

Echoes of Empire: Imperialist Pursuit and Monetization of Nature in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Afterlives*

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Abstract

The present research endeavours to map out the complex interplay between colonial history, nature, and economic exploitation in Gurnah's novel Afterlives. Set against the backdrop of German colonialism in East Africa, the novel delves into the lives of individuals impacted by imperialist pursuits, particularly focusing on the commodification of natural resources and indigenous labour. Through the characters' experiences, the narrative reveals how the colonial project sought to reshape both land and people for economic gain, embedding the violence of empire into the very fabric of nature. The novel critically examines the lasting effects of imperialism, as Gurnah portrays the ways in which colonial powers imposed economic systems that not only extracted natural wealth but also sought to control human lives. By highlighting the cyclical relationship between imperial exploitation and environmental degradation, Afterlives presents a nuanced understanding of how colonial legacies continue to reverberate in post-colonial settings. This study underscores the importance of acknowledging the environmental and economic dimensions of colonial history, contributing to the broader discourse on the enduring consequences of empire.

Keywords: Exploitation, Imperialist, Violence, Environmental Degradation, Discourse.

Introduction:

Ever since the beginning of diasporic migration and subsequent colonisation, Africa has been the bird's eye for European capitalist imperialism for the source of natural resources to be accumulated for the growth and development of European economic base and empire thereby exploiting the nature and those who are the part and parcel of that nature of Africa, otherwise known as the paradise on earth. German colonial power established German imperialism in East African regions (known as Deutsch Ostafrika) of Tanzania (formerly called Zanzibar), Rwanda and African Great Lakes region nearly in 1885. Germans' imperial pursuits in the Deutsch Ostafrika, the setting of the novel *Afterlives*, ostensibly was to exploit the rich resources and its people. After German defeat, British imperialism also continued the same legacy of exploitation and monetization of nature and natural resources of the land, thus, plundering the country. Every bit of Africa, thus, belonged to European imperialist powers: British East Africa, Deutsch-Ostafrika, Africa Oriental Portuguesa, Congo Belge. Schutztruppe, a troop of colonial army, was the chief agent of German atrocities and imperial pursuit in colonial Deutsch-Ostafrika. Similar agents of British imperialism were King's African Rifles and Royal West African Frontier Force and Force Republique for Belgians. The goal of the activities of these agents of cruelties was to plunder the land, natural resources and the labour force of the continent and to instill fear by unleashing terror on the land and its people in order to ensure their obedience.

Abdulrazak Gurnah is a Tanzania born British diasporic author known for his voice of resistance and resilience to his country's colonial past. He never shies away from exposing the cruel exploitation of the European imperialist endeavour to plunder the nature, human resources and beauty of the East African scenario. Gurnah indulges himself in the works of fiction and most of his novels deal with the themes of displacement, cultural identity, colonialism and post-colonialism (Falk, 2020, p. 4). The works therefore focus on the complexities of human nature and the impact the colonial past had on the lives of the characters. He focuses on personal growth, emotional resonance and the experience of the marginalized communities in society. The powerful storytelling and accurate representation of the horrors which people faced during the colonial era made him earn critical acclamation. Gurnah was born in Zanzibar in 1948 and being a child of migrants, he was greatly influenced by the complicated colonial past of East Africa. Being educated in a post-colonial society and having an academic background in literature shaped his perspective on life (Ruzmatova, 2024, p. 1). Personal narratives in the novels of Gurnah are intertwined with larger historical and political events to highlight the uncomfortable truths, the exploitation and power dynamics in society. *Afterlives* is Gurnah's tenth novel. Set in an unidentified town on the eastern coastline of Tanzania, like many of his other novels, this also deals with displacement, bloodshed and the ever-shifting nature of power (The Hindu, 2022). While on the surface, *Afterlives* deals with the impacts of German imperialism on East Africa, it also focuses on the untold stories that get lost in the grander picture. The novel is a complex interplay of colonialism and natural and economic exploitation. The story starts with Khalifa, who worked for a merchant named Amur Biashara during his early twenties, but in doing so he was unable to be there for his parents at their time of need. After the death of his parents, Khalifa married Asha and created a life together. When they realized they could not have children of their own, they started devoting their time to helping others.

The novel shows that there are many forms of exploitation, while the German colonizers established their control over the country with an iron fist, the local people were just as bad. Afiya is another protagonist within the novel who is an orphan and is treated harshly by the couple that adopted her. She is rescued by her brother Ilyas, but after the war breaks out, Ilyas again leaves behind Afiya to fight the war and never gets back. Gurnah has shown how war and colonialism break a person, Ilyas is unaware of the damage that he is causing to his sister and also to his mind (The New York Times, 2022). The manifestation of human wickedness is shown through both the characters of Afiya and Hamza. Afiya suffered years of suffering under her fellow Africans, while Hamza was broken by Europeans.

Colonial Encounters and Struggles in *Afterlives*:

Researchers consider *Afterlives* to be a sequel to one of Gurnah's previous novels named *Paradise* where the events take place before the First World War and show how the German government enlisted Askari, a mercenary group to commit several atrocities in the region on their behalf. *Afterlives* takes place in the same East African region, extending to the mid-twentieth century (Valle and Nazareth, 2022, p. 70). There are multiple victims of colonialism in the novel, Ilyas being one of the main ones. During his childhood, he was kidnapped by the Askari and this contributed to him having a colonial upbringing and seeing the Germans as "civilizers" and "saviours". When Ilyas refers to the Germans as honourable and civilized people, it is evident that he has been indoctrinated (Zerfaoui, 2023, p. 56). The character of Ilyas is first introduced in the novel with he arrives back in town, through a flashback Gurnah reveals the impoverished conditions of Ilyas while growing up. The indirect colonial exhibition of power is therefore what forced Ilyas to make such a drastic decision and is representative of his first migration movement. When the Askari found Ilyas, they did not care about Ilyas refusal to go with them as the only goal of the Askari was to recruit more natives and mould them according to colonialism. Thus, from an early age, Ilyas's eyes were open to hybridity, and he

developed a new colonial identity. However, in the name of ‘Zivilisierungsmission’ (civilizing mission) they lied and killed for the empire. Their only intention was, according to the German Oberleutnant in the novel, to “take possession of what rightfully belongs to us because we are stronger. We are dealing with backward and savage people and the only way to rule them is to strike terror into them and their vain liliput majestat sultans, and pummel all of them into obedience.” (Gurnah, 2020, p. 86).

The imperialist pursuit and the theme of migration are again shown in this novel as after getting kidnapped he is forcibly taken to the mountains. The dominance of colonialism and subjugation of the native cultures are seen as Ilyas attending a German school where he was forced to abandon his Muslim faith, praying to a different God would have entailed sin and so Ilyas mimicked his voice and pretended to pray in the Christian faith. The colonizers had a certain air of superiority and perceived the local East Africans to be uncultured. Therefore, the attempt to change the religion was the first effort to make Ilyas more cultured. Language is one of the mediums through which social hierarchies are maintained, Ilyas therefore internalised the German language (Valle and Nazareth, 2022, p. 73). The effects of colonialism on Ilyas and other children are clear as the Germans denied their own identity and shaped it according to their liking. Later in life, this makes Ilyas think he has a “superior” identity compared to the other Africans.

The theme of exploitation is also evident through these portrayals. After completing his education, Ilyas stayed back on the mountain with a farmer. Although he held the idea that he had established a relationship with the farmer, it was the coloniser farmer who ultimately benefited from the undefined individuality. By the time Ilyas returned to his village, Gurnah describes that the colonial discourse changed him so much that he did not realise that they were putting together a relationship of master and slave. He was completely unaware of how the brutal colonialism had impacted his mind. He considered his social position to be inferior and submitted to the German cause. Ilyas was under the false impression that the Germans considered him to be one of them and embraced his nature (Lemay-Hébert and Ari Jerrems, 2024, p. 254). The internalization of German culture and the effects of colonialism is evident as Ilyas felt like an intruder when he visited his village (Valle and Nazareth, 2022, p. 74). In a way, Gurnah represented his own experience through Ilyas. Growing up in Europe and being born to immigrants, Gurnah also struggled to remember names and faces when he came back to Tanzania. Through the uncle and aunt who adopted Afiya, Gurnah has shown that the oppression was not effectuated by the Germans alone in the narrative, the black people were ready to discriminate against a child thereby repeating the cycle (Zerfaoui, 2023, p. 54).

Gurnah through his creative narration never lets the readers forget the essence of colonialism. The two siblings were distanced from themselves also because of colonialism. After being rescued from the horrible living conditions, Afiya had a great time with her brother but it was short-lived. As war broke out, Ilyas decided to support the German cause as he considered himself to be one of them. Gurnah reveals the level of brainwashing the people suffered by the colonisers after being separated from their homes. Both Khalifa and Afiya were not able to grasp the idea of Ilyas wanting to leave behind his last remaining family to fight a war that did not affect him, they were not able to interpret the hybridity of Ilyas. The mind of Ilyas has been a product of colonialism, the decisions which Ilyas takes in the novel show that the European mission has been successful as Ilyas voluntarily enlists himself for German Schutztruppe force. As Ilyas never speaks, he never realizes the domination of the Germans and that he is merely serving their cause. The extent to which German colonials were successful in instilling hegemony is clear when Mahmudu, a chit chatter in a cafe, warns Ilyas,

Listen, just because one German man has been kind to you does not change what has happened here over the years. In the thirty years or so that they have occupied this land, the Germans have killed so many people that the country is littered with

skulls and bones and the earth is soggy with blood. I am not exaggerating. (Gurnah, 2020, p. 41).

This reveals the true picture of the colonial imperialists. However, interestingly Ilyas's answer to this remark was astonishing as he accused the person of exaggerating. However, resistance to German oppression and exploitation also started. There are references to the 'Al Bushiri' revolt and the protests and resistance of the caravan traders on the coast. The al bushiri rebellion united elite Arab, Swahili and African people against the various taxes and injustices inflicted by Germans. From August 1888, the German East Africa company tried to take over the coastal towns against fierce resistance from the Arab elite, who feared for their slave and ivory trade, and also from the Swahili and African population. Various other levies and rules were imposed, and the Sultan's former officials and military forces were taken under the control of the company, on much reduced salaries. These haughty attempts by Emil von Zelewski, the German administrator in Pangani, to raise the company's flag over the town sparked the uprising. The revolt around Pangani was led by the plantation-owner Abushiri ibn Salim al-Harthi, who gained the support of both the Arabs of the area and local Swahili tribes. But he was pursued by Wissmann and returned to the coast, where he was captured and executed on 15 December 1889. The tragic effect of colonial rule is shown as he disappears during the war. The readers are instead presented with another victim of colonialism named Hamza. Much like Ilyas, Hamza was also kidnapped at an early age by a merchant; he was forced to migrate to the coast to manage the store of the merchant. After years of serving the merchant as a slave, he was finally released for a trade journey. During his journey, he witnessed the negative effects of colonialism, the bloodshed, oppression and alienation that the people of the country faced under German imperial rule. Hamza ran from his oppressor to become an Askari and serve the Kaiser. Gurnah states that although Hamza felt he was deciding by himself, it was the colonial discourse that was deeply rooted in him. After his voluntary recruitment, he realized the mistakes he had committed as the colonizers were worse than his previous merchant. The racism is revealed as Hamza learns they are not allowed to make eye contact with the German officers. As the war between Germany and Britain unfolded, the locals often did not know which land they were fighting on. The Askari were trained in terror, they were instructed by the officers to forcefully make the people submit to their cause. In the power struggle, they massacred the hometown of Hamza. The Askari did not know for whose ambition they were fighting and were merely acting as puppets for the German military.

Unlike Ilyas, who was indoctrinated from an early age, Hamza was able to separate right from wrong. He was under the impression that his enlistment would help with a sense of belonging and individuality, but he realised that the colonial rulers would never truly allow him the opportunity to return to his roots. Gurnah has used Hamza as his mouthpiece in this novel and has shown that the connection with the roots and the human community is what can help an individual become a man. Hamza is a colonial subject and it was only after he tried to integrate himself to the family of Khalifa and local community that he felt a sense of belonging (Valle and Nazareth, 2022, p. 87). Hamza came to see himself as a man through these organic relationships, something that was denied by colonialism. The mental turmoil and consequences that colonialism has on the people have been shown through Hamza. He is shown to struggle with his identity, he is not a child even though society perceives him as one, on the other hand, he is not a man either but he tries to pretend as one. The effects of colonialism in the novel have therefore caused dislocation, exile and loss among the people of Africa which eventually led to a loss of identity. Ilyas is a perfect example of how colonialism violates individuals and forces them to oblige to their own culture, customs and traditions. The indoctrination is evident as shown by Zerfaoui (2023), Ilyas truly believed that the Germans were only there to educate the Africans and develop the nation to reduce the social issues of ignorance and poverty.

Colonial Imprints on Nature and Attitude Towards Indigenous Labour:

The prolonged period of colonialism has left a long-lasting impact on society as evident through the several passages in the novel. Gurnah has shared how the Askari leaves the lands devastated, in order to neutralize the people. They have caused hundreds and thousands of people to starve and die. The worst part is these atrocities were carried out by native black people. They were fighting for a cause that they did not know about. Postcolonial ecological critique explains the complex relationship which is shared between colonial subjugation and environmental degradation. The Askari merely act as an agent of colonial power, their acts of violence exploit the lands and leave them in ruin. The fertile lands are exploited for their wealth and to fulfil imperialistic goals, the lack of causal origin among the Askari makes it hard for them to understand the relationship between culture, history and environment (Abbas et al., 2023, p. 5). Another account of the Askari shows how the refusal of a man to disclose his land led to him being executed. The brutality is part of the exploitation, the Askari does not even leave a small child as they beat him until they find information on the land.

In the novel, the Schutztruppe, while fighting and moving towards Rhodesias, deliberately left scorched, plundered villages behind them to thwart their pursuers who themselves were doing the same things. (Gurnah, 2020, p. 112). As a result, “they had exhausted the land, which was now littered with starving or empty villages, their supplies repeatedly plundered by the rival armies.” (Gurnah, 2020, p. 112). The quest for resources showed the greed of the colonizers, they were ready to use coercive measures as long as they could exert their influence on the people. This directly contrasts the ecological wisdom possessed by the indigenous people and their practices. The Askari are also black native people, but the narrative shows how these people have forgotten their origins, the injustice has eroded knowledge and destroyed relationships that were shared between the people on the land. Similar to Hamza, some of the other Askari also believed that the colonizers saw them as their equal. However, it is evident that when camps were being made, the Germans lived in separate lines compared to the Askari and had better protection against mosquito bites (Abbas et al. 6). The act of having mosquito nets only for the colonizers shows cultural superiority and creates a distinct ecological space that establishes a sense of hierarchy. These forms of spatial differences preserved European prestige and heritage. In the broader sense, this also reflects the disruption of local ecosystems and social structures.

The mocking of the indigenous people and their culture helped in maintaining European superiority on the lands. Franz’s remarks about the indigenous people show his ignorance and lack of appreciation for their culture. He refers to them as “nature’s hoarders” and “savages with goatskins and fur”. The dehumanizing nature of colonialism has been shown through this representation of a white colonizer dehumanising and disregarding the rich culture and ecological knowledge that the locals shared. Through these examples from the novel, it can be seen that colonial behaviour does not only harm the culture of the people but also the intricate relationship which these people share with nature. Gurnah has criticized the Eurocentric views of world history, where Africa during its postcolonial era has been treated as something unwanted and tragic (Abbas et al., 2023, p. 8). Gurnah has shown how people living in Africa are denied a voice, and it is the Western modes of production that still determine the ecological conditions in the global south. This shows that the rest of the world still considers Africa to be uneducated and unqualified to participate in the construction of modernity.

In *Afterlives* there are two main male protagonists who are direct victims of the colonial struggle. Both Ilyas and his brother-in-law Hamza have faced deprivation, displacement and violence during their time of training with the Askari. However, Ilyas has been brainwashed due to his training from an early age, Hamza, on the other hand, embodies a permanent status of strangeness. Gurnah has used Hamza to denounce the brutality of colonialism and the psychological distress that this has caused to the people. The colonial imprints from Ilyas never really left. After the war ended, he joined the Nazui group Reichskolonialbund which aimed at reclaiming all of the past colonies. Ilyas therefore wanted the Germans back in his country as

he thought they were the only ones who could help the population succeed and develop themselves. The lack of faith in his people and treating the Germans with respect and appreciation after everything they have done has been pointed out by his nephew many years later. Ilyas tells his mother that while she is weeping for her brother, he has been singing and dancing in German cities demanding the return of the colonies to their masters. Ironically, his demands for a medal and pension for his service to Schutztruppe was turned down as the medal cannot be given to a subject of non-European origin.

The novel *Afterlives* is an example of how environmental hazards caused by colonialism have destroyed the already disadvantaged East African communities. The destruction of farmlands and poor living conditions of the people increased the prevalence of malaria and other water-borne diseases. There is a clear reference to 'Maji Maji' rebellion. It was an armed revolt by East African native peasants against German colonials. German colonials, keeping eye only on their profit, forced the indigenous people to grow cotton as an export crop. They compelled the native Africans to stop farming food crops except cotton. Most effect was in Tanzania, the setting of this novel. Each village was responsible to produce a definite amount of cotton despite the fact that the water required for this production was almost impossible to get. As a result, ultimately it became a threat to the food security of the region. The word 'Maji' in swahili means water. However, it was not ordinary water, but was believed to be a magical water which could give the native East African rebels protection against German bullets. The war lasted from 1905 to 1907. Towards the end of the rebellion, German atrocities over nature reached its peak when in order to suppress the rebellion the German Governor Von Gotzen introduced the policy called 'scorched earth' policy by which the German colonial force Schutztruppe burnt and plundered all the villages wherever they could. This action caused a great famine called 'ukame' in Tanzania, the setting of this novel causing the death of almost three lakhs people. For many of the countries belonging to the global south, biopolitical and environmental precarity has affected the flow of migration. The distinctions which were set up by the German forces were also later followed by the British when the war was finally won (João, 2023, p. 11). The German people were treated with respect, while on the other hand, the Africans who came to fight for the same cause were belittled, