonial theory is classic and points to the limitations of the theory as well as its instability to reflect contemporary reality. In the era of globalization, postcolonial theory needs to go beyond its present deconstructionism and handle more salient issues of a global world. By focusing and laying so much emphasis on “difference” and denying the “subaltern” status of the colonized, postcolonial theory could be said to “construct” one myth while in the process of ‘deconstructing’ another. The separate identity that postcolonial theory seeks to put on a pedestal is an illusion, another myth that is greatly threatened by modernity. Such separateness could hardly survive globalization as Tomlinson argues:

Modernity also institutionalizes and regulates cultural practices, including those by which we imagine attachment and belonging to a place or community. The mode such imagination promotes is what we have come to know as ‘cultural identity’— self and communal definitions based around specific, usually political inflected, differentiations; gender, sexuality, class, religion, ethnicity and nationality. (2)

By claiming a “self identity” separate from the “other,” postcolonial theory has fallen short of seeing the trend in the outrage of globalization where existing categories (of gender) are constantly shifting or changing.

This study, nonetheless, uses the concept of self and other to show that gender, culture and ethnicities which shape ethnic definitions are in a process of evolution, a process which has

been accelerated by the surge of globalization. The self and other, far from being the colonizer's only experience, is more and more a global experience and a stable gender is becoming as elusive as the concept of gender itself. The concepts of representation, race, gender, identity are also used in the analysis of the text under study not to criticize the colonizer's ethnocentric and/or racist misrepresentation of the colonized, which has almost been exhausted by postcolonial theorists and other researchers in the field, but rather as a means to look inward and find out how the colonized, in the course of re-presenting the "self" and shifting the "center" has gone further to recreate the myth of that "self", thus perpetuating the center/margin binary in gender and culture. The studies also discuss these concepts from the perspective of contemporary global realities like gender binary, gender fluid, gender variance, butch and gay, which lead to the redefinition of gender by characters in a multicultural context.

Besides the Postcolonial theory, Gender criticism is also fundamental to this study. It complements the postcolonial theory. Proponents and exponents of this approach include: Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Simone de Beauvoir, Dorothy E. Smith, Betty Friedan, Sigmund Freud, Hegel, Patricia Hills Collins, Nancy Chodorow and Catherine Mackinnon.

Regarding gender, Simone de Beauvoir in *Second Sex* notes: "One is not born a woman, one becomes one" (xxxxi). This view presupposes that the term "gender" should be used to refer to the social constructions of masculinities and femininities and not the state of being male or female in its entirety (6). Simone de Beauvoir equally posits that

Since patriarchal times women have in general been forced to occupy a secondary place in the world in relation to men, a position comparable in many respects with that of racial minorities in spite of the fact women constitute numerically at least half of the human race and further that this secondary standing is not imposed of necessity by natural "feminine" characteristics but rather by strong environmental forces of educational and social tradition under the purposeful control of men. (10)

She goes further to discuss the issue of 'other'. She says that through history women have always played a secondary role in relation to men; they are relegated to the position of the 'other'. Whereas the man has been enabled to transcend and control his environment, always furthering the domain of his physical and intellectual conquest, the woman has remained imprisoned within "immanence;" remaining a slave within the circles of duties imposed by

her maternal and reproductive functions. Women's otherness seems to be absolute because, unlike the subordination of other groups such as Jews and black Americans, her subordination was not the result of historical events or social change but it's partly rooted in her anatomy and in her physiology. She insists that every human subject must engage in exploits that serve as a mode of transcendence as a means of rising above and controlling the conditions into which one is born (*Second Sex* xxviii).

Beauvoir disputes the view of Engels and others that there was ever a matriarchal society in history, a rule of women that was dethroned by the advent of private property; she herself was a property, first of all of her father and then of her husband (*Second Sex* 72-75). Women thus came to embody otherness. According to De Beauvoir, the aged-old conflicts no longer take the form of woman attempting to hold back man in her own prison of immanence, but rather in her own efforts to emerge into the light of transcendence. In addition to Woolf's conception that women's situation will be transformed primarily by a change in economic condition, Beauvoir adds that this change must also generate social, moral, cultural and psychological transformations. De Beauvoir is confident that women will arrive at "complete economic and social equality which will bring about an inner metamorphosis" (*Second Sex* 686).

Hegel, on his part, in *Philosophy of Nature* holds that the two sexes were of necessity different, the one active and the other passive, and of course the female would be the passive one. "Thus man is consequence of that differentiation, is the active principle while woman is the passive principle because she remains under-developed in her unity" (15). "Otherness is a fundamental category of human thought" (ibid 17). Women are defined and differentiated with reference to man and not with reference to her. She is incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject, he is the Absolute, and she is the "Other". Simone de Beauvoir links women's identity as other and her fundamental alienation to her body - especially her reproductive capacity - child bearing, child birth and menstruation are draining physical events that tie women to their bodies and to immanence.

In addition, Dorothy E. Smiths according to the stand point theory posits that "what one knows is affected by where one stands (one's subject position) in the society. We begin from the world as we actually experience it and what we know of the world and of the "other" is conditional of the location (Smith, 20). Put in another way, the goal of Smith's *Feminist Sociology* is to explicitly reformulate sociological theory by fully accounting for the

standpoint of gender and its effects on our experience of reality. As far as this study is concerned, the postcolonial, and gender criticisms are of great relevance in that they facilitate the exposure of the realities of the Zanzibari society, wherein different rules are attributed to different genders in patriarchal setup. Both theories complement than contradict each other as they both question gender disparity in the society by bringing into the limelight gender based discriminations; how individuals are tortured and discriminated upon. Consequently, characters strive or look for ways to break-even. In Gurnah's *Paradise*, the author exposes these ills and reaffirms societal discrimination and the growing changes in gender category.

Abdulrazak Gurnah's writings have captured the attention of some critics and scholars positively and negatively. *Paradise* is not quite a new publication. However, few public works have been written on it. This explains why this work limits itself to individual book reviews and the view of some scholars. Gurnah has sufficiently touched on almost all the contemporary issues affecting Africa and Zanzibar in particular. *Paradise* (1994), shortlisted for the Booker prize award, is another bildungsroman narrating, like *Memory of Departure*, the coming to maturity of a young boy. The novel is set in the turn of the twentieth century. This is a novel that does not shy from telling Swahili involvement in the slave trade. Many of Gurnah's novels especially *Paradise and Memory of Departure* show pre-independence Zanzibar, with its internal strife and contradictions, to be a far cry from a harmonious, egalitarian Eden. Gurnah has argued that post-colonial writing often falls into the trap of glossing over the fragmentations within indigenous cultures in its concern to denounce European colonization and native resistance. The subcontinent coexists in a fragile, subtle social hierarchy. This viewpoint is very much in line with the study as the ideas match those raised in *Paradise*, whereby Gurnah discusses characters entangled in the web of different cultures, struggling to reassert their real identity. Simon Lewis on his part in *Paradise and Admiring Silence* employs the word "parried" to describe the primordial hybridity of characters: 'There is 'no new land' for these East African Asians, but there never was a stable home-land before that' (222). Philip Whyte, in "Revisiting Gurnah's Writings" in the same vein, describes Gurnah as a 'chronique du d racinement' – a chronicler of rootlessness ("Chroniquer" 89; cf. 'Heritage' 11, 15).

Besides the aforementioned, several scholars have also reflected on the intersection of smaller and larger "imagined communities" in tension and conflict with each other in Gurnah's novels. Jacqueline Bardolph has observed the recurring interest in the powerful figure of the "Uncle" in *Paradise and Admiring Silence*. Also, Dianne Schwedt and Elizabeth

Maslen in “Writing and Place” have emphasized the imaginary dimensions of collectives, noting how incessant story-telling serves the double aim of distinguishing one ethno-cultural collective from another and fabricating instant histories for the benefit of the community. They posit that one of the predominant features of Gurnah’s writings is precisely the interaction and mutual interference of different social and linguistic networks. Apart from Blake’s observation that Gurnah appropriates and transforms a literary genre, and the observation, made by several scholars, that *Paradise* rewrites the Biblical and Koranic story of Joseph/ Yusuf, there is at least one reading of Gurnah’s fiction primarily along intertextual lines. Johan Jacobs has argued, in terms echoing Blake above, that *Paradise* rewrites Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (Schwedt 97). While Jacob is right in drawing attention to the many literary influences that resound throughout his fiction (156), the turn to Conrad’s canonical work is perhaps a little misjudged. As Susheila Nasta in her essay “Re-writing Gurnah’s work”, has argued that the focus on Conrad may in fact be regarded as part of a “postcolonial exotic.”

Furthermore, Hand Felicity in “*Understanding Stories and Healing Rifts*” states that the work of remembering is central to Abdulrazak Gurnah’s literary art, much of which is based on a desire to recuperate the history/ies of the Swahili coast and more specifically, of the people of his native Zanzibar. He draws on innovative ways of using memory as a tool for deconstructing historical narratives, enacting in his fiction the tension between the individual’s perception of history and that of the collectivity. He captures the sense of uprooting that circumstance or voluntarily chooses to abandon their homelands. His works have no doubt been greatly influenced by his own experience as an African migrant in 1960s Britain, which filters in the loneliness his characters suffer from. Two of the concerns that resonate throughout his novels are the heterogeneity of East African cultures, and the excesses of Afro centrism - illustrated by the immense hatred that the rest of Zanzibar feels towards the people of Arab descent. Gurnah’s fiction depicts the intricate meshwork of social codes, emotions, and narratives that shape subjectivity in a highly unstable and cosmopolitan social reality. His novels repeat thematic cultural disorientation, migration and the efforts of establishing a minimum of social and narrative stability in the form of a home. His works also evoke a transitional Indian Ocean and British world that emphasizes the subject’s involvement which channel the circulation of property and determine social identity. In this vein, Peter Tinniswood in *London Times*, reviewing Gurnah’s previous novel, states that

Mr. Gurnah is very fine writer. I am certain he will become a great one. Paradise is Abdulrazak Gurnah's great novel. At twelve, Yusuf, the protagonist of this twentieth century odyssey is sold by his father in repayment of a debt. From the simple life of rural Africa Yusuf is thrown into the complexities of pre-colonial urban East Africa - a fascinating world which Muslim black Africans, Christian missionaries and Indians from the subcontinent coexist in a fragile subtle social hierarchy. (143)

From all indication, most critics talking about the works of Abdulrazak Gurnah emphasize the fact that he is concerned with issues of colonialism, migration, slavery and slave trade. Gurnah also expands on the issue of multiculturalism, bringing together people of diverse cultures to live in a circle.

However, this work differs from the aforementioned in that it captures the disparities that exist within the same and different gender. The newness of this work is seen in the examination of gender as an evolving category, which marks a difference from what other critics have said about the text. It also sets out to deconstruct gender stereotypes, and attempts to strike a balance which calls for complementarity, rather than subjugation and domination. The present work notes that gender category is a perception and it is conceived and relied upon by society. Also, it investigates students' views about gender categories and the related changes affecting it.

The work is divided into a general introduction, four chapters and a general conclusion. Chapter one, entitled "Gender Categories", examines the backdrop against which gender is categorized. This chapter also x-rays the intricacies in gender reformation in Gurnah's work. Chapter two, captioned "Conflicting Interests," examines the various instances where characters have differences due to the quest for personal interest, instigated by their differences in gender. This chapter also demonstrates the fact the one sex is given prominence over the other by society. It also illustrates that different cultures adhere differently to the notion of gender. Chapter three labeled "Towards Reconfiguring a new Space", analyses the various strategies and the ways characters use to find outlets from these societal constraints. Chapter Four, entitled "Gender Identity in a Cameroonian Classroom", captures an investigation of the notion of gender category, and the responses of students. It also exemplifies how an excerpt in the novel can be used in an ESL/EFL classroom, to teach

a lesson, with focus on developing reading skills. Through this lesson, students will be drilled on how to accommodate abnormal behaviours in relation to gender categories. The general conclusion summarizes the major argument evoked in the write -up, brings out findings, recommendations and suggests possible areas for future research.

CHAPTER ONE

GENDER CATEGORIES

The concept of gender is complex and multi-faceted, and several distinct facets get lumped together within the same community or category. Gender category or identity is one's own personal experience of gender. All societies have a set of gender categories that act as the basis of the formation of a person's social identity in relation to other members of the society. In most societies, there is a basic division between gender attributes assigned to males and females. Most people adhere to these gender binaries and they enforce conformance to ideals of masculinity and femininity in all aspects of sex and gender; biological sex, gender identity and gender expression. Gender expression is the ways in which a person manifests masculinity, femininity, both or neither through appearance, behaviours, preferences. The cultural expectation is that one's biological sex, gender and gender expression should align to existing stereotypes; that someone who is male will identify as boy/man, and have a masculine gender expression, for example. However, these expectations do not usually serve our diverse world as portrayed in Gurnah's *Paradise*. This chapter therefore seeks to identify the different gender categories exhibited by characters in Gurnah's *Paradise*. It also explores the ambiguity of gender roles and relations. It goes further to establish the fact that gender is a wide continuum that keeps changing and evolving over time including other genders as is greatly evident in Gurnah's *Paradise*. This work attempts to categorise this wide range of gender types in the novel into three: gender variance, gender fluid and gender binary.

Gender variance or gender non-conformity refers "to behaviors and interests that fit outside of what we consider 'normal' for a child or adult's assigned biological sex. We think of these people as having interests that are more typical of the "opposite" sex" (*genderdiversity.org* 6). For example, a girl who likes to play football with boys. These are considered gender-variant or gender non-conforming behaviors and interests. In simpler terms, it is a behaviour or gender expression by an individual that does not match masculine and feminine gender norms. West Candance and Zimmermann Doh in *Doing Gender in Gender and Society* states that our conception of what women and men are, and what they are supposed to be is produced by the society in which we live. They further state that the day-to-day, continuous production of gender has been called "doing gender". This means the gender is "made" by us in everyday lives; in our interactions with others. "Doing gender" thrives on continually establishing a dual order of two sexes - masculine and feminine. From these

categories gender characteristics are derived. In the course of life, human beings are then “made” into a boy or man or a girl or woman in a complex process of rearing and education, social norms and values stereotype, identification, images and traditions. However, it is noticeable that conceptions of women and men have changed over time. What is supposed to be feminine or masculine is only historically defined.

