

Synthesizing Stylistic Repetition and Repetition Compulsion: Echoes of Postcolonial Trauma in Gurnah's Selected Novels

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Abstract—The study of language's role in conveying ideas and ideologies remains a focal point within literary discourse. Analyzing prominent literary figures and their distinctive writing styles has persistently sparked scholarly inquiry. Abdulrazak Gurnah's stylistic approach notably engages syntactic repetition as a foregrounding device. This research focuses on identifying and exploring syntactic repetitions found in Gurnah's selected novels and analyzing their underlying motivations and effects. Additionally, drawing on Short and Leech's framework outlined in "Style in Fiction", the study categorizes these repetitions into three stylistic levels: syntactic, phonological, and semantic (Leech & Short, 2007). These levels encompass a variety of devices, including anaphora, epiphora, antithesis, anadiplosis, phonaestheme, phoneme cluster, semantic prosody, hyponymy, polysemy, collocation, ambiguity, and so on. Using a qualitative research design and drawing on Cathy Caruth's theory of repetition and iteration, this study explores Gurnah's distinctive stylistic choices and underlying thematic concerns. The findings reveal Gurnah's conscious use of language through repetitive devices to establish a sensible connection with readers. This conscious use enables readers to discern the predominant images and themes within the author's mind. Notably, anaphoric devices emerge prominently as a key tool in conveying the overarching semantic theme of "Postcolonial Trauma" (Craps, 2008) to readers. This thematic focus accentuates Gurnah's exploration of the enduring impact of colonialism and the complexities of postcolonial identity narratives.

Index Terms—stylistics, qualitative research design, cognitive poetics, anaphora, semantic prosody

I. INTRODUCTION

Language primarily facilitates communication, and its core function involves the generation of meaning (Schwartz, 2012). Indeed, a novel, as a verbal communication, is dynamic in expression, typically abstract, and concomitant with the words used. The writer uses figurative language to convey the complexity of his thoughts (abstract) through verbal communication (concrete), while simultaneously striving to achieve communicative competence through the use of symbols, neologisms, parallaxes, phonemes, and other linguistic elements. Therefore, the author's expression (style) more directly determines the meaning than the language employed. According to Short and Leech (Leech & Short, 2007), style refers to the expressive or emotive element of language that enhances the neutral presentation of messages. As a result, the author's style affects, evokes, and directs the readers to understand the semantic and overall meaning intended in the work of art.

Indeed, there is a concomitant relationship between form and content; Flaubert likens it to the relationship between body and soul (Leech & Short, 2007). Undoubtedly, linguistic evidence initiates the exceptional quality or pattern the author consistently employs in his work of art, a process known as foregrounding. The process of foregrounding serves as a code that identifies a specific value, theme, and mindset of the writer, strategically drawing readers' attention and deciphering the author's unique way of thinking. There are four levels of style: semantic, syntactic, phonological, and graphological. Foregrounding is a pattern (chiasmus) or variation (tropes) that stands out in the cognitive code. The qualitative foregrounding of an eminent pattern of choices within the code shades into the qualitative foregrounding that changes the code itself (Leech & Short, 2007).

This research paper analyses certain foregrounding patterns used by Abdulrazak Gurnah in his three novels, *Paradise*, *Gravel Heart*, and *Afterlives*. With linguistic clues from the novels, the researchers uncover the writer's innate intentions and core thoughts. In *The Verbal Icon*, Wimsatt, W. K., Jr., and Monroe Beardsley propound upon the concept of the "intentional fallacy", cautioning against a concentration on the historical, sociological, and psychological background of the author. Instead, their suggestion is to scrutinize a specific author's text in comparison with their own preceding works. Deviating from this approach poses a risk of succumbing to the intentional fallacy. As a result, the researchers

recognize that a technical method for identifying an author's inherent intention entails a comparative analysis of the author's texts. Gurnah employs repetition as a foregrounding technique to convey concepts that are difficult to communicate. All style figures fall under the stylistic category of 'foregrounding', namely parallelism, repetition, and deviations (Burke, 2014). This research on repetition aims to improve the readers' deeper understanding of trauma expression. This helps to unfold how language and patterns in communication influence understanding, persuasion, and emotional response of the readers.

This study aims to explore several key research questions that provide insight into the use of language and style in Abdulrazak Gurnah's selected three novels. Firstly, it investigates the prominent repetitive stylistic devices, or linguistic evidence, that appear throughout the texts. Secondly, it examines how these specific linguistic features serve aesthetic purposes within the narrative structure and style. Finally, the study considers how these stylistic and aesthetic elements collectively contribute to a deeper understanding of postcolonial trauma as portrayed in Gurnah's works.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholars have extensively examined Abdulrazak Gurnah's literary oeuvre for its thematic depth and narrative complexity, particularly through the lenses of postcolonial theory and trauma studies. Omwenga examines the recurring silence by various characters in different situations throughout the novel *Paradise and Desertion* (2006). He demonstrates that trauma comes from psychological scars of colonial and postcolonial experiences. Also, Sheena Goddard in his article *Trauma and the Dialectics of Recuperation in Abdulrazak Gurnah's By the Sea* (2022) emphasizes the recurring use of the phrase "I would prefer not to" by the characters Saleh and Latif to underscore the passive resistance against the capitalist system that is in a colonial context. Similarly, in the article *The Global Refugee: Ocean Borders Thinking in Abdulrazak Gurnah's By the Sea*, Allahyari (2023) mentioned the repetition of the lexis "refugee" and "Asylum", which considerably underscores the refusal of recognition and identity, contributing to a narrative tension. Also, Coope (2008) in *Returning the Jims to the Jar: Material Culture stories and Migration in Abdulrazak Gurnah's By The Sea* observes how repetition of words changes the sound in the unique acoustic environment of a jar. The author suggests that the repetition emphasizes the symbolic aspect, making the word stand for broader ideas or experiences. Also, this shift can affect the meaning or perception of the words. So, it is identified that linguistic repetition creates one of the stylistic patterns or the author's choice of style, which is used by Gurnah to express certain specific values, themes, or mindsets of the author that help to grab the attention of the readers. Yet, this linguistic repetition in Gurnah's novels needs broad and in-depth examination to attain a holistic understanding and completely appreciate Gurnah's contribution to contemporary literature. Addressing this gap would complement contemporary thematic studies and furnish a more holistic understanding of Gurnah's contributions to contemporary literature, solidifying his place as a masterful storyteller in the postcolonial canon.

"Repetition is a linguistic phenomenon and stylistic device that plays a significant role in the analysis of all kinds of literary texts and is widely used", says Vinogradova (2021, p. 657). Repetition, as one of the linguistic features in Gurnah's text, involves the recurrence of single lexemes, phrases, syntactic structures, syllables, semantics, or even sounds/phonemes throughout the narrative. Elegant variation within repetition becomes a powerful thematic device in literature (Leech & Short, 2007). Ruberto (2009), in *Itinerant Narratives*, offers a broader reading of Gurnah's fiction, focusing on how travel and identity interact with literary form. Repetition, as a stylistic device, has also received critical attention beyond Gurnah. Хаджиева and Сарсенбаева (2024) argue that repetition operates across phonological and semantic dimensions in both English and Karakalpak literary texts, reinforcing emotional intensity and thematic unity. Ngūgī wa Thiong'o (2018) in the novel *Wizard of the Crow* refers to the recurring use of certain phrases, themes, or stylistic elements that serve to emphasize key messages and create a sense of unity and cohesion within the narrative. These repetitive patterns mimic the oral traditions and storytelling methods of local orature, which often involve the use of repetition for emphasis, rhythm, and memory retention, reflecting the collective consciousness of the community. In *Repetitions in Henry James Novels* by Andrea Radetić (2018) analyzes James' stylistic repetition across four levels: lexical, grammatical, phonological, and contextual/cohesive. Similarly, in *Speech Acts and Language Styles of Biden's Speech for promoting Peace Value*, Astiandani (2022) analyzes the stylistic repetition in Biden's speech, highlighting how it underscores various peace-related values. Short and Leech (2007) in *Style in Fiction* demonstrate how small changes in word choice, sentence structure, and sound pattern subtly shift the semantics of a story. They show how a sentence can be syntactically, phonologically, and semantically structured to convey its context more effectively. They assert that analyzing texts across these three stylistic levels enhances a deeper understanding of their meaning. In the same way, this paper seeks to analyze the repetitive stylistic feature across three levels: syntactic, phonological, and semantic, in order to foster literary appreciation. As Brenda Coope observes, Gurnah's linguistic repetition symbolizes broader ideas or a cognitive code that the author seeks to communicate to the readers. Like Shakespeare and Dickinson, Gurnah employs repetition to convey emotion and foster a deeper sense of understanding in the reader.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research aims to provide a nuanced and multidimensional understanding of how stylistic choices in fiction influence the readers' engagement and interpretation by employing Short and Leech's tripartite framework of syntactic, phonological, and semantic analysis, along with Caruth's trauma theory on repetition and iteration.

This study employed a qualitative research design. Three of Gurnah's novels, such as *Paradise*, *Gravel Heart*, and *Afterlives*, were selected for analysis. These texts were intentionally chosen due to the significant gaps between their publication years, allowing the study to trace the evolution of the author's thematic perspective.

This research process involved reading and re-reading the texts, selecting relevant data (specifically related to repetition), and analyzing it across three stylistic levels. The researchers systematically gathered all instances of syntactic repetitions employed by the author and classified them under multiple themes, including war, postcolonial impact, feminism, homosexuality, and economic disparity. Drawing on Katie Wales' *Dictionary of Stylistics* (1989), the study uses her proposed repetitive syntactic stylistic devices as the foundation for analysis. These data are presented and examined within the framework of the three stylistic levels (syntactic, phonological, and semantic). Miles et al. (2014) advocate three major processes for data analysis: data condensation, data display, and drawing and substantiating conclusions. Based on this approach, the progression of the research unfolded as follows: (1) identification and compilation of syntactic stylistic devices based on repetition, (2) classification of the selected data using repetitive stylistic devices from Katie Wales' *Dictionary of Stylistics* (1989), and (3) examination of the data based on the three proposed levels: syntax, phonology, and semantics. Short and Leech's framework provides a comprehensive toolkit for examining how stylistic choices, grounded in categories from Katie Wales' *Dictionary of Stylistics* (1989), shape the semantic and aesthetic understanding of fiction.

A meticulous and detailed analysis of these repetitive syntactic stylistic devices at the phonological and semantic levels, as proposed by Short and Leech in *Style in Fiction*, forms the core methodology of research. In addition, by applying the interdisciplinary approach of trauma theory, particularly that proposed by Cathy Caruth, the study seeks to understand how various cognitive mechanisms influence the readers' engagement with the text, thereby revealing the author's unique signature.

Cathy Caruth argues that saying the same things repeatedly is not merely an act of repetition; rather, it may represent an effort to articulate something difficult to express. In other words, Caruth suggests that literature demands that we read and listen to the language of trauma, even in its mute, repetitive silences of suffering. This research contends that Gurnah's use of linguistic repetitions is not mere reiteration but a distinctive mode of expressing trauma through literature.

Having established the claims that (a) language resembles trauma and (b) literary language is well suited for communicating it, we turn our attention to a more practical question: How exactly does literature speak trauma? Or, when authors represent trauma in the stories they tell, how does trauma shape those narratives? For Hartman, Felman, Caruth, and LaCapra, the answer to this question often returns to three tropes: absence, indirection, and repetition. (Kurtz, 2018, p. 100)

The fourth type of philosophy of trauma is present in trauma fiction that conveys an implicit philosophy of trauma while dealing with traumatic experiences. For example, modernist and postmodernist trauma fiction have developed certain textual strategies to performatively give expression to trauma through fragmentary, non-linear style, by foregrounding repetition, disrupted temporalities, absences, gaps, and silences that indirectly point towards the unsayable. (Davis & Meretoja, 2020, p. 26)

Finally, drawing on Cathy Caruth's book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narration, and History* as a methodology, this research aims to prove that Gurnah's devices of linguistic repetition strive to confront and communicate traumatic experiences. As Caruth suggests, to encounter trauma through new modes of understanding and thought.

IV. DISCUSSION

In Gurnah's three novels, the manipulation of anaphora and epiphora functions as a cohesive device, linking various parts of the text and creating metaphorical connections that deepen the narrative. According to Leech and Short (2007), cohesion refers to the linking of one part of a text to another, a technique that Gurnah masterfully employs to engage readers with the themes and emotions of his works.

In *Paradise*, the repetition of "imagine" serves as an anaphoric device: "Waterfalls that are more beautiful than anything we can imagine" (p. 79). In *Gravel Heart*, the narrator's mother uses anaphora to emphasize the incomprehensible horrors she describes:

You can't imagine what that time was like, my mother said, trying again to describe it. You cannot imagine the terror of it—the arrests, the deaths, the humiliations. People were driving each other mad with rumors of new outrages, new decrees, and news of more sorrows. But yes, you can imagine, you must try. Nothing stands between us and atrocities but words, so there is no choice but to try and imagine. (Gurnah, 2017, p. 20)

The repetition of "imagine" and "try" compels the reader to engage deeply with the emotional weight of the narrative, underscoring the difficulty of comprehending the horrors being described.

In *Afterlives*, the repetitive questioning "Can you imagine doing that?" combined with contrasting contexts functions as an antithetical device:

Can you imagine doing that, eating human flesh? I don't mean as an act of craziness in war or as a ritual of primitive people who eat their dead enemies to gain their strength—not as a custom, not as an item on your customary menu, but as a desire, a curiosity, and an adventure. Can you imagine doing that? (Gurnah, 2020, p. 111)

This repetition foregrounds the cognitive dissonance and moral complexity of the act, prompting deep reflection on the part of the reader.

All three quotations (from *Paradise*, *Gravel Heart*, and *Afterlives*) employ a similar grammatical structure centering on the verb "imagine" to evoke emotional and psychological engagement. What is the purpose of this variant realization of a single action? Is it here that the omniscient narrator, frustrated by the marginalization of non-Western suffering, emerges with this interrogative insistence? The word "imagine" becomes a sign, comprising a signifier (the phonemes or graphemes forming the word "imagine") and a signified (the internal image of war in our mind as well as the external reality of war itself). From Cathy Caruth's perspective, it is the otherness of voice that speaks the collective trauma of African people. The narrator's repeated appeal to the reader to "imagine" becomes a stylistic and ethical strategy, a way of articulating trauma that cannot be fully represented, but must be felt through empathetic cognition.

Phonologically, the texts employ phoneme clusters and phoneme themes to generate rhythmic and sensory experiences. In *Paradise*, the repetition of phonemes such as (/n/, /l/, /s/, /t/, /d/) mimics the movement of water, enriching the sensory imagery of flowing rivers and waterfalls. For instance, the sound patterns /l/ and /s/ often evoke smoothness and fluidity, reproducing the gentle imagery associated with water. In *Gravel Heart*, the repeated use of phonemes (/t/, /s/) creates a harsh, staccato rhythm that reflects the tension and psychological distress in the narrative. Words such as "terror", "arrests", "deaths", "humiliations", and "atrocities" amplify a sense of menace and discomfort. Similarly, in *Afterlives*, the phonemes (/t/, /ŋ/, /s/) contribute to a disjointed and uneasy rhythm, echoing the readers' likely discomfort and hesitation when confronted with the disturbing imagery. Phrases such as "eating human flesh", "act of craziness", and "imagine doing that" convey phonetic sharpness and emotional tension.

Semantically, the texts employ repetition to build cohesive themes and emotional landscapes. In *Paradise*, the positive connotations of words like "beautiful", "garden", and "waterfalls" create a sense of tranquilly and awe, aligning with the theme of *Paradise*. In *Gravel Heart*, words like "terror", "arrests", "deaths", and "humiliations" carry heavy negative connotations, building a semantic field of suffering and urging the reader to grasp the gravity of the situation. In *Afterlives*, the negative prosody associated with "eating human flesh" juxtaposed with words like "desire", "curiosity", and "adventure" creates a jarring effect, gripping the reader to engage with the disturbing nature of the content. Additionally, the hyponym related to water in *Paradise* strengthens the core theme of water as a life-giving and divine element, while the semantic field in *Gravel Heart* highlights the oppressive and violent nature of the post-colonial period.

Gurnah's novels can be effectively analyzed through the lens of Cathy Caruth's trauma theory, which emphasizes the repetitive and intrusive nature of traumatic memories and their resistance to narrative integration. In *Paradise*, the repeated invocation of the word "imagine" aligns with Caruth's concept of the return of the traumatic event through repetition, creating a narrative space in which overwhelming experiences can be indirectly processed. Similarly, in *Gravel Heart*, the anaphora of "imagine" and "try" highlights the difficulty of comprehending and articulating traumatic events, reflecting Caruth's notion of the mind's struggle to integrate trauma into coherent memory. In *Afterlives*, the antithetical repetition of "Can you imagine doing that?" mirrors the fragmented and disjointed nature of traumatic memory, compelling readers to engage with the moral complexity and cognitive dissonance embedded in the narrative. The repetition of specific phonemes and words across these texts contributes not only to their sensory and emotional resonance but also to a rhythmic and cohesive narrative structure that attempts to contain and make sense of trauma's enduring effect. This aligns with Caruth's assertion that storytelling is a crucial mode of bearing witness to trauma and of confronting what cannot be directly represented.

Cathy Caruth asserts that healing from trauma occurs through a continuous and repetitive process, wherein the individual must repeatedly dramatize and re-experience the traumatic event. Abdulrazak Gurnah's narrative practice revisits similar characters, structures, and incidents across his novels. This can be seen as a form of narrative reworking, through which he addresses his own experiences of dislocation and identity crisis. Van der Kolk and Van der Hart (Davis & Meretoja, 2020) argue that transforming traumatic memories into a coherent narrative facility both personal healing and collective memory, an idea that resonates strongly within Gurnah's texts.

Gurnah employs a variety of literary devices to highlight themes of trauma, colonial impact, and sensory richness, articulated through repetitive structures and phonological patterns. In one passage, repetition is a key stylistic choice. The text employs anaphora, epiphora, and symploce, as evidenced by the recurrent use of "or" and "how": "Or make a slave out of anyone? Or rob an innocent man? ... How they'll dispossess everyone. They are born killers without a streak of mercy in them. How they'll destroy us and everything we trust in" (Gurnah, 2020, p. 94). This generates a rhythmic structure that underscores the persistent anxiety and uncertainty experienced by the characters. The repetition of the phoneme /m/ further emphasizes a sense of motionlessness and pain, symbolizing the collective suffering and

silence of African people under colonial rule. Furthermore, this passage employs hedging to mirror the characters' fragmented and hesitant attempts to articulate their traumatic experiences.

In another passage, the theme of repetition continues with the use of anaphora, repeating "nor" to emphasize the sensory richness of the characters' experiences:

Nor the bitter scent of orange sap in the day and the deep embrace of jasmine fragrance at night, nor the 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. (Gurnah, 2022, p. 232)

This repetition emphasizes the contrast between the beauty of their surroundings and the underlying trauma of colonialism. The phoneme cluster involving "RA" sounds (Emre, 2010) serves as an auditory symbol of the burning poverty and hopelessness that plague post-colonial Africa. This phonological repetition reinforces themes of loss and disillusionment, aligning with Caruth's notion of traumatic repetition. Furthermore, the use of stylistic devices such as prosopopoeia and polysemy in the text adds layers of meaning, illustrating the complexity of trauma and necessitating a careful negotiation between writer and reader to fully grasp the underlying issues.

Gurnah's strategic utilization of repetitive conjunctions and phonological patterns aligns with Caruth's theory of trauma. The repetition of conjunctions in these passages reflects the return of traumatic memories, underscoring the ongoing struggle to process and integrate these experiences into a coherent narrative. His deliberate avoidance of conventional conjunction pairs and the use of hedging reflect the fragmented nature of traumatic articulation. This repetitive engagement becomes necessary to uncover deeper meanings, highlighting the intrusive and persistent character of trauma. Ultimately, Gurnah's stylistic choices complicate and deepen our understanding of the characters' postcolonial realities and their continuous efforts to assimilate traumatic experiences into their lives. As J. Roger Kurtz asserts, apartheid and colonialism produce a condition,

...in which trauma is not a momentary intrusion on everyday life, but rather a way of life, a permanent state of things. Generative in the strong sense as a movement to produce something ungraspable by sovereign power, the application of the postcolonial in this context aims to apply itself in a manner that reveals how it finally calls traumatic experience... (Kurtz, 2018, p. 240)

In Gurnah's narratives, the utilisation of repetition, phonological patterns, and semantic elements underscores themes of trauma, self-centredness, and postcolonial dislocation. In one passage, the repetition of first-person pronouns and phonemes emphasizes a self-indulgent perspective.

In another passage, Gurnah continues to employ repetition to delve into the characters' internal struggles:

I was ashamed of my failure, I was angry with them for bringing me here, I despised their self-importance, and I did not owe them a thing. So I was surprised when, around Christmas of that year, I received a letter on embassy paper from Rome... I cannot bear to return... (Gurnah, 2017, p. 101)

I told her, I cannot bear to see what you are doing... I did not know how to think of myself differently, how not to take myself so seriously, how not to take the world so seriously. I was tortured by vivid images of their embraces, and night after night, I murdered him. I was a dog; I felt like a dog. I did not think there was anything I could do about all of this. You ask why I did not speak. If I spoke, I could only condemn myself for my puniness and cowardice. My life was empty, without pleasure or purpose. I could not bear that Saida had abandoned me in such a way. Nothing seemed worth the trouble after losing her. I lost my way; that was how I was. I was ashamed of what had been forced on us and that we could not prevent it, that I could not prevent it. (Gurnah, 2017, p. 247)

These passages feature stylistic devices such as anaphora, antithesis, and epiphora, along with recurring phoneme clusters /θ/ and /t/. The emphasis on negative emotions and recurring verbs like "bear" foregrounds the characters' emotional vulnerability and unresolved pain. Gurnah's use of stylistic repetition thus becomes a textual enactment of trauma, one that reveals the circularity, fragmentation, and intensity of postcolonial psychological wounds.

The repeated phonemes /r/, /j/, and /s/, /k/, /p/ symbolize the characters' voiced and voiceless encounters, paralleling the trauma of being unheard or silenced in contexts of alienation and dislocation. This alignment of phonological patterns with themes of voicelessness and oppression reflects the characters' ongoing effort to articulate and make sense of their traumatic experiences. At the semantic level, the lexical set associated with physical love and desire in the first passage contrasts sharply with the expressions of shame, contempt, and surprise in the second, illustrating the shifting emotional landscapes that trauma generates.

Caruth (Davis & Meretoja, 2020; Kurtz, 2018) suggests that trauma is "deathlike break" (p. 244) and "mute cry" (p. 244), a rupture so severe that it repeats its effect, and may even erase the memory of the original traumatic event. In Gurnah's narrative, the separation of Masad and Salim from Saida is portrayed as more painful than her death, disrupting their capacity for communication and emotional connection. Slim suffered from developmental trauma; his lifelong neglect by his mother, father, family, lover, and motherland, beginning in childhood and persisting throughout his life, manifests in his repetitive, fragmented narration, especially through the anaphoric use of "I". In the Masad case, a single, unexpected incident causes a death-like rupture, triggering the re-emergence of trauma through dreams and flashbacks. This aligns with Cathy Caruth's extension of Freud's concept of "repetitive compulsion" (Davis & Meretoja, 2020; Kurtz, 2018). Echoing Freud, Caruth elaborates on the theory of "repetition compulsion", wherein trauma recurs

in unrecognizable forms such as nightmares, dreams, intrusive thoughts, or even symbolic actions. Echoing Freud, Caruth elaborates that “The repetition of trauma, that is repeated unconsciously in the survivor, therefore, is not only an attempt or an imperative to know what cannot live; it is also an imperative to live that remains not fully understood” (Kurtz, 2018, p. 204).

Geoffrey Hartman (Davis & Meretoja, 2020; Kurtz, 2018) writes most succinctly on this theme, arguing that literature enables us to “read the wound” (p. 349) of trauma and asking whether trauma “can only be reclaimed by literary knowledge” (p. 97). Caruth and others propose that language often fails to directly represent traumatic events, as words are inadequate to fully capture the lived reality of trauma.

This non-referential quality of traumatic language means it can only hint at or evoke the experience rather than explicitly describe it.

Gurnah's literary works intricately explore such themes through the intentional use of repetitive stylistic devices, delving into the depths of individual and collective trauma. Central to his narrative technique is the overwhelming presence of trauma, which permeates his characters' thoughts, language, and modes of expression. His use of foregrounding, a stylistic device that draws attention to particular linguistic elements, functions almost as a narrative signature or code, underscoring the disorientation and fragmentation characteristic of traumatic memory. Through foregrounding, Gurnah invites readers to engage with the text's abstract layers, offering glimpses into both the characters' psychic turmoil and the author's reflective engagement with trauma and displacement.

Semantically, Gurnah's narratives transcend the bounds of conventional storytelling; they function as reflections of the author's psyche and lived experiences, often resisting straightforward exposition. The ineffable nature of trauma permeates his works, compelling readers to confront the complexities of meaning and interpretation embedded within his communicative strategies.

This study posits the foundational role of textual analysis in supporting evaluative and interpretative claims made by scholars. It aims to elevate the status of literature within intellectual discourse by examining Gurnah's use of repeated literary devices. It argues that specificity in literary analysis is essential for gaining greater academic recognition and fostering deeper critical understanding (Burke, 2014).

In examining the overall contributions of stylistic devices to the representation of trauma, it has been identified that one-third of the repetitive stylistic devices used by Gurnah are instances of anaphora. Anaphora, when deployed in conjunction with traumatic experience, serves to foreground major themes in his novels, particularly the trauma of displacement, dislocation, forced migration, and collective racial, cultural, and national discrimination. From the perspectives of Stef Crap (Andermahr, 2015), it is argued that traditional Western approaches to trauma are primarily clinical and psychological, and may fail to fully account for the complex and layered nature of trauma as experienced in postcolonial contexts. Second-wave trauma theorists like Gabriel Schwab, Sarah Phillips Casteel, Ronald Schleifer, Saal, Stef Craps, and Forter have emphasized the need for trauma theory to evolve alongside a deeper understanding of psychological and cultural trauma. These scholars advocate for more inclusive and interdisciplinary frameworks that can better represent and interpret traumatic experience in literature, especially those rooted in histories of colonization, marginalization, and systemic violence.

Hence, the novels of Gurnah require an alternative way of understanding and communicating trauma that is more attuned to the cultural, historical, and social context of the victims. Rethinking varieties of trauma identified in these novels, and re-situating them in our understanding, shifting the meaning and challenging the Western-centric views of knowledge and power, includes structural oppression like colonialism. It delves into the concept “postcolonial trauma” (Andermahr, 2015, p. 49). “Postcolonial trauma novels often denounce the pathologization and depoliticization of victims of violence, critique Western complacency in dealing with non-Western testimony” (Andermahr, 2015, p. 5).

Textual approaches offer a unique way of understanding history by incorporating socio-political and cultural context, providing a holistic view of the trauma portrayed in Abdulrazak Gurnah's novels. Much of the repetition in his work reflects traumas rooted in a postcolonial context. For instance, in *Paradise*, the African characters dream of attaining a paradisaical world while caught in the turmoil of colonial wars, dreams embedded in their collective psychology. Yet Western perspectives often reduce Africans to pathologized figures or view them as “barbarians”. These perceptions stem from a shared root: poverty, oppression, and the mechanisms of Western dominance in the postcolonial world. In *Gravel Heart*, a novel without an explicit colonial backdrop, trauma arises from forced migration, dissociation, and emotional dislocation, still shaped by the legacies of postcolonialism. These are the same traumas that led Gurnah himself to migrate from Tanzania to England in his teenage years. Folasade Hunsu discusses the autobiographical elements present in Gurnah's fiction. This study finds that to fully grasp *Paradise*, *Gravel Heart*, and *Afterlives*, one must move beyond clinical interpretations of trauma and instead adopt a postcolonial trauma perspective. Gurnah does not merely represent trauma in a medical or psychological sense; rather, his writing conveys the deep crisis of memory he experiences. This obsession with memory becomes a driving force in his fiction. Yet language often fails him. It is through foregrounding (his distinctive use of linguistic repetition) that Gurnah encodes his abstract meanings. This repetition acts as a narrative signature, a stylistic device through which he communicates the enduring pain of postcolonial trauma.

V. CONCLUSION

An analysis of Abdulrazak Gurnah's writing, particularly his strategic use of repetition, reveals a sophisticated deployment of stylistic devices such as anaphora, epiphora, and other forms of patterned repetition, all of which contribute significantly to the emotional and psychological resonance of his narratives. These devices, often marked by deviations from conventional syntax, leave a lasting impression on readers, with anaphora emerging as a central mnemonic element in this study. In Gurnah's novels, anaphora functions as a key stylistic device, operating at both the syntactic and thematic levels. Its recurrence supports not only the rhythm of the narrative but also deepens the representation of trauma. Ultimately, Gurnah's meticulous manipulation of repetition, particularly anaphora, serves a dual function: it dramatizes the enduring impact of colonialism and positions postcolonial trauma as foundational to contemporary identity narratives. Gurnah's fiction resonates with Cathy Caruth's insights into the fractured nature of trauma and its compulsive return in memory, narrative, and language. His characters often embody this "repetition compulsion", reflecting trauma's intrusive persistence in both individual and collective consciousness. In other words, stylistic repetition in Gurnah's work underscores the psychological repetition of trauma itself.

By synthesizing insights from trauma theory and stylistics, this research bridges a critical gap between psychology and literature. It emphasizes how foregrounding patterns, especially repetitive structures, illuminates the psychological challenges embedded in traumatic expression. Moreover, it contributes to an understanding of how trauma manifests through language and narrative form, reinforcing the value of stylistic analysis in literary trauma studies.

By synthesizing ideas from linguistics, literary theory, and psychoanalysis, researchers can contribute to the development of new theoretical frameworks for analyzing trauma in literature.

Further, the frequent use of anaphora in Gurnah's work underscores its effectiveness in integrating both phonological and semantic repetition, making it a particularly powerful stylistic tool. This observation highlights the importance of future research into other repetitive devices like antithesis, symbolism, and epiphora. Such scholarly inquiries hold the potential to uncover deeper layers of meaning and thematic complexity in Gurnah's literary oeuvre.

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