ZuleykaZevallos in *Sociology of Gender: A Study of How Society Influences Understanding and Differences between Masculinity and Femininity* states that gender is more fluid - it may or may not depend upon biological traits. Zevallos posits that more specifically, it is a concept that describes how societies determine and manage sex categories; the cultural meaning attached to men and women’s roles; and how individuals understand their identities including, but not limited, to being a man, woman, transgender, intersex, or gender queer positions. Gender involves norms, attitude and activities that society deems more appropriate for one sex over another. Gender is also determined by what an individual feels and does. The sociology of gender examines how society influences our understandings and perception of differences between masculinity (what society deems appropriate behaviour for “man”), and femininity (what society deems appropriate behaviour for a “woman”). Due to the growing ambivalence in gender, to better understand and name the new development, new words or neologisms have come into existence.

Judith Lorber and Susan Farrell in *Masculinity and Femininity* argue that the social constructionist perspective explores the taken-for-granted assumption about what it means to be “male” and “female”, “masculine” and “feminine”. They explain:

Women and men are not automatically compared, rather gender categories (female-male, feminine-masculine, girls-boys, women-men) are analyzed to see how different social groups define them and how they construct and maintain them in everyday life and in major social institutions, such as the family and the ceremony. (49)

Femininity is constructed through patriarchal ideas. This means that femininity is always set up as inferior to men. Women can actively challenge gender norms by refusing to let patriarchy define how they portray or reconstruct their femininity. This can be done by rejecting cultural scripts. This means that gender variance can be act of rebellion against what society has constructed to limit a particular gender.

In Gurnah's *Paradise*, Ma Ajuza is a quintessence of a gender variant woman. She deconstructs her society's expectation and definition of femininity and masculinity through her actions. She acts according to her feelings. The popular idea that women do not get ahead to approach men is falsified by Ma Ajuza. This is seen when she expresses how she feels about Yusuf, both in words and in action. Khalil describes Ma Ajuza and her encounter with Yusuf in the following words:

One of the women, her skin, glossily black and her face mobile with subtle movement was besotted with him. Her name was Ma Ajuza, a large, strong looking woman with a voice which cut through crowds. She seemed very old to Yusuf, cumbersome, bulky and with a look of suffering when her face was unguarded. Her body shivered and straightened with an involuntary charge when she caught side of Yusuf, and a small cry escaped her. If Yusuf had not seen her, she stalked him until she was near enough to squeeze him into her arms. Then while he struggled and kicked, she ululated with triumph and joy. (30)

From the above excerpt, it is evident that Ma Ajuza deconstructs her gender role as ascribed by the society. The cultural variability of how people "do gender" in different cultures demonstrates the cultural specificity of gender norms. Yusuf's refusal of Ma Ajuza's advances is due to the fact that it is seen as a taboo in the Swahili culture where he comes from. Whereas in Ma Ajuza's Indian culture, it is doable. Consequently, Ma Ajuza's culture recognizes gender beyond the binaries of male and female. This means that behaviours that come to be understood as masculine and feminine, vary across cultures and they change over time.

One can say that Ma Ajuza is a nonconformist to the ideals of gender binary. In the gender continuum terms such as gender non-conformist, gender atypical or gender queer can be used to describe her. She exhibits a gender role which is at odds with her assigned gender and social position. This can be further illustrated when the narrator says:

On occasions when she could not sneak up on him, she approached with ecstatic cries, calling him "my husband, my master" then she cajoled him with compliments and promises, tempted him with sweet meat and offered him

pleasures beyond his wildest imaginings if he came with her. Take pity on me,
my husband she cried. (56)

Her persistence and determination shows that she has completely disregarded the societal norms that older men can have sexual relations with younger women but not the other way round. The narrator recounts that when Yusuf returns from his journey, Ma Ajuza, openly declares her love for him, as the narrator recounts:

Ma Ajuza's jaw dropped with melodramatic amazement when she saw him in the shop. For a long time she stood still, rubbed of words and volition. Then she smiled slowly with ... "Ah my husband has come back to me". She said "thank you God! And how beautiful he looks. I will have to watch girls now. (182)

This shows the level of desperation and anxiety in Ma Ajuza. Even though she is about forty-four years old, she expresses love so passionately to Yusuf, who has just turned twenty-five. She ignores the fact that she is a lady, old enough to be his mother. Khalil even confesses to Yusuf that in his absence, he slept with the old woman. Yusuf is shocked that Khalil can sleep with such an old woman, but that is of course because he comes from the interior and despite his stay in the coastal area, his mentality is still stuck to his conservative society. Thus Ma Ajuza's actions challenge the status quo. She is typically viewed as subversive. This is because she challenges the typical social order.

It is important to note that at first, since Yusuf is too young to be a husband to Ma Ajuza, her advances seem jocular, just meant to express her admiration for the boy's beauty, but when Yusuf's comes back from the journey and Khalil tells him that he has been sleeping with Ma Ajuza then we realise that she had been serious in her advances towards Yusuf. This is because she belongs to a gender category that is not common in most conservative societies such as the one Yusuf hails from. In the same vein, the Mistress is also another character who displays gender variant behaviour. She orchestrates advances towards the men she likes just like Ma Ajuza. In the novel, we are told that she came to hear about the Seyid who was many years younger than her through business gossip. She discretely sent words and gifts to him and in a few weeks, she married him (202). This is a woman who goes against the societal and traditional norm of the Swahili culture. She is from India, where marrying a man is normal. Here we notice the inconsistency in two different cultures, wherein one culture triumphs. She expresses masculinity and we are told her face "was sharp featured and

handsome” (209). This Mistress’ decision to court a man could have been best explained by her. Her behaviour goes in line with Jaylan W. Hussein in *Social Base of Gender* where he states that women have been victims of gender ideology. Hussein adds that gender ideology is a systemic set of cultural beliefs through which a society constructs and wields its gender relations and practices. For him, gender ideology constitutes legends, narratives, and myths about what it means to be a man or a woman and suggest how each should behave in the society. This explains why Khalil and the other male folk in the novel ridicule Ma Ajuza and the Mistress, for their acts of openly professing their love to a man.

The traditional norms or laws have made it complex to address the real needs of women. Women are caged if a man does not approach them. The fact that their feelings are entrapped is a cause for concern. Some women refuse to be victims of such ideology as Hussein puts it. The mistress has been deserted by her supposed husband Aziz. He locks her in a huge house for years on the bases that she is crazy and has a chronic illness. Hence she has been deprived of love. She realizes that the only way out is by wooing a man herself. This explains why she constantly invites Yusuf into her chambers and speaks in a soft and caressing tone. In the Mistress’ desperation, she yearns for Yusuf’s love. She says: “one touch from the beautiful boy will cure this wound in my heart” (205). Like the existentialist, the Mistress chooses to live as she likes. She chooses her freedom over the entire culture and tradition. She refuses to condone with traditional norms, and damns the consequences. From the Mistress’ conversation with Amina, we come to realize that she is brave and mindless of her social entrapment.

The existentialist concludes that human choice is subjective, because individuals finally must make their own choices without help from external standards as laws, ethical rules or tradition. Because individuals make their own choices, they can be free: but because they freely choose, they are completely responsible for their choices. The existentialists emphasize that choice is necessarily accompanied by responsibility since individuals are forced to choose for themselves, they are their freedom and therefore their responsibility is trusted upon them. They are condemned to be free. The Mistress is free from Aziz’s grip of marriage and she further wants to be free to love and to be loved. The author tells us that Aziz has never reciprocated the Mistress’ want to give meaning to her existence by finding love. This goes in line with Jean Paul Satre’s philosophy in which states that existence precedes essence. She finds essence in wooing Yusuf. She tells Yusuf that “even when you sit still, light glows in your eyes and from your flesh. And how beautiful your hair looks” (226).

All along in her life with Aziz, they have never expressed such pleasantries; rather they quarrel or ignore each other. Aziz often reminds her that he did not look for her; “you searched endlessly for me” (20). When the Mistress comes to the realization that her illness is persistent, she finds solace in Yusuf’s prayers. Sometimes she beckons for prayers so precisely and so simply that Yusuf has no way of refusing. The narrator recounts one incident thus:

He stood up and approached. And as she came nearer, she lowered her shawl down to elbow, then she touched the mark on her neck, inviting Yusuf to put his hand on it and her grin was turning into a gentler smile. She grappled Yusuf passionately, murmuring some sweet words into his ears. She screamed in joy acts, while trying to let her lips meet with Yusuf’s. (214)

The Mistress is so ingrained in her thoughts that she says one touch from that beautiful boy will cure this wound in my heart, (205). It is evident that the mistress deconstructs what society and culture has ascribed to her.

We also meet another woman who acts like a man, both in her words and actions. Hamid’s wife Maimuna tells him that “You are such a beautiful boy, I will soon get rid of this my fat husband and marry you. She reached out for his face and strokes it. Who can be mad with a beautiful boy as you? My entire being yearns for you cuddle.” (67). From the women’s actions and reactions, we realise that these are women who do not succumb to patriarchal prescriptions. This challenges what Hofstede in *Masculinity and femininity* states: “masculinity stands for a society in which social gender roles are clearly distinct. Men are supposed to be assertive, tough and focused on material success: women are supposed to be more modest, tender and concerned with the quality of life. (101) But in this context, femininity stands for a society in which social gender roles overlap, where both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender and concerned with the quality of life.

Another form of gender variance evident in the text is the relationships between men and men, and between women and women. Anthropologists have shown that people who erotically desire the same gender sufficient to organize their social life around this desire come in all genders, colours, political and religious creeds (Hilary Libs 208). They further states that there is no single word or construct, including the western idea of “homosexuality” that represents them all. To make matters even more complicated, the local term in each

culture or community that classifies the homoerotic actor role is not always positive. We should be aware, however, that there is no uniform term for the desire to love and have sexual intimacy with others of the same gender, and even though it may be negative or stigmatizing to be in such a category, many people have dared to brave the consequences. Such relationships that is, the relationship between men and men, and women and women preoccupies the subject matter in Gurnah's *Paradise*. The relationship between male and male can be classified under homosocial, homosexual, gay, or down low.

Traditionally, the homosocial category referred to relationships of people of the same gender that may be either sexual or asexual. Girard in *Deceit Desire, and the Novel* posits that the relationship between two men envying one woman's affection is stronger than that relationship they have to the women. This assertion brings in the idea of Sigmund Freud and the oedipal complex. Freud suggests that for a man to develop in a healthy heterosexual manner, he must pass through the stage of "positive" Oedipus, a homoerotic identification with the father, a position of effeminized subordination to the father, as a condition for finding a model for his own heterosexual role. This is more of a social bond between two males that is very close and may even seem homosexual but is more or less just homosocial. This shows that between the homosexual and the homosocial there is a continuum that sometimes makes it hard to differentiate one from the other.

This continuum within simply homosocial relationship can be found in Abdulrazk Gurnah's *Paradise*. In the novel, several types of men are produced as well as other types of male relationships. We can see very paternal relationships found between Yusuf and Khalil, as well as Hamid and Kalasinga. Their relationships are based on a father-son bases. Khalil and Yusuf exhibits traits of friendship, as both of them work for Uncle Aziz. Khalil constantly watches Yusuf's back and teaches him the dos and don'ts in the business. He educates Yusuf on the likes and dislikes of their master, uncle Aziz. The mutual intimacy between Khali and Yusuf as regards Khalil's mentorship to Yusuf is evident when the author says:

Khalil tutored him in the ways of the shop. He showed him how to lift the sacks

Without hurting himself and how to pour the grain into the tubs without spilling

It. He showed him how to count money quickly and how to work out the change,

how to name the coins, to differentiate the bigger from the lesser. Yusuf

learned how to accept money from a customer, and how to hold a note so that it was secure between his fingers. Khalil held his hand so it will not shake while he taught him to measure the coconut oil with a ladle and how to cut pieces off the long bar of soap with the length of wire. He grinned in approval when Yusuf learned well, and hit him sharp painful blows when he failed, sometimes in front of the customers. (29)

From the above quotation we realise that Yusuf and Khalil operate strictly on the bases of simple friendship. Their relationship is more of a trainer /trainee terms when it comes to business. The bond of their friendship is reinforced day by day. In their encounters, we see Khalil playing the role of a friend and a big brother. This we get when the author says;

They visited the town every Friday to say prayers at the Juma'a mosque, and play kipande and football in the streets. Passers-by shouted remarks at them, telling them they are such lovely friends. One day they both went to the sea, in the company of some fishermen. They offered them smoke which Khalil accepted but forbade to Yusuf. He is too fragile to smoke, the fishermen said. It will only spoil him. Smoking is devil's business, a sin. So you see my dear brother, I can't bear to see you get spoiled.(50)

Through this we see the bond of brotherliness. Their behaviour as friends and brothers align with their biological sex .All their activities are geared towards masculine behaviours. Mohammed Abdalla provides the reader with a very interesting spot of this homosocial continuum because he is seen as a man who "picked porters who will be willing to get down on all fours for him during the journey" (47). The author says:

It was Mohammed Abdallah who hired the porters and the guards, and agreed with them the share of their profit. It was also he who kept them to their mark. Most of them were people of the coast, from as far as Kilifi and Lindi and Marima The Mynapara struck fear in all of them. His snarling and scowling looks, and the Pitiless light in his eyes promised nothing but pain to any who crossed him. His simplest and most ordinary gestures were performed with the knowledge and relish of this power. He was a tall, strong-looking man, who strode around with soldiers thrown back,

anticipating a challenge. His face was high cheek-boned and lumpy, bubbling with unquiet urges. He carried a thin bamboo cane which he used for emphasis, swishing it through the air when he exasperated, landing it on a slothful buttock when his ire was up. He had a reputation as a merciless sodomizer who could often be seen absent-mindedly stroking his loins. (47)

It is important to note that there are no outward homosexual relationships between him and anyone else in the novel. But his admiration for Yusuf makes him look homosexual even though that might not be the case. The narrator further says:

He looks at Yusuf with a frightening smile shaking his head small delight. *Mashalla* he would say, *A Wonder of God*. His eyes softened with pleasure at his times and his mouth in an unaccustomed grin. In his anguish, he releases heavy sighs of lust and smilingly muttered lines of songs about the nature of beauty. (47)

The men in the text exhibit traits which cannot be out rightly termed as homosexual relationships. However, since there are at least suggestive of some intimacy and admiration between people of the same sex, there can be placed within the continuum of homosociality. This might be because in Africa, homosexuality in most areas is not overt, and even if men in Africa sleep with other men, they are not considered homosexual.

Furthermore, the continuum of a fraternal or homosocial relationship is further viewed in the likes of Yusuf, Khalil and Kalasinga. They immediately take Yusuf under their wing. When Yusuf is frightened because of the dogs and he loses control of his body, Khalil acts as a big brother in a situation that is scary, embarrassing and upsetting for Yusuf. In the time that they spend together, the reader sees Khalil and Yusuf becoming brothers. This is clear when Yusuf is given the assignment to go to Hamid and even though it is evident that Yusuf does not want to leave Khalil, says, "It is better for you , it's for your own good and future. Go along, I will always pray for you. Never forget to say your prayers too" (53). Because of their fraternal nature Khalil wants what is best for Yusuf. We see true brotherhood in the instance where Khalil and Yusuf are parting. They both hug each other with streams of tears flowing down their cheeks (155). This relationship between Khalil and Yusuf ties with Nils Hammaren and Thomas Johnson notion in "Homosociality" It is for example frequently used in studies on men and masculinities, which are defined as a mechanism and social dynamic

that explains the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity. Hence it is a study on male friendship, male bonding and fraternity orders. Through Khalil and Yusuf, we see how men through friendships and intimate collaborations with other men maintain the gender order and patriarchy.

As soon as Yusuf is placed in Hamid's care, we see a new relationship. Hamid is very paternal to Yusuf. He allows and even helps Yusuf to open a garden. He encourages him when he says: "Well I will clear the bush for you and you can plant a flower garden for us". (68). Hamid also expresses fatherly concern to Yusuf by sending him to school to learn how to read the Quran. Hamid exhibits solely a fraternal relationship with Yusuf and also with Kalasinga.

Eve Sedgwick in "In Between Men" states that "homosocial" refers to all relationships between people of the same sex. He says this is a neologism, obviously formed by analogy with "homosexual," and just as obviously meant to be distinguished from "homosexual". In fact, it is applied to such activities as "male bonding," which may, as in our society, be characterised by intense homophobia, fear and hatred of homosexuality (*Gender Studies, Gay/Lesbian Studies, Queer Theory* 677). However, because of homophobia, that is fear and hatred for homosexuals, people try to distinguish between homosexual and homosocial by stating that homosexual refers to sexual relationships between people of the same sex and homosocial refers to all bonding or social relationships between men and men or women and women.

She further posits that all relationships between men are in a way homosexual, in any male dominated society, there is a special relationship between male "homosocial" (including homosexual) desire and structures for transmitting patriarchal power (Sedgwick 524). This shows that homosexual relationships are very common among men of the ruling class. Even in our own Cameroonian society, many stories have been published in newspapers accusing the ruling elite of wide-spread homosexual practices. This claim can be substantiated in Gurnah's *Paradise* through the portrait of Mohammed Abdalla and Uncle Aziz. Both are powerful men, feared and respected in their community. When Uncle Aziz passes, the people both men and women bow in allegiance, and kiss his hand (68). On his part, Mohammed Abdalla is said to be:

The mnyapara who struck fear in all of them, his snarling looks and his pitiless light in his eyes promised nothing but pain to any

who crossed him. His simplest and most ordinary gestures were performed with the knowledge and relish of his power. He was tall, strong looking man who rode around with shoulders thrown back, anticipating a challenge. His face was high cheeked-bone and lumpy, bubbling with unquiet urges. He carried a thin bamboo cane which he used for emphasis, swishing it through the air when he was exasperated, landing it on a slothful buttock when his ire was up. He had a reputation as a merciless sodomizer. (46-47)

It is evident from the above extract that both Aziz and Mohammed Abdalla desires, transmit and maintain patriarchal power. There are also intimations of homosexual relations between Mohammed and the other men either by force or through their consent. At one point he is accused of being a merciless sodomizer and at another, through the light-hearted discussions with the other men of the caravan, it is clear they like his company. This is further shown when the men embark on a business trip into the interior championed by him. While on their journey he tells the story of a beautiful woman, who after complicated stragems on his part, agrees to take home, and “she” turns out to be a man (85).

Moreover, the fact that Uncle Aziz employs someone who is proudly homosexual, because he does not object to the appellation is also suggestive of closer ties with him. This suggests that their relationship is more sexual than social. This relationship is likely to be the source of Aziz’s power because the moment Mohammed’s physical strength starts waning as a result of an attack from the Kilifi raiders, Uncle Aziz’s power and influence is challenged and compromised. He is almost defenceless when Chato and his men attack and subsequently, he and his men are transformed from wealthy businessmen to poor peasants begging to labour in local farms to feed themselves.

Also the fact that Aziz keeps Yusuf though he seems to have little or no use for him suggests that he may be grooming him for a future homosexual relationship. He does his best to protect him from the other men in his caravan. At one point he tells him through that he is not happy to see him sitting with the men. Furthermore, this justifies King Hamidou and King Chato’s fascination with the boy. Both kings ask to keep the boy for some time though their motives are not clear about their intensions. It is only but obvious that Chato cannot just keep the boy for sometime just for the sake of keeping him. There must be an unmentioned reason why he demands the boy, which the author wants his readers to figure out.

Another gender category which is glaring in Gurnah's *Paradise* is gender fluidity. A gender fluid person according to Sarah Marsh in "The Gender-fluid Generation: Young People on Being Male, Female or Non-binary," is somebody who "doesn't identify with one gender, instead fluctuating between feeling more male or female" (par 3). She quotes a Costa Rican transgender who says, "At one end is being male and the other female, and you kind of move between the two, and usually remain in the middle," to illustrate her point. She defines gender fluid as:

a gender identity which refers to a gender which varies over time. A gender fluid person may at any time identify as male, female, neutrois or any other non-binary identity, or some combination of identities. Their gender can also vary at random or vary in response to different circumstances. Gender fluid people may also identify as multigender, non-binary and/or transgender. (par 4)

This implies that types such as the butch; that is a person usually female identified, who identifies themselves as masculine, whether it is physically, mentally or emotionally and the sissy; that is a boy who is thought of as weak or interested in activities girls usually like. They can also be referred to as gender "inverts". It is important to note that gender limits how we view the world and the people in it. In the Swahili culture, where the author originates, it is not considered normal for women to routinely behave in ways that are considered masculine. Such abnormal behaviours include: wooing a man, paying bride price for a man. There has to be some sort of explanation to it. In order to acceptably behave in such "gender bending" behaviour, you are seen as either a special category of person.

In view of the above, Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble* argues that traditional feminism is wrong to look to a natural "essential" notion of the female, or indeed of sex or gender. Butler starts by questioning the category "woman" and continues in this vein with examinations of the "masculine" and the feminine". Best known, however, but also most often interpreted is Butler's concept of gender as a reiterated social performance than the expression of a prior reality. This implies that people usually express what aligns with society and not their prior reality. Christina Agapakis in *Sex, Gender and Evolution* adds that the role of the society is the most complicated thing and that she has spent more time trying to understand it than the time learning about quantum mechanics. She further states that many scientists try very hard to de-emphasize this complexity trying to reduce human nature down to parts genes and behaviours that can be explained by evolutionary mechanism. One will

hardly find reasons to explain same gender-attractions like the one between Yusuf and some men in the novel.

Transgenderism as a form of gender fluidity is most evident in *Paradise*. According to Joe Carter in *Transgenderism* “It is an umbrella term for the state or condition of identifying or expressing a gender identity that does not match a person’s physical/genetic sex” (par 2). He adds that the transgender person is independent of sexual orientation, and those who self-identify as transgender may consider themselves to be heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, pansexual, polysexual, or asexual (ibid). The tendency is for people who identify or express a gender identity that is contrary to their biological sex to be considered as homosexual and even pursued by homosexuals. Carter points out that to be transgender does not entail homosexuality.

In Gurnah’s *Paradise*, the protagonists Yusuf could be considered a transgender although the narrator does not overtly say so. This suggestion can be supported with the powerful and threatening sense of sexuality that is directed to him by most of the characters especially the male ones. Yusuf’s attractiveness is most often referred to as beautiful and not handsome, which is more masculine. Also, the fact that he does not pride himself in his beauty shows that he is averse to the kind of attraction that it causes him – attraction from men. He arouses the emotions of the various men he comes into contact with. The narrator says that “he is an object of desire for men as they deal with the hardship of the jungle (55). Gurnah uses the novel to represent his experience with men who exhibit feminine attitude. He assists himself by giving thin story lines that involve women.

Yusuf is introduced to the reader very early as someone who is treated well by others, especially men. We see in the beginning of the novel that “the hotel cook drank and cursed and abused everyone in sight except Yusuf (5-6). This is the first experience that Yusuf is seen and treated differently by others. The word beautiful is used to describe Yusuf far too many times to count in the novel. Yusuf is seen as a “beautiful” boy by both men and women and no one has a problem verbalizing it. Just in a passing conversation, the fisherman says he is too beautiful to smoke” (50). This again is because in most African societies, smoking is largely considered as a male activity. Women who smoke are most often considered as prostitutes or criminals. The term beautiful as well as the naivety that is associated with the semantics of the word as used by the fisherman uses is often reserved for women. While in east for trade, Hussein, Aziz’s business partner says “You will drive women insane with your

beautiful looks one day. Come back to Unguja with me and I will wed you to me daughter” (33). Yusuf being male is termed female by Simba Mwene when he notes:

You have found yourself a husband, pretty one” with laughter rolling out of him as he made lovelorn face for the benefit of the company. You are too beautiful for that ugly monster. Come and give me a massage later too tonight and I will show you what love is. (90)

From the pleasantries showered on Yusuf, it is evident that his physical looks account for the untold admiration and desire. Hilary Lips in *Sex and Gender* explains that psychologists have become increasingly aware that physical appearance is a critical aspect for stereotyping. He further states that in terms of gender stereotypes, physical appearance may have a strong implication for how masculine or feminine a person is thought to be. Yusuf’s appearance, apparently has earned him the tag, beautiful. His appearance makes people to think of him more of a young pretty lady than a man.

Another category worthy of note is gender binary. According to *Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia*: gender binary otherwise known as binarism is a model of gender that classifies into two categories that is male and female. Gender binary says that they can never be more than two genders. This means that a person can only be male or female. Amidst Gurnah’s presentation of different categories such as gender fluids and gender variance, gender binary is also a glaring category in the text. This ideal category or model is exhibited through the protagonist’s parents. Yusuf’s mother throughout the text plays the role of a devoted wife and mother (10). She puts in a relentless effort to ensure the wellbeing of her husband and child. This she even extends to her husband’s friend, uncle Aziz by serving him whenever he is around (15). Yusuf’s parents leave as husband and wife. While Yusuf’s father takes care of the shop and the wellbeing of the family, his mother takes care of the home. Hence the role and relationship played by these characters ascribe to the ideal gender category.

Another relationship which pertains to gender binary is that between Yusuf and Aisha, Hamid’s daughter. Due to Yusuf’s intense love and admiration for her, the author says:

He reached roughly for her, expecting her to fight and wriggle away as the others did, but she came willingly into his arms. She curled up against him with a long sigh, and felt the heat of her breath on his chest. He felt her plump body

softening too, and they lay silently against each other. For several minutes,
gazing passionately into each other's eyes. (105)

From the above excerpt, it is evident that Yusuf and Aisha align with the prescribed gender category which promotes a male and female relationship. Yusuf also honours the masculine responsibility of approaching a woman and professing love to her. This ties with what Butler in *Gender Trouble* says that men are to be attracted to women only and women are to be attracted to men only.

This chapter set out to identify the different gender categories exhibited by characters in Gurnah's *Paradise*. In the course of our analysis, we discovered that gender is an ideology. This is because some of the characters in the novel act at odds to their prescribed gender role. We also found out that characters due to their physical looks or appearance are perceived differently, regardless of their gender identity. This gives rise to some disparities, which results to conflicts. Consequently, we found out the implicit assumptions on which conventional theories of masculinity-femininity are predicated. This implies that all gender related phenomena contribute to having both extremes of femininity-masculinity factor. This means that assessment of an individual's masculine or feminine rights and qualities can be used to infer his or her position on the hypothetical masculinity-femininity continuum. As a result, conflicts or differences due to clashes of interest are borne, which is the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The differences that exist between different gender categories have caused serious conflicts. These conflicts, ranges from relegation to extinction. These differences often lead to clashes of interest, usually favouring one against the other. Because of these conflicts, women are more or less considered as the “other” while men remain the subject. This idea goes in line with Friedrich Nietzsche’s adage which says: “that which does not kill me makes me stronger” that is the fact that women are relegated or looked down upon by the men instead makes them stronger and determined to thrive, and achieve their desires. The struggle for rights has been the major bone of contention amongst feminists. Feminists generally struggle for the recognition of women’s structural role and achievements and for women’s structural and political rights. Virginia Wolf in *A Room of One’s Own* insists that a woman must have money and a room of her own to write fiction. This means that women need financial and psychological independence to exercise their potentials. Hence, in order to be free from men’s subjugation, they need freedom. This goes a long way to put an end to women being placed as the “other” as Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* puts it. Thus gender conflicts are deeply ingrained in the structures of our societies. This chapter as such attempts to examine patriarchy and the material bases of gender conflict. It further identifies the extent to which gender stereotypes imply that women and men are valued differently- that one sex is better than the other. It goes further to discuss conflicts borne as a result of gender nonconformist behaviours portrayed by some characters in Abdulrazak Gurnah’s *Paradise*.

De Beauvoir in *Second Sex* undertakes an examination of the myths created by men about women from time immemorial. De Beauvoir says that throughout history women have always occupied a secondary role in relation to men; they are being relegated to the position of the “other”. The role of women has been dethroned by the advent of private property; she herself was a property, first of all of her father and then her husband (72-75). She goes a long way to say that legislators, priest, philosophers, writers and scientists have striven to show that the subordination of women is willed in heaven and advantageous on earth. This is to say that the differences between men and women are very eminent in our societies. Beauvoir’s adoption of the existentialist themes in her writing helps investigate why the woman is seen as different from the man, not man being different from women. ‘She’ represents the inessential in relation to the essential. ‘He’ is the subject, the absolute; ‘she’ is the “other”.

These existentialists' issues are espoused by Abdulrazak Gurnah in *Paradise*. In his traditional Swahili culture, it is the wife's duty to produce children, most importantly a son. Yusuf's father kept reminding the wife that if she had given him but a female child, she would have long gone. Thus, Yusuf is their binding factor in the midst of marital crises. A boy child is preferred to a female child, yet the female child is not given a broader space and opportunity to mingle and experience life. This situation is portrayed in *Paradise* when Hamid in the course of advising his children, lays more emphasis on the girl child. He says "respect yourself and others will respect you. It is true about all of us but especially true about women. That is the meaning of honour (110). This is to say that a boy child can do anything while a girl child should not. This already creates a barrier between male and female.

Women in most societies, particularly in the Zanzibar society that Gurnah portrays, are reduced to mere second class citizens. The society is patriarchal and the women are discriminated from having formal education. Women are thus mostly seen as maids or house wives. Makama Godiya in "*Patriarchy and Gender Inequality in Nigeria: A Way Forward*" avers that the patriarchal society sets the parameters for women's structural unequal position in families and markets by condoning gender-differential terms in inheritance rights and adulthood, by tacitly condoning domestic and social conflicts. Tradition or culture and religion have dictated female relationship and entrenched male domination into the structure of social organizations and institutions at all levels. Patriarchy thus justifies the marginalization of women in education, economy, labour market, politics, business, family, domestic matters and inheritance. (*Salaam* 245). Thus, in Gurnah's *Paradise*, tradition places women in the position of the other. Women should listen to their husbands even if it means going against their own will. They have no right to own businesses of their own. But rather succumb to whatever their husbands want. Yusuf's mother does household chores like cleaning, washing and cooking. While Yusuf's father manages the hotel business and even restricts Yusuf's mother from passing around the vicinity. This patriarchal control and domination is also seen in the relationship between Uncle Aziz and the Mistress. Uncle Aziz is seen to have taken over the wife's inheritance. He manages the business alone and tells the wife "I have to work my head out for this business to survive...how many businesses have you seen succeed with women as managers" (215). Men have therefore made themselves superior to women. Relying on tradition, Yusuf's father places the entire blame for all that has gone wrong on Yusuf's mother. They dictate what a woman should and should not do.

They are decision makers in every society: in families they proclaim themselves heads. This is all explained in Beauvoir's writing where she stipulates that

their own everything that has been written about women by men is suspect for although men are intimately involved, they set themselves up as judges and parties to lawsuit. Being men those who have compiled the law have favoured sex and jurists have elevated these laws into principles. (12)

Paradise presents most women as second class citizens. This is evident in the lives of Maimuna, Hamid's wife, Ma Ajuza, Aisha, Yusuf's mother and uncle Aziz's mistress. Yusuf's mother is economically industrious, but her husband will not let her. She is refused the opportunity of selling in their local market on the pretext that Yusuf needs care. He makes his wife to understand that there is no need in trying to sell and look for money because he can provide for the family. This is evident in a conversation between the two when Yusuf's mother expresses her wish:

Yusuf's father: Is there anything you lack?

Yusuf's mother: that's not it

Yusuf's father: what is it about then? Do you lack anything? Have you ever gone hungry? The Hotel is the latest of my line of business to make a fortune and a name, and you know that. (4)

From this conversation between Yusuf's parents, we discover that Yusuf's father is very proud and authoritative. For him, he has provided everything the wife needs and does not care if she is satisfied or not. The most he cares about is making a name for himself. This shows that men are self-centred and think that providing food is all a woman needs.

Uncle Aziz's mistress equally suffers the effects of male dominance and relegation. Though very rich, she falls for uncle Aziz. Blinded by love, she gives up her inheritance. The best she gets in return is being locked up in a house because of her sickness. Khalil explains the circumstances under which uncle Aziz's met his mistress to Yusuf in the following words: "Uncle Aziz married her many years ago and became suddenly rich but she's very ugly. She abandons her because of her illness and locks her up in a room, while he feeds fat on her inheritance (3).

Remi Akujobi in “Gender, Literacy and the Society: A Discourse of Disparity in some Selected Schools in Sokoto Metropolis, Nigeria,” explains that women whether in rural or urban areas aspire to “get there”. They wish to reach their horizon; they too want to touch the stars, if touching the stars is their ultimate; and so any attempt to hinder them from these goals is viewed as victimization. Therefore, disparity in education between men and women is considered victimization, and where there is disparity, the woman is crippled; she is devalued and reduced to “half”. Aisha is a victim of such circumstance. Because she is deprived of doing what suits her, she becomes handicap and lazy, and has trouble performing her normal duties. As Gurnah makes us to understand, a woman who tries to improve herself is seen as invading male domain. This creates differences and conflicts and thus the gap between men and women keeps on widening. Woman in this case are made “other”, the “inessential”, the “suffix”, while men are elevated to the “essential”, “subject”, “ultimate”, as Simone de Beauvoir puts it. Yusuf’s father also makes us to understand that women are not meant for business, but are meant to serve others, especially their male counterparts. Yusuf’s mother is always so busy whenever uncle Aziz is around. Yusuf’s father tells her he wants the best of preparations:

Whenever Uncle Aziz is around mother prepares the best dishes, two different kinds of curries, chicken and minced mutton. The best rice Peshawar rice, glistening with ghee and dotted with sultanas and maharini, overflowing the cloth covered basket. Spinach in a coconut sauce. A plate of water- beans. Strips of dried fish charred in the dying embers which had cooked the rest of the food. (50)

This quotation attests that Yusuf’s mother spends most of her time cooking and serving Uncle Aziz and her husband whenever he is around. The husband sees her only as a housewife. This kind of treatment goes the same for Hamid’s wife. The husband sees her as an object. Whenever he gets back from work he asks: “where is that thing, can’t she hear that I’m around. Get me my food and some cold water” (90). Maimouna on getting the husband’s voice, rushes out and bows in greetings, then serves his food. This proves that women are like puppets in the hands of men. When Maimouna retaliates Hamid gets so disgruntled and says: “what kind of talk is that? Where did you learn to speak like that? It must come from hanging around with gossips” (194). Both Hamid and his wife have their own interests to protect. The differences in what they desire leads to conflicts.

Sri Ay Wulasari in *“Gender Inequality Perception: A Comparative Study of Women in Japan and Indonesia”* intimates that one of the most fundamental forms of gender conflict in the society may be seen at the level of social unit, which is the gender distribution of roles in the family. First, from childhood, people are surrounded by gender stereotypes. According to Eckert and McConnell-Genet in *Communities of Practices: Where Language and Gender Power Live*, gender is embedded so thoroughly in social institutions, community actions, social beliefs and people’s desires that it appears to the society as completely natural. Men in most cultures have more access to positions of public power and influence than women. And women in most cases wield considerable influence in domestic setting or in other non-public domains. Robinson et al. adds that “...house is for women only. Regardless of how best the wife may be with a paid job, the husband hardly takes any of the household chores (Quoted in Rohrbaugh 80). Moreover, Robert Clayton in the same vein quotes the voice of Tlali to say “woman is to say the pot, to say woman is to say the broom” (289). That is women are associated with the kitchen and household chores. Yusuf’s mother’s life revolves around the compound. Her day begins as early as 4:00 am. She sweeps the compound, prepares breakfast, and while Yusuf and the father are eating, goes to the farm to get what she will prepare for lunch and super (200). Sharon Begley, in a similar vein, in “Gender Stereotypes: Masculinity and Femininity,” notes that gender stereotypes consist of beliefs about the psychological traits and characteristics of, as well as the activities appropriate to, men or women. Gender roles are defined by behaviours, but gender stereotypes are beliefs and attitudes about masculinity and femininity. Hence the concepts of gender role and gender stereotype tend to be related.

Begley further adds that when people associate a pattern of behaviour with either women or men; they may overlook individual variations and exceptions and come to believe that the behaviour is inevitably associated with one gender but not the other. Therefore gender roles furnish the material for gender stereotypes. It is worthy of note that gender stereotypes are very influential; they affect conceptualization of women and men and establish social categories for gender. These categories represent what people think, and even when beliefs vary from reality; the beliefs can be very powerful forces in judgments of self and others. Therefore, the history, structure, and function of stereotypes are important topics in understanding the impact of gender on people’s lives (160).

It is hard to resist gender stereotypical inclination in the world; this is because, informally by virtue of living in a social world, individuals learn the appropriate or expected

gendered behaviour for their sex. While individuals can accept and resist traditional gender roles in their own presentation of self, gender roles are powerful means of social organization that impact many aspects of society. For this reason, individuals inevitably internalize conventional and stereotypic gender irrespective of their particular chosen gender, and develop their sense of gender in the face of different cultures and they assert the correct gender role of their perceived body. This is seen through Yusuf, when the Mnyapara says:

‘You’ve found yourself a husband, pretty one’ Simba Mwene said, laughter rolling out of him as he made a lovelorn face. You are too beautiful for that ugly monster. Come and give me a massage later tonight and I will show you what love is; and Yusuf frowned with surprise. (55)

The fact that Yusuf frowns proves that he considers the advances and love declaration by a fellow man absurd. Hence he asserts the correct gender role of his perceived body by refusing to comply with Simba Mwene’s sexual harassment tactics. Yusuf’s refusal to yield to Simba Mwene’s antics results into a conflict. Simba shows his superiority over Yusuf by conniving with the Myapara to send Yusuf far away into the jungle. All these, he does in an attempt to getting Yusuf to change his mind. Jacques Derrida posits that the world is full of ideologies which he calls binary opposition. He further states that these oppositions usually arise because one group regards itself as superior and looks down on the other. Reasons why Derrida refers to these oppositions as violent hierarchies. This leads to a number of discrepancies as the marginalized group attempt to reassert themselves. This explains why the female characters in the text retaliate when their husbands go against their desires and priorities. The characters in Gurnah’s text live in a society that is strange to theirs. From their actions and reactions, it is evident that they carry what their different cultures uphold, in relation to gender performativity. These characters struggle to make their gender matter or give meaning to it. In the course of doing this, they get into gender nonconformist behaviours, which results into conflicts with other characters. Laurie Cohen and Melissa Tyler in “Spaces that Matter: Gender In/Visibility, Materiality and the Poetics of Organizational Space” states that Performative analysis of gender draws critical attention to the body as an important site on which the gendered subject is brought into being, or made to matter (24). Here, they play on the term matter as referring to both the materialization of gender, and its performance in accordance with the heterosexual matrix. They further posit that gender performativity, and its materialisation in the form of “bodies that matter” is

driven largely by the desire for recognition of the gendered self as a viable, intelligible social subject. This implies that the reasons why some characters put up behaviours which do not align with their biological sex is as a result of trying to get recognition. This quest for recognition of their gendered body according to how they perceive it leads to conflicts. Yusuf the protagonist gets into conflict with other characters from the beginning to the end of the novel. This is because he and the other characters have different preferences and they perceive their genders differently. Yusuf ascribes to the heterosexual matrix of male and female relationship. While characters like Mohamed Abdallah, Ma Ajuza, and the Mistress bases their interest on Yusuf's physical outlook, he stays strong and pursue Amina. This confirms what Cohen and Tyler say that performative analysis draws critical attention to the body as an important site on which the gendered body is brought into being. The Mistress's desire for Yusuf, and Yusuf's eventual refusal to heed the Mistress's pleas of a relationship leads to a conflicting situation between them. We get the encounter between Yusuf and the Mistress through the author who says:

He expected to be met by a ranting, dishevelled woman who will fly at him with incomprehensible demands. The Mistress received them in a large room whose windows looked out into an enclosed yard inside the house. The floor was covered with thick decorated rugs, and large embroidered cushions were arranged at intervals along the walls. Khalil greeted her and sat several feet away from her. Yusuf sat down beside him. Khalil spoke first and after a while she replied. Her voice sounded fuller in the room, with a quite modulation which gave which gave it authority and assurance. As she spoke, she adjusted her shawl slightly and she saw that the line of her face were finely etched, giving it an appearance of alertness and determination which he had not expected. After some refuted advances, the Mistress spoke angrily, and even though Yusuf could not understand the words. The Mistress rose in anger, her face pinched with misery. The bubble of her face slowly subsided, and then she beckoned him nearer. He that she was richly dressed.

Her long cream dress glittering with amber thread. She pulled her shawl away and leaned forward, waving him nearer with insistent urgency. He

took two steps forward and stopped, his heart pounding, knowing he should leave. She began to talk quietly to him. Her voice was rich with feeling and her voice grew softer as she spoke. She pressed the palms of her hand on her bosom and the rose to her feet. He began to retreat and she followed. He turned to flee, but she clutched his shirt from behind and he felt it tear in her arms. As he ran out of the room, he heard her screams of agony (231-236).

From the above excerpt we realise that the Mistress's encounter with Yusuf degenerates into a conflict. The Mistress's desire to protect her interest, and to get what she desires, against what Yusuf considers normal, questions the ideals of masculinity and femininity. The Mistress uses her position, wealth and power to make Yusuf's life miserable. Her promise of imprisonment causes Yusuf to consider fleeing with Amina.

It is on a similar platform that Gayatri Spivak in "*Can the Subaltern Speak*" posits that women, as postcolonial subjects have been marginalized or completely omitted. In the same article, the term "woman" is defined by some as a category of essential oppression and flattening. The article also notes that women in colonized societies are often marginalized not only because of their race, but also because of their gender. Due to this, their experience of domination in a patriarchal system makes it difficult for them to define themselves. It is imperative to acknowledge that women across the globe, and across cultures, experience denial of personal development, denial of educational development, and also denial of voice. Although females' ethnic background may vary significantly, the experience of marginalization remains the same. We realize that the women in Gurnah's *Paradise* have no voice. If uncle Aziz's mistress had a voice, then she would have fought back, and recuperate what is rightfully hers- inheritance confiscated by Aziz. She is locked in a room, because of her health condition and physical outlook. This means although a woman can be rich economically, she needs a man in order to have a voice. Although there are a few female characters, the world they inhabit is every bit as cruel as the world inhabited by the men. Bill Ashcroft and Helen Tiffin in *Key Concepts to Postcolonial Theory* on this note states that the "concept of dominance is a principal regulator of human societies (42). They termed the marginalized group the "other". And this "other" is denied effective voice, and is pushed to the margin, a process which as Helen Cixous observes bestows upon them a statute of marlad inferiority. She adds:

What is the “other”? If truly there is an “other”, there is nothing to say; it cannot be theorized. The “other” escapes me. It is elsewhere, outside: absolutely other. It doesn’t settle down. But in history of course, what is called “other” is an alterity that does settle down, that falls into the dialectical circle it is the other in a hierarchically organized relationship in which the same is what rules, names, defines, and assigns “its” other...the reduction of a “person” to a “nobody” to the position of “other”-the inexorable plot of racism. (Quoted in Young 2-3)

It is therefore evident that patriarchal structure dominates in every sphere. Women are reduced to the position of nobody, without a “man”. In Gurnah’s *Paradise*, when women are mentioned, they are mentioned through other men and in relation to them. Gurnah does this because he is illustrating the idea of men in Africa with ambiguous gender roles. In the text, we find men who are playing the roles society or cultures ascribe to women. An example of such instances can be seen through Hamid and Yusuf. The encounter between Hamid and his wife makes this glaring as evident in the following excerpt:

Hamid while clearing the bush winced at a sharp twig that stabbed his palm. Finally with a despairing wail he threw the machete on the ground and stormed back to the house. ‘I’m not going to kill myself over that forest’ he declared as he brushed past his wife. (68)

As seen above, man, whom society and culture terms stronger, is not strong in all circumstances. Hence Maimuna quips: “it is not a forest, just a few bushes you feeble man” (45). Hamid thus proves deficient physically. This attitude of his deconstructs men’s superiority over women. Through Yusuf, we equally see the switching of gender roles and responsibility. Hamid says:

Yusuf did all house chores, chopped some firewood, swept the yard, did the dishes, when he could be spared, he went to the market for vegetables and meat while Amina went down town, lingering in the open spaces and watching the herdsmen and the farmers passing through. (69)

The above citation proves that a person's gender expression may or may not be consistent with socially prescribed gender roles, and may or may not reflect his or her gender identity (*The American Psychology Association* (28)).

Following the concept of marginalization, we realize that women are treated as objects - they are commodified. A woman is marginalized first because she is woman, and secondly, by the society that set rules for them. This commodification is seen in the text when the narrator states that "The sultan purchased rear beauties from around the world - from India to Morocco, and from Albania to Sofala. He sent out for women everywhere and paid well for them (145). It is evident that women are considered as objects. The Sultan, because of his financial ability "purchases" as many women as he wishes. Women are turned into baby producing machines: "... he produced hundreds of children with them I would be surprised if he himself knew the number of children accurately" (205). This attests to the fact that women are married not for love, but for the interest of the man. Like the existentialist, Abdulrazak Gurnah in *Paradise* presents to us Yusuf who chooses to live as he likes. He chooses his freedom over his entire family and damns the consequences. He refuses to condone with the absurd social conditions by refusing to be a homosexual. In the same light, Yusuf's mother Amina, and Maimuna strive against all odds. For Virginia Woolf, when women have a room of their own (a tradition, a language, economic and intellectual independence) they will be free to be themselves, to see a reality as it is without their relation to male sex weighing down their judgment. They will be able to "think of things in themselves" (*Room* 110-111). This implies that when a woman is free, she is able to do things her own way.

This chapter set out to prove that gender related conflict is deeply ingrained in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Paradise*. The differences in sex have made society to see the woman as the weaker sex. It also looked at some men, exhibiting different types of masculinities by not adhering to their gender roles and responsibilities. In the course of our discussion, we discovered that several factors contribute to women being viewed as the "other". These factors include cultural constraints, societal beliefs, fear, poverty, and ignorance. With all these constraints, women are bound to be the weaker sex. We also discovered that some men do not adhere to their gender responsibility, as indicated by society. We find men playing female roles. Despite this, individuals attempt to break the frontiers laid by the society. This made us to conclude that differences in gender, results to conflicts and subjugation. This paves the way for redefinition of gender by individual characters thus creating an alternative space for themselves as the next chapter attempts to exude.

CHAPTER THREE

TOWARDS RECONFIGURATING A NEW SPACE

The fundamental differences that exist between men and women have led to the creation and establishment of some societal constraints. Characters, while trying to break free from such constraints, have further entangled themselves into what society considers absurd, thereby entrapping others into their web. Given that societies and cultures ascribe roles to men and women, the desire for men and women to break free from such roles has called for the quest of a new space. Such space as desired by characters, is meant to reassert their real gender role and responsibility, in order to create a psychological stability in which characters feel comfortable, hence asserting themselves fully in their individual communities. This chapter therefore examines the various strategies employed by characters to break free from societal constraints and patriarchal domination and create an outlet or space of their own in which they can express their gender identity freely. It also assesses how far they succeed in forming such a desirable space.

Erik Erikson in *Identity: Youth and Crisis* looks at identity, as a psychological well-being. Its most obvious concomitants are a feeling of being, at home in one's own body, a sense of knowing where one is going, an inner assuredness of anticipated recognition from those who count (Bracher 518). By this, Erikson implies that being comfortable in the society and living the life one wants, one needs to identify himself/herself, and identifying oneself is having a feeling of being secured in a place called one's own. Uncle Aziz's mistress is deprived of such comfort and freedom. She is deprived of her liberty of feeling free in her supposed matrimonial home. Her case is even worse because no one recognizes her. No one wants to know the reason why she is the way she is, rather, a judgment is passed against her which helps to blur her identity as a married woman. The society does not care to know who between Uncle Aziz and her is wrong. According to Erikson:

The conscious feeling of having a personal identity is based on a simultaneous observation: the perception of the self-sameness and continuity of one's existence in time and space, and the perception of the fact that others recognize one's sameness and continuity. (Qtd Bracher,519)

The absence of recognition is, correspondingly, “the worst evil that could befall us (Todorov 15). This is what Uncle Aziz’s mistress suffers from, and which tampers with her sanity.

The lack of recognition and care is the most common and powerful cause of identity vulnerability, for it most often leads to severe forms of shame and humiliation as a result of insult and ridicule. Recognition is therefore an important factor in transcending mistreatments and malpractices. In the novel, no one recognizes Uncle Aziz’s wives as part of the community. Uncle Aziz’s customers even describe her as a man. They say: “Her face is sharp featured and handsome” (209). This is a way of saying that she is ugly and this is insulting. This could be probably why she is confined in the room. As a result of this lack of recognition and love, Uncle Aziz’s Mistress strives to create a new space for herself, within which she can feel comfortable, be loved, and find a sense of belonging. This, she does, by devising her own strategies. Khali tells us that

‘The Mistress hides from people. She never goes out. The few women who visit are relatives or people she cannot turn away from. She made me put mirrors on the fence so that she could see the garden without going out. That was how she saw you. Every day you went to work in the garden, she watched you through her mirrors. She said God had sent you to her to cure her.’

‘At first she said that if you prayed over her, she would be healed. Then she insisted that you would have to spit on her. ‘The spit of those God favours has powerful qualities,’ she said. One day, she saw you holding a rose in the cup of your hand and she became certain that your touch would heal her; she said that if you held her face as you held that rose, and then her sickness would go away. (204-205)

It is evident that one does not need to suffer physical injury in order to be traumatized. The mere fact that Uncle Aziz confines his wife in her bedroom pushes her to seek for an outlet. She finds freedom in her thought of being cured by Yusuf. Gilligan Pett in *Violence* explains that

To suffer the loss of love from others, by being rejected or abandoned, assaulted or insulted, slighted or demeaned, humiliated or ridiculed,

dishonoured or disrespected, is to be shamed by them. To be overwhelmed by shame and humiliation, is to experience the destruction of self-esteem: and without a certain minimal amount of self-esteem, the self-collapses and the soul dies. (Qtd Bracher 520)

This implies that actions that do not directly cause physical injury or death can constitute the kind of psychological torture that can destroy a human personality in ways that are likely to lead to deviant behaviours in later life.

The confidence with which she talks is her stratagem to bring the boy closer to her in order to have a sexual relationship with him. Yusuf is just a boy, young enough to be her son, but she realises that a relationship with him could serve as an outlet through which she can escape from the trauma meted out on her by Uncle Aziz. The society in which she finds herself does not permit older women to have an erotic relationship with younger boys. She decides to insist on Yusuf coming into the house with the pretext that she needs prayers from him. Thus she realises that her gender conformist position does not really help. Each time in life that she shifts from it to a more gender fluidity, she obtains what she wants. At first, she had shifted and courted Uncle Aziz and got married, but now that Uncle Aziz has abandoned and imprisoned her within the confines of her rooms, she needs to bend even further in order to liberate herself and give her life some meaning by satisfying her carnal desires. She therefore does what in a traditional Muslim society, like the one she belongs to is usually done by men.

She claims that she needs prayers from Yusuf but this is a trick that she is using to bring the boy closer, for Yusuf does not even know how to pray properly. He does not even master the Koran. He studies it only to please his master and soon abandons it when he is asked to go and work in the garage with the Indian. Yusuf goes into that house only because he desires to see the beautiful Amina whom he has fallen in love with. The Mistress's actions above subscribes to Soren Kieregekaard's view in *Stages of Life's Way*, that "to be a woman is something so strange, so confused and so complicated that no one predicate can express it, and the multiple predicates that may be used to contradict each other in such a way that only a woman could put up with it (212). The mistress has thus realised that not even her husband or maid can help her live a fulfilling and meaningful life and as a result she desires to transcend the dictates of her society and get what she wants. In addition, Mariana Deegan

in “Trying to Find a Space Called Freedom” notes that liberation means more than having economic and educational opportunities (41). Despite the mistress’s wealth and perhaps education in Arabic, she is still subjugated by her husband whom she should rather be grateful and subservient to her for making him rich.

Furthermore, the Mistress also takes advantage of her position as a wealthy mistress in order to find meaning for her life. She knows that the two boys Khalil and Yusuf are mere slaves, and really have little power over her. She, unlike most women, is unaware of the power and influence that she wields. The reason why most women are oppressed by men is that they are not aware of their power and influence. Awareness of one’s strength can be a powerful weapon against subjugation and domination. The mistress is the source of Uncle Aziz’s wealth and at such she is indirectly responsible for the well-being of the entire house. Uncle Aziz is always absent making dangerous business adventures that sometimes ends in catastrophe. The novel ends with Uncle Aziz returning with little or nothing from the last expedition as a result of the attack from King Chato. He is covered with debts and has no idea how to repay his debts. His wife might be the only one to turn to for restoration. This might explain why even though she knows that the wife’s claim of Yusuf attempting to rape her in his absence is false. He does not challenge her, but rather reprimands Yusuf for going into the house against his instructions.

However, female characters such as Ma Ajuza, Amina, and Yusuf’s mother are void of any lucrative activity which can help empower them economically. So they adopt other strategies to give meaning and fulfilment to their lives. They oscillate between gender categories. They move back and forth from gender binaries to gender fluidity in order to achieve this. This enables them to survive emotionally and psychologically. By so doing, they equally succeed to create a centre for themselves by creating alternative life styles and roles that do not conform to the norms of their particular societies. Also, such movements help them to achieve a certain degree of equity in their respective gender-biased societies. This is evident through Yusuf’s mother. Based on her actions and reactions, she can be seen at one point as a gender fluid character and at another as not. She reacts differently in response to different situations. At one point, we see her as a loving mother and devoted wife. And at other times, she takes the role of the husband. This is seen in her effort making sure that her son Yusuf grows into a brave man. She tells him: “my dear son, bravery is what is required of

a man... be brave like your mother” (56). From what she does, we realize that her gender identity varies over time. This goes in line with what Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble* states:

Gender fluid is a gender identity which varies over time. A gender fluid person at any time identify as male, female, or any other non- binary identity or some combination of identities. It extends beyond behaviour and interests, and specifically serves to define their gender identity. (230)

Yusuf’s mother single-handedly brings up Yusuf while her husband spends time lamenting on the love he has for his first wife, whose parents refused their union. Yusuf’s mother takes great leaps to strengthen Yusuf for the difficulties and dangers that he is likely to face later on in life especially in the strange environment he is going to. She helps him to form great leadership skills and makes him into an independent-minded man.

Moreover, Yusuf’s mother in her fight against patriarchal domination does not accept the fact that a woman’s place is in the kitchen. From the outset, she has plans and ambitions. She has always loved to pursue her business. Her priority is not a husband. For her, a husband comes second. She dreams of owning a well-established business of her own. Unlike Hamid’s wife who loves staying at home and taking care of her husband and children, Yusuf’s mother dreams of becoming a successful and renowned business woman. This is evident when she says:

Staying at home and doing nothing is not my thing, and you know that my husband. My parents did not labour for me to end up lazing about. Let me do this for you, and especially for my son. I want to be economically empowered. If I stay like this I will not even be safe in this town. (48)

Another means by which characters configure a space for themselves is through resistance. Yusuf resists all attempts by men to have sexual relations with him. Yusuf’s has a gender binary identity as a result of his upbringing and the values learnt from his mother. However, because of his good looks men try to have sexual relations with him but he rejects them. Hamid tells the Indian trader that Yusuf takes no pleasure in all the comments people make about his beauty. He also rejects all advances from Ma Ajuza, and is appalled when on his return from a business trip with Uncle Aziz Khalil tells him that he had gone to Ma Ajuza.

Yusuf is tough and has a strong will power. He pursues his girls such as the daughter of Hamid, the girl who serves him while in captivity at King Chato's palace and Amina, Uncle Aziz's younger wife.

Yusuf is firm to maintain his gender role and responsibility. He sticks to the societal and cultural norm of what they consider normal, that is male-female relationship, otherwise known as gender binary. Gender binary says they can never be more than two genders. That is a person can only be male or female; and a sexual relationship should be only between these two categories, and not male-male or older women and children. As is the case in *Paradise* "When Yusuf sat with them in the evening, they made room for him, and include him in their talks. Sometimes a hand stroked his thigh, but he knew how to avoid sitting next to it after (209). Yusuf never gives in to same sex advances, thereby asserting his masculinity. By openly admitting to Uncle Aziz that he had gone into that house to see Amina and not actually to rape the old Mistress is an open assertion of his non gender binary identity that he has chosen. This explains why when the opportunity comes for him to leave Uncle Aziz, we are told that he darted forward. He does not follow the Germans because they are going to offer him freedom, but at least, in his mind, he is sure that the Germans, unlike his parents, will be able to protect him from people like Uncle Aziz and Mohammed who prey on young boys.

Another character who adopts a gender bending position is Ma Ajuza. She uses her power of rhetoric and her strong and imposing personality to create her desired space. She is old, ugly and unmarried. So, in order to obtain sexual gratification, she closes her eyes to the society which expects her to only sleep with male of the same age as her, or older than her and openly courts and sleeps with younger men like Yusuf and later Khalil. Ma Ajuza is always dominated by a wide smile each time she sees Yusuf. She laughs at anybody who tries to insult her or make advances towards Yusuf. While beckoning on Yusuf to love her, she keeps telling him not to listen to what others are saying. She tells people that she has no husband but has found favour in Yusuf. Ma Ajuza forms strategic escapist ways to make sure she is not bogged by gossips or any form of discussion that members of her community may hold in disapproval of her acts. Her utter non balance, frequent singing, dancing and her constant search for people's flaws in their cultural conformity is her way of getting people off her affair.

Gurnah in his novel tries to reveal the cultural imbalances that have relegated the female gender to the background. For example, a boy child is preferred to a female child, yet the female child is not given a broader space and opportunity to mingle and experience life. The sultan thinks only of the Princes to inherit his property and cares less about the princesses. Khalil's father gives in his daughter Amina into marriage to Uncle Aziz, in order "to compensate for his Ba's debt (207). It is evident that at every stage of the novel, female characters struggle to create a space of their own. They do all they can to create a just atmosphere for themselves. They all want to be free. Amina breaks the chain of relegation by falling in love with Yusuf. She goes against her husband, a man old enough to be her father. She finds love in the arms of Yusuf, and they both contemplate eloping. She is probably only held back by fear of the consequences that might befall her family.

Characters also use aggression, rebellion and sometimes force to reconfigure their personal space. This can be seen via characters such as the Mistress, Mohammed and Yusuf. Karl Marx in *Economic and Philosophical Manuscript* argues that humans do not have a fixed innate nature, but are instead defined by their social relationships, which in turn, are dependent on the economic structure of society and the classes it produced. Marx adds that the roots of gender disparity lies in political-economic structures based on subjugation, discrimination, exploitation and privilege. According to him, fairness prevails when individuals receive what they need on the basis of their humanity and not on what they deserve because of their social class, origin, or productivity. He notes that human beings are not molded by nature. It is the society that shapes the attitudes and behaviours of individual. The Mistress and Amina from the onset are not stubborn women. It is the society that has hardened them and pushed them to react in the way they are doing. They need a way to curb patriarchal dominance, and to show that they are human, and should not be treated as objects. The relationships between women and women and across gender categories are not balanced. Women are always the other, yearning to love, and be loved, and to be showed some care. The fact that they are deprived of such opportunities push them to device strategies of getting what they want by themselves. Gender-variant men such as Mohammed are despised and talked about in a condescending manner.

Simone de Beauvoir in *Second Sex: Facts and Myths* correlates this idea by stating that

For the male it is always another male who is the fellow being, the other who is also the same with whom reciprocal relations are established. The duality that appears within societies under one form or another opposes a group of men to a group of men; women constitute a part of the property which each of these groups possesses and which is a medium of exchange between them. Women have never composed a separate group set up on its own account over against the male grouping. They have never entered into a direct and autonomous relation with the men. "The reciprocal bond basic to marriage is not set up between men and women, who are only the principal occasion for it" says levis-Strauss. (71)

Simply put, men regard other men more than women. They establish reciprocal relations with other men, disregarding the women. In Gurnah's *Paradise*, we realize that Uncle Aziz prefers to be in the company of his male counterparts. He values his relations with Mohammed Abdallah, Hamid, Yusuf and Khalil very much. Although he has two wives, Amina and the Mistress, there is no fruitful conversation between them in the novel. To him, they are almost insignificant. The women leave under the guise of being "Mrs. Aziz", yet there is nothing that makes them feel that they are his wives. Both women are deserted, and are emotionally starved. It is for this reason that they strive to make their lives worth living. Just as women, gender variant men such as Yusuf and Mohammed are treated as objects. They are called names and men think they can be used as objects of pleasure and business. Aziz seems to have use for Mohammed only when he is travelling, probably because despite his gender variant nature, he is also strong to defend himself and the other men in the caravan. As for Yusuf, men call him names, strike his thighs and chiefs even ask for him to be offered as a peace offering.

The Mistress takes the bull by the horn. She expresses her love to Yusuf openly. She transcends the patriarchal line and goes for what she desires. Her actions show that women have gone far beyond the times when they had to sit and wait for men to approach them. The Mistress, in order to get Yusuf, starts by inviting him for diner and prayer sessions. In her desperation, she tells Khalil to bring Yusuf to him and failure to do that she will come and get Yusuf herself (206). Khalil further says "She wants you to say a prayer and... and... touch her there ... She wants you to touch her heart, and heal the wound in it (210). By doing this, the Mistress creates an environment, which is convenient for her to get what she wants. She

cares less of the fact that she is still someone's wife. Hence, in the midst of a culture where men regard women as second class citizens, the Mistress creates a space for herself and strives for an authentic identity. This is open rebellion against the norms and restrictions of her male-dominated society.

In Book V of "The Nicomachea Ethics" Aristotle observes that we call just the things that create and preserve happiness in parts of the citizen's community" (159). According to him:

The hallmark of a just apportionment is equality, this consists of maintaining the same ratio of quantified goods or burdens to qualified men for all recipients. In rectification, it consists in restoring the parties to the relative position they were in before one harmed the other. (159)

As seen above, and judging from the mistress's actions, it is evident that the things that create and preserve happiness deserve to be called just. The Mistress does all she can to preserve her happiness. It is evident that she does everything possible to bring happiness in her life. With her rights as a human being, she deserves to love and be loved. She strives for solidarity by creating acquaintances with Yusuf, Amina and Khalil. She forcefully breaks the world of solitude created for her by her husband Uncle Aziz. Bo Rothstein in "Creating a Sustainable Solidarity in Society" encourages solidarity, which according to him is a practice that increases equality in life chances.

Another character whom in the course of the novel is very conscious of his gender, and strives to maintain it to the end is Yusuf. He has values and principles which guide him. Yusuf never calls himself beautiful as other characters do. Yusuf seems not to think about beauty in masculine terms, he sees beauty in women. Dorothy E. Smiths in *The Stand Point Theory* posits that

What one knows is affected by where one stands (one's subject position in the society). We begin from the world as we actually experience it and what we know of the world and of the "other" is conditional of the location (Smith 1987). Put in another way, the goal of Smith's Feminist Sociology is

to explicitly reformulate sociological theory by fully accounting for the standpoint of gender and its effects on our experience of reality. (115)

This knowledge and consciousness of one's gender constitutes a guide to one's behaviours in the community. Yusuf is aware of the fact that men are not supposed to be attractive to other men erotically. Reason why he does not reciprocate the advances made towards him by Mohamed Abdalla, the hotel cook, and Simba Mwene. The hotel cook drink and curses and abuses everyone in sight except Yusuf. He would break off in the middle of the foul-mouthed harangue with smiles when he caught sight of him but Yusuf still feared and trembled in front of him (5-6). Also, Khalil tells Yusuf that "The Myapara likes you but who would not like a beautiful boy? Your mother has been visited by an angel" (45). All through the novel, Yusuf is feminized and flattered with beautiful words; words which are typically used by men in wooing women.

Another male characters, Simba Mwene, tells Yusuf that

'You've found yourself a husband pretty one!' laughter rolling out of him as he made a lovelorn face for the benefit of the company. 'You're so beautiful for that ugly monster'. 'Come and give me a massage later tonight and I'll show you what love is'. And Yusuf frowned with surprise. (192)

From the above except, it is evident that Yusuf is an object of desire by the men. He is admired, and he is a thing the men want to possess. The fact that Yusuf frowned with surprise after Simba Mwene's utterance, proves that he is against what he wants. Yusuf here therefore, is seen as a character who strives to give himself an identity above what the male characters see, and what they take him to be. Yusuf's experiences among traders from different cultures, ignites in him a spirit of bravery. In one of the key scenes at the end of the novel, Yusuf overcomes his fears. When he sees the dogs feasting on piles of excrement and they growl at him, warning him not to come near, he realizes that like the dogs, he will be forced to "eat shit" for his entire life unless he does something drastic to change things (240). We further see Yusuf's bravery and decisiveness when he decides to move away. He tells Amina that

If this is Hell, then leave. And let me come with you. They've raised us to be timid and obedient, to honour them even as they misuse us. Leave and

let me come with you. We're both in the middle of nowhere. Where else can be worse? There will be no walled garden there, wherever we go, with sturdy cypresses and restless bushes, and fruit trees and unexpectedly bright flowers. Nor the scent of orange sap in the day and the deep embrace of jasmine fragrance at night, nor fragrance of pomegranate seeds or the sweet herbaceous grasses in the borders. Nor the music of the water in the pool and the channels. Nor the contentment of the date grove at the cruel height of the day. There will be no music to ravish the senses (234).

From the above excerpt, we realise that Yusuf has grown past the age of being commanded. He reaches and takes the decisions that concern his life. He envisages creating a “paradise” for himself and his beloved, Amina. Yusuf’s long standing love and admiration for proves his actions. This explains why Yusuf shuns Uncle Aziz’s instructions, and strives to live a life of his own. The fact that Yusuf courts Amina, a female character, shows the reassertion of his gender. His decision to elope with Amina, attest his bravery and maturity. This bravery and maturity is noticed by Uncle Aziz when he says “you really have been brave, haven’t you? How you have distinguished yourself in these last few weeks (241). From Yusuf’s action, we can see that through his bravery and intelligence, he has worked to gain the experience he desired.

The actions and reactions of both male and female characters in the novel, while striving to create a space for themselves coincides with the ideas of Reeve and Baden in *Gender and Development: Concepts and Definitions* that gender is “the distinctive patterns of ideas, beliefs and norms which shape the way of life and relations of male and females as groups in a society” (69). Included in these patterns are expectations and characteristics, as well as aptitudes and likely behaviours of womanhood and manhood. This explains why Yusuf, Ma Ajuza, the Mistress, Simba Mwene, and Mohammed Abdallah, all behave in distinct ways. They all in different ways through which they strive to strike a balance in their lives. They do what seems comfortable to them, and not adhering to the norms of a given people. Yusuf finds a male to male relation absurd, while characters like Simba Mwene and Mohammed Abdalla see it very normal because their culture accepts it.

This chapter was out to examine characters reaction when caught in the web of societal and cultural constrains. It also studied the methods or strategies employed by characters in

their attempt to flee from societal constraints, and be free. It equally looked at how characters struggle to reassert their gender identity in the midst of diverse cultures. In the course of our analysis, we realized that patriarchal dominations and neglect is detrimental to the female folk, and as a result, they struggle to create a space of their own. We also found out that characters as a result of culture shock are determined to maintain and uphold the values and norms of their own culture. Finally, we came to the conclusion that *Paradise* offers an important vision for the construction of the self, wherein women and men create a centre for themselves in the midst of diverse cultures where conflicts of interest is the order of the day. The next chapter therefore attempts to investigate the various gender categories present in our classrooms. It further shows through a lesson plan how an excerpt in the text can be used in an ESL/EFL classroom.

CHAPTER FOUR

GENDER IDENTITY (CATEGORY) IN A CAMEROONIAN CLASSROOM

This chapter sets to out find the students' perception about different gender roles and relationships. It also looks at the different gender categories that students align to in a Cameroonian classroom and tries to show the importance of gender awareness in the teaching and learning experience. Finally, this chapter introduces a lesson on reading comprehension in order to demonstrate how a teacher can actively engage in the issue of gender category in the Cameroonian ESL classroom.

Gender identity is one's innermost concept of self as male or female or both or neither - how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different than the sex assigned at birth. Most people develop a gender identity that matches their biological sex. For some, however, their gender identity is different from their biological or assigned sex. Some of these individuals choose to socially, hormonally, and or surgically change their sex to more fully match their gender identity (Jonathan Kos 215). Such conceptions account for the different manifestations of personalities which reflect one's gender identity. Due to globalization, the world has been reduced into a small village. In this light, Abdulrazak Gurnah, captures some sensitive contemporary issues which are plaguing today's world. One of such issues evident in Gurnah's text is gender categories.

It is therefore difficult to read this text in a classroom and not be confronted with the issue of gender. Whenever such an issue comes up whether spontaneously or not, the teacher does not need to shy away from it because most students have very thrilling questions or ideas about them as result of their own personal experiences with gender or as a result of their wide exposure to the media. The classroom therefore becomes an important environment where students ought to learn about these unfamiliar issues and freely express themselves about them. Ryan Hannah in "The Effects of Classroom Environment on Students' Learning" posits that

A large amount of a child's time is spent sitting in a school/classroom. This place is where they will learn various skills deemed necessary and proper for them to achieve success in the global society. He explains that the classroom is where they will gain an understanding of their place in the

world, and the “gifts” they have to offer. It is where the students develop what they want their future to look like, as well as knowledge of skills needed to reach that goal. (241)

With the classroom being such an important place in the growth and development of a child, it is important to find out how students perceive and react to a sensitive contemporary issue such as gender categories given that the concept no longer enjoys a unique variety, but rather new and seemingly strange varieties keep evolving. Like the Zanzibari society where the author comes from, the Cameroonian society treats gender from the point of view of patriarchal domination. This situation is exemplified in most traditional set ups in the Cameroonian society. Given that a work of art serves as a mirror to the society, many writers use this medium to sensitize their societies. Rose Murfin and Supryia M. Ray in *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms* define arts as the study of beauty in nature and arts (5). Beauty here does not only refer to things that are appealing to sight. Arts also give the opportunity for writers to reflect on society the way it is and the way they want it to be. In this light, it serves as a revolutionary platform where subjects that are otherwise considered as a taboo can be discussed. This helps in bringing knowledge that seemed farfetched, closer to the students. By relating knowledge to context, teachers can help the students to identify with the issues handled and therefore seek solutions to their own personal or private worries. One of the issues raised in the novel under study but which many teachers usually shy away from is that of gender categories.

The teacher therefore can use excerpts as platforms to engage students with the question of gender category while at the same time enhancing their reading skills. In this wise, the teacher cannot and might not be able to take the teaching of reading for granted as has always been the case in many ESL/EFL classrooms in Cameroon. Julian Hermida in *The Importance of Teaching Academic Reading Skills* notes that in the past decades, researchers discovered a mutual relationship between students’ academic reading skills and academic success. Students as well as teachers, however, take the learning of these skills for granted. As a result, most students pay little attention to reading.

One of the factors that account for this is the fact that most teachers usually evaluate rather than teach reading comprehension. This approach is largely influenced by the manner in which course books are designed, and by the fact that most teachers due to academic laziness or lack of resources are glued to the prescribed textbooks. All reading

comprehension passages states that “Read and answer the following questions”. This approach to reading comprehension does not teach students how to read. Considering the fact that reading is very important in academic success; and given that most students fail because they do not know how to read or are not interested in the passages that are most often chosen for them to read, this chapter goes further to present a reading lesson plan which handles the issue of gender at hand while at the same time developing reading and other skills in the learner. This lesson is very apt and timely, given that most of these reading skills are tested in the Advanced Level Certificate Examinations, both English Language and Literatures in English papers. In order to achieve the expected outcome, an excerpt from the *Paradise* is chosen for this exercise.

One crucial aspect of teaching is lesson preparation. It is at this stage that the teacher chooses the most appropriate material and method for his or her learners. Sometimes, it is very important for the teacher to carry out research on the relevance of an issue to students prior to the lesson rather than just following the syllabus blindly. In this wise, therefore, the researcher embarked on a survey to find out respondents’ opinion on gender categories in a Cameroonian classroom.

The practical methodology deals with the presentation, description and analysis of data collected on the field. The data aimed at investigating and finding out students’ opinion on gender categories. As regards the methodology, emphasis is laid on the selection of subjects, collection of data and testing technique and method of analysis. As far as the analyses are concerned, emphasis is laid on students’ opinion based on the category they ascribe to. The respondents, (students) were selected in Lower-sixth Arts in Government Bilingual High School Essos Yaoundé (G.B.H.S Yaoundé). With the approval of my supervisor and the Literature in English teacher of G.B H.S Yaoundé, the questioner was administered. The researcher got responses from sixty (60) students, made up of forty (40) girls and twenty (20) boys. These students were between the ages of sixteen (16) to nineteen (19); an age group that falls within the bracket of adolescence. The reason for choosing this class is because; it is a fertile ground for the targeted investigation; the students could provide concrete information thanks to their level of maturity and education. The target gender categories are gender variance, gender binary and gender fluid. As regards the method of data analysis, the quantitative and the qualitative methods are used. According to Doberman Pinchers, “quantitative methodology describes data in numerical terms, and thus has the advantage of providing simplified and precise measurement” (564). Data that is analyzed

quantitatively is presented in tables in the form of numbers and statistics. (Explorable.com, 2). He further observes that quantitative researchers are mainly interested in the collection of numerical data to explain, predict and control phenomena of interest, using statistical analysis primordially. In the same vein, Mark Seliger and Elena Shohamy in “Language Policy: Hidden Agendas and New Approaches” note that quantitative data analysis is computational since it deals with figures and statistics (211). Quantitative methods are focused, concise and narrow, and their findings can be generalized from the study sample to the larger population.

Qualitative data, on the other hand, is an approach in which the researchers are regarded as data collection instruments and have an important role, as their values, assumptions beliefs, and knowledge have an influence on the data that is collected (Robin Sharma, 2). According to *Explorable.com* (ibid) the qualitative method focuses on gathering verbal data, rather than measurements, and the data is analyzed in an interpretative and subjective manner. The data that is analyzed using the qualitative method is presented in the form of words, images or objects. Also, it is focused, complex and broad, and its findings cannot be generalized beyond the study sample. Qualitative data analysis is thus a very personal process with few rigid rules and procedures. According to Cohen et al in *Research Methods in Education* data can be analyzed using an open ended approach (102). By this it means that most of the data collected in open- ended responses are qualitative, that is, are in numeric form. They acknowledge that research has so many meanings, but restrict its use to those activities aimed at developing the truth, particularly distinguishing research, from personal experience or common sense knowing and reasoning (4).

As far as the quantitative method is concerned, a table will be drawn to show the different occurrences of gender categories. The number of boys and girls who align to a given gender category will be indicated. Later, the total number of students who have the same gender identity will be presented. The qualitative method comes in with the interpretation of data. In order to do this, the researcher read the text under study thoroughly and selected an excerpt which handles different gender categories. Questions were then formulated in relation to the subject matter in the excerpt. Here, students are expected to read the excerpt and choose the right answer from the different alternatives given.

As far as data collection and analysis are concerned, the researcher faced some challenges in the process. It was quite difficult getting the students together. This is because it was during what is commonly known as “rascal week” that is the week immediately after the

exams. The researcher also had difficulties in analyzing the data. At the level of writing down all the respondents, it was difficult counting the number of students who align to a given category. This is because some would say something and then contradict it in the next question. For example:

- 1) How do you view a situation where a woman takes a leading role in courtship? 35 students said it is normal. Then a similar question which reads :
- 2) How do you view a situation whereby a girl proposes love or marriage to a boy? 40 students said it is strange in the African context. Thus such contradictory responses posed a problem in analyzing the data. However, the researcher considered the majority of the students who said the same thing, without contradicting in the next question. Before getting into the data analysis, it is important to give a brief insight of the targeted gender categories. This will facilitate the understanding of the different categories.

In order for the researcher to attain her objectives, she tested the respondent's ability in reading an excerpt and answering question related to it. In which fifty-five (55) students understood and responded, while five (5) students did not. Among the fifty-five who responded correctly, forty-five of them think it is normal for a woman to approach a man and profess love to him. They also said it is normal for a woman to contribute in paying her bride price, so long as she has the means. Ten out of the forty-five who responded correctly gave a contrary view. According to them, it is abnormal for a woman to approach a man, talk less of wooing him. We equally asked their view on same sex relationship. Out of sixty students, thirty of them think same sex relationship is very bad, while nineteen viewed it as positive, if the individuals feel happy and comfortable with each other; and eleven thinks it's not too bad, depending on the culture and tradition of the people.

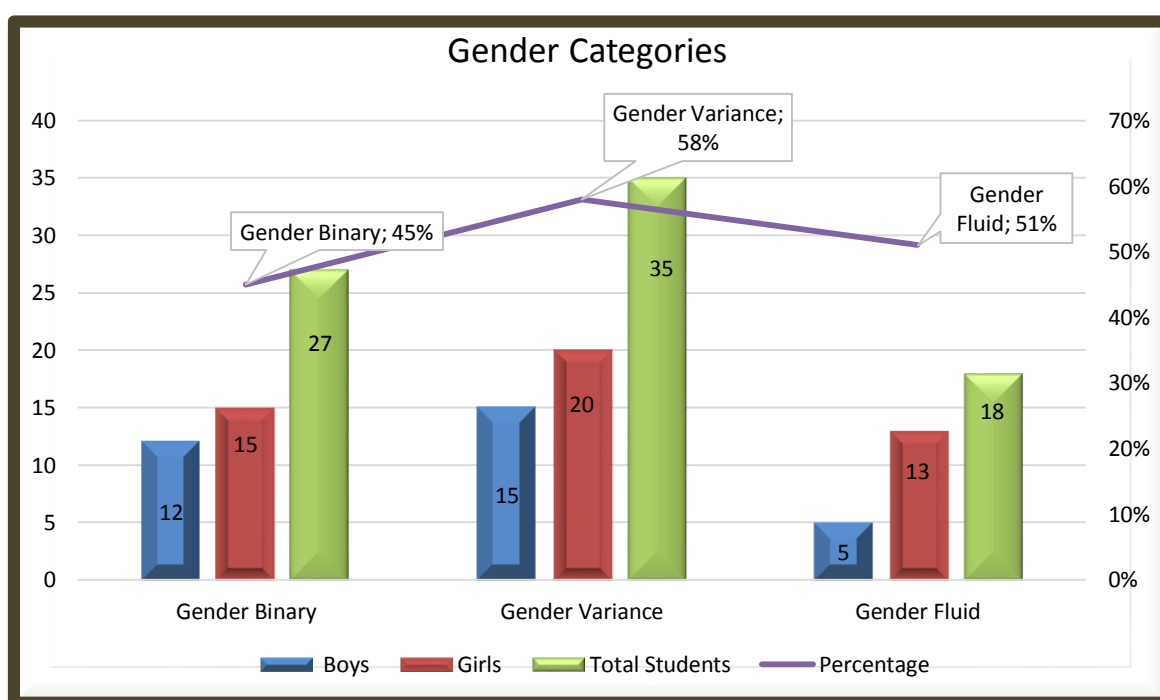
The next gender category that was examined is gender binary. According to *Wikipedia The Free Encyclopedia*, gender binary is the classification of sex and gender into two distinct, opposite and disconnected form of masculine and feminine. It further states that it is one general type of gender system, and as one of the core principles of genderism, it can describe a social boundary that discourages people from crossing or mixing gender roles or from identifying with three or more forms of gender altogether. In this binary model, "sex", "gender" and "sexuality" are assumed by default to align; for example a biological male will be assumed masculine in appearance, character traits and behaviour, including a hetero-

sexual attraction towards the opposite sex. It is important to note that classification with this gender binary does not encompass individuals who are born with non-binary reproductive organs and excludes those who identify lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or a third gender. As regards gender binary, respondents were asked which combination makes an ideal union. Fifty-five out of sixty students opted for man and woman, while five respondents said it depends on the individuals. They are free to choose whatever combination suits them and that which makes them happy and comfortable. Also respondents opinion were sort on who they think should carry the financial burden in the family. In this light, forty respondents said it should be the man while twenty think either the man or the woman can shoulder the financial burden. This they backed up by saying that it depends on who has the financial means.

On the question of the growing changes in gender category, respondents were able to elaborate on the fact that it all depends on the individuals concerned. They also think it depends highly on the society and what the culture and tradition of the people holds. To some cultures, lesbian and homosexual marriages are celebrated in church, while in other cultures; such a union is considered a taboo. And it is shunned at by the society and considered morally wrong.

The next category which was examined was gender fluid. Simply put, gender fluid recognizes that a person can demonstrate more than one gender role. These changes, over time depend on the individual. As regards this category, 8 respondents say it is normal to see some girls developing male features and behaviours while boys develop female features and behaviours. These changes are evident in dressing styles, manner of walking, talking etc. Although this is the case in some societies, the fact that such categories are fast gaining grounds in other communities, especially in our society today is a cause for concern. Given that what pertains in the modern world is shown on public media; and since viewing is not restricted, teachers and elders need to take the responsibility of sensitizing the students and discouraging such combinations. At this juncture, the table and bar chart below will show the percentages of the findings.

Serial numbers	Gender categories	Number of boys	Number of girls	Number of students	Percentage
1	Gender Binary	12	15	27	45%
2	Gender Variance	15	20	35	58%
3	Gender Fluid	5	13	18	51%
Total	3	32	48		



From the table above, it is observed that only 45% of the respondents see gender binary as the norm. 58% align with gender variance while 51% ascribe to gender fluid. Thus it is evident that the different gender categories examined are fast gaining grounds in our society. At this point the study presents present a lesson plan on developing reading skills, using an excerpt from the text. Through the lesson, learners will be taught how to infer, summarize, using contextual clues to get the meaning of unfamiliar words, and how to read and jot. The excerpt chosen is apt in handling the target reading skills the researcher wants to develop in students.

Before selecting the excerpt, the researcher took into consideration the learners' age, level of education and class.

This chapter aimed at investigating the perception of gender categories in a Cameroonian classroom. It also went ahead to presenting a lesson plan, on developing reading skills, using an excerpt from *Paradise*. In the course of our analysis, we discovered that the target gender categories we sort to investigate are deeply rooted in our Cameroonian classrooms. This we got through the questionnaire that was administered. Through the respondents' responses, we realized that students are so much excited and involved in behaviours which do not correspond to their biological sexes just like the mistress and Ma Ajuza in the text, who approach men and declare their love for them. A good number of students, both boys and girls, say it is normal for a girl to approach a boy. Thus, they portray behaviours which do not align with their biological sexes, as prescribed by the society. Thus the percentages of the findings ranged between 51% to 70% as indicated on the bar chart.

LESSON PLAN

Name : HARRIETE FRI ACHOANOH

School : Government Bilingual High School Yaoundé

Class: Lower Sixth Arts

Number on roll: 60

Sex: Mixed

Subject: English Language

Module: Family and Social Life

Language Area : Reading Comprehension

Lesson Topic : Developing Reading Skills (inferring, summarizing, getting meaning of words through contextual clues, reading and making notes)

Skills: Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening.

Time: 12: 40 – 13: 30

Duration: 50 minutes

Date: 10 April, 2016

Teaching aids: Instructional charts, handouts, flannel board.

References: Gurnah, Abdulrazak. *Paradise*. London: Bloomsbery, 1994.

Hornsby, A. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford U P, 2010.

Contributing Previous Competence: Students can skim a text for gist and can scan a text for specific information.

Expected outcomes: By the end of the lesson, learners should:

- (1) Read and select specific information from the text;
- (2) Extract main points from the text as they read and jot them down;
- (3) Use contextual clues to guess accurately the meaning of words in context;
- (4) Discuss gender related issues in real life;
- (5) Summarize the text.

STAGES	INTERACTION	TIME	SUBJECT MATTER	PROCEDURE		RATIONALE
Introduction	T- S	5 Min	<p>Observe the chart on the board and say what you see</p> <p>Ans: a male dressed like female, an old woman kneeling and begging a young boy, two boys kissing each other.</p> <p>I) How did you recognize each of them? Ans: we read them.</p> <p>II) What other things do you read daily? Ans: Labels, newspapers, signs, notices.</p> <p>III) Why do you think people read? Ans: to follow instructions, to look for specific information, to pass an exam.</p> <p>IV) Our lesson for today is based on developing reading skills.</p>	<p>Teacher's activities</p> <p>Teacher puts up a chart containing some pictures which the students read and described.</p> <p>Teacher gives instructions and asks leading questions.</p> <p>Teacher announces lesson topic and writes it on the board</p>	<p>Students' activities</p> <p>Students observe the chart.</p> <p>Students put up their hands and answer the questions orally</p> <p>Students listen attentively</p>	<p>To create the learner's awareness of the importance of reading in life.</p> <p>To expose them to different types of reading texts.</p> <p>To lead them into the lesson which is reading</p> <p>To acquaint students with the topic of the day.</p> <p>To give students a focus</p>

Presentation		20Min	<p>I- Read the passage on the handout, entitled “gender identity” silently for five minutes and say what the passage is about.</p> <p>II- Re-read the passage and while reading, jot down on the margin, three different gender categories found in the texts.</p> <p>Ans: gender binary, gender variance and gender fluid.</p> <p>III- How old is Yusuf?</p> <p>Ans: 12 years old.</p> <p>IV- Using context clues, come out with the meaning of the following words as used in the passage.</p> <p>N.B. Context clues refer to information or familiar words which may help one to get the meaning of an unfamiliar word in a text.</p> <p>For example</p> <p>Anguish: excruciating distress</p> <p>Following the above example, bring out the</p>	<p>Teacher gives handouts to students.</p> <p>Teacher moves round the class to ensure that the students are reading as instructed.</p> <p>Teacher explains and writes words on the board.</p> <p>Teacher writes words on the chalk board and</p>	<p>Students read the passage silently for five minutes.</p> <p>Students put up their hands and answer the questions orally.</p> <p>Students infer the meaning of words with the help of context clues.</p>	<p>To enable students read for gist.</p> <p>To develop the skill of inferring by letting students state what is not overtly mentioned in the text.</p> <p>To develop the skill of getting the meanings of unfamiliar words without the use of a dictionary.</p>
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			<p>meanings of the following words</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Jewel- precious 2) Crave - desire 	<p>then elicits the meanings from the students.</p> <p>Teacher writes students' correct responses on the chalkboard</p>		
Guided Practice		10 Min	<p><u>Discussion Questions</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1- What gender category do you consider the best <p>Ans: Gender binary i.e male and female relationship.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2- Have you ever been approached by someone of the same sex as you. 3- What is your stance on gender non-conformity, behaviours? 4- Who do you think is to blame for such gender changes? 5- How best can one handle love advances from same sex without causing conflicts or exclusion. 	<p>Teacher asks students specific oral questions.</p> <p>Teacher moves round the class while discussing with the students.</p>	<p>Students listen to instructions keenly.</p> <p>Students put up their hands and share their views and opinions orally.</p>	<p>To enable learners discuss what they have read and share their views and ideas with their peers.</p>

Evaluation		10 Min	<p>Exercise</p> <p>Write a short summary of the text in five lines.</p> <p>What in your opinion are the causes of gender variant and gender fluid behaviours. Propose ways through which this can be combated.</p>	<p>Teachers gives specific instructions</p> <p>Teacher moves round the class correcting the students books.</p> <p>Teacher selects students to read their summaries aloud.</p>	<p>Students listen to instructions</p> <p>Students do their exercise in their books individually</p> <p>Students put up their hands and read out their summaries.</p>	<p>This is done to test student ability in selecting relevant information from a lot and to develop the skill of reading and summarizing.</p>
Post lesson activity		5 Min	<p>Write a talk about gender categories. Convince your audience about the disadvantages of gender non-conformist behaviours and its relative consequences.</p>	<p>Teacher copies post lesson activity on the chalkboard and instructs the students to take it down.</p>	<p>Students copy exercise in their books.</p>	<p>To enable learners to think critically and to convince logically, while stating their point.</p>

CONCLUSION

This work set out to validate the thesis that human discrepancies create disparity between genders, thereby necessitating the quest for a new space. It also proved that the growing ambivalence in the concept of gender is deeply rooted in our Cameroonian classrooms. In an attempt to vectorise our agreement, it was important first of all to identify the different gender categories evident in Gurnah's *Paradise*. Written against the backdrop of postcolonial and gender criticism--, the work explored the ambiguity of gender roles and relationships. It further examined patriarchy and the material bases of gender conflict. The work equally analyzed the extent to which gender stereotypes imply that women and men are valued differently; that one sex is better than the other. The work looked at the socio-cultural and political factors that orchestrate gender conflict in Gurnah's *Paradise*, and the various strategies employed by characters in their attempt in breaking free from societal and cultural constraints. This led us to the investigation of the perception of gender categories by ESL students. In this process, we identified the different gender categories that students align to, and their perspectives about the ambiguous nature of gender categories. Finally, we proposed a lesson plan, wherein an excerpt from *Paradise* was used in teaching the developments of reading skills.

In the course of our analysis, we realized that Gurnah presents characters who exhibit different gender roles. Such roles do not correspond to their biological sexes. We also discovered that gender is an ideology, and it is perceived differently by different characters. This is because some of the characters in the novel act at odds to their prescribed gender roles. Other characters, due to their physical outlook, are perceived differently, regardless of their gender identity. Gurnah's characters in the likes of Ma Ajuza and the Mistress, exhibit gender nonconformity behaviors otherwise known as gender variance. Yusuf and Amina outwardly showcase the prescribed category which is gender binary. Yusuf is identified as a gender fluid. This is because though he is a boy, he looks more feminine on some days. Gurnah presents to us different types of masculinities. Here, we see males taking up female roles, and behaving like them. The author also presented to us men expressing their sexuality in different manners. Here, we found males developing and expressing erotic feelings towards a fellow male. From all indications, Gurnah in his text sorts to prove that gender is a very sensitive issue in any given society and should be handled with care.

We equally came to terms with the fact that women in gender binary relations, as well as gender fluid and gender variant are marginalized or dominated. This status as the analysis proved, places them as victims of circumstances. Men in gender binary relations lord over women while people who are generally in gender binary relations try to ridicule or subjugate those in the other two categories, viz gender fluid and gender variance. We equally came to terms with the fact that that Gurnah's novel portrays ways through which the marginalized, oppressed or dominated characters can create an identity for themselves. Gurnah empowers these victimized characters either economically, intellectually or otherwise as a means of combating their otherness. Thus, these characters strive for re-identification and the re-creation of a space of their own - a space within which they can find authenticity and give more meaning to their lives.

We further looked at the evolution of gender categories and we sought to investigate these gender changes in our Cameroonian classrooms. From our findings we ascertain that the different target gender categories, which are gender binary, gender variance and gender fluids are greatly ingrained in our classrooms. Due to globalization and the growing changes and advancement in modern technologies, such absurd categories have been brought to our door steps and its consequences are far reaching on the younger generation. Teachers, modelers of societies, as well as students must be aware of all these gender categories in order to develop the right approach to handling them when they come up in their classrooms, or anywhere else.

By way of contributing to literature, this work is a continuation of the long standing but crucial debate on gender - masculinity and femininity as the prescribed gender category. Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Paradise* presents the fact that there exists other categories other than masculinity and femininity. While the work advocates for all gender categories to make meaning out of their lives and fight for freedom, it also cautions readers of the existence of other gender categories and suggests the right responses when confronted with categories that are uncommon or incompatible with one's values.

Teachers in particular and educational authorities need to revise their course materials to include all gender categories so that students are not taken aback when confronted with the different gender categories. Abdulrazak Gurnah presents serious problem common to most African societies, that of gender category continuum. From all indications, the growing ambivalence of new gender categories is affecting our educational system. This is because, as

proven by the investigation, globalization has made many students to be aware of other existing gender categories. This greatly affects the standards of morality as many of them imitate such behaviours sheepishly. To solve this problem, the powers that be, first of all, have to be aware of the dangers of such evolving categories to our younger generation and the educational system in particular. In this light, the government should revisit the law and place sanctions on categories which could lead to moral degradation while at the same time, being tolerant to categories that are natural. Also, Heads of school administration should follow suit and implement these laws. Moreover, for gender binary relations, both sexes should be given equal opportunities as a means of creating an acceptable space free of conflict and relegation.

Using Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Paradise*, other researchers can attempt to examine Gender Categories in Cameroonian novels as a catalyst, in a bid to show universal values within cultures and prove that such representational material can be useful in the ESL/EFL classroom.

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APPENDIX

Read the following excerpt and answer the questions that follow.

The women customers loved Yusuf so much. One of the women, Ma Ajuza, a large strong-looking woman with a voice which cuts through crowds desired him strongly. She seemed thirty years older than Yusuf. Her body shivered and straightened with an involuntary charge when she caught sight of him and a small cry escaped her. She approached Yusuf with ecstatic cries, calling him, *“my husband, my master”*. She tempted him with sweets and offered him pleasures beyond his wildest imaginings if he came with her. *“Take pity on me my husband,”* she cried. In the same way, Mohammed Abdalla, a tall strong-looking man, looks at Yusuf, his eyes softened with pleasure and he says, *“Come closer my jewel. You found yourself a husband, pretty one. You are such a beautiful boy”*, he groans in anguish.

A QUESTIONNAIRE ON GENDER IDENTITY IN A CAMEROONIAN CLASSROOM

This questionnaire is intended for an academic research and the respondents' answers will remain confidential. As a result, the respondents are urged to answer the questions with maximum sincerity. This will help the researcher in her quest.

Respondents' Status

School:

Class:

Age:

Sex:

Religious inclination:

QUESTIONS

Instructions: Tick the appropriate letter where necessary.

1) How do you view a situation whereby a woman courts a man or walks up to him to profess her love for him?

A) Normal B) abnormal, the man should be the one to do such. C) It is strange in the African context.

2) What is your view on a man-to-man relationship?

A) It is really bad. B) Not too bad. C) Good, if the individuals feel happy with it.

3) According to you, what should the ideal union?

A) Man and woman B) Woman and woman C) Man and man.

4) Who should decide which union is good or not?

A) Society B) The Individual. C) Religious institutions.

5) In your opinion, who should take up more financial responsibility in a relationship?

A) The woman B) The man C) Any of them, depending on who has the means.

6) Is it acceptable for a woman to pay the bride price?

A) Yes, if the man cannot afford it. B) No, it is the man's duty. C) It is absurd.

7) Nowadays, there exist new forms of marriages such as homosexual and lesbian marriages. Do you find these changes appropriate?

A) Yes, it depends on the choices of the individuals. B) No, it is morally incorrect. C) It depends on the laws of the society.

Answer the following questions

8) What is your opinion on the fact that some girls nowadays develop male features and behaviours while some boys develop female features and behaviours?

9) Girls only

As a girl, what will be your reaction if a girl walks up to you and professes love?

Boys only

As a boy, what will be your reaction if a boy walks up to you and professes love?

10) Boys only

How will you feel if a girl walks up to you and professes love or proposes marriage?

Gender Identity

The women customers loved Yusuf so much. One of the women, Ma Ajuza, a large strong-looking woman with a voice which cuts through crowds desired him strongly. She was two scores older than Yusuf. Her body shivered and straightened with an involuntary charge when she caught sight of him and a small cry escaped her. She approached Yusuf with ecstatic cries, calling him, "*my husband, my master*". Come to me my love, my jewel, you are precious to my heart. She tempted him with sweets and offered him pleasures beyond his wildest imaginings if he came with her. "*Take pity on me my husband,*" she cried. You are all I have always craved for- my desire please accept my burning love. In the same way, Mohammed Abdalla, a tall strong-looking man, looks at Yusuf, his eyes softened with pleasure and he says, "*Come closer my jewel. You found yourself a husband, pretty one. You are such a beautiful boy*", he groans in anguish. Yusuf's parents broke into an argument. During one of their terrible arguments, when they seemed to forget about him sitting outside the open door as they clawed at each other, he heard his father groan, 'My love for her was not blessed. You know the pain of that.' No, no, don't accuse me, not you. You are the light on my face,' he shouted, his voice rising and breaking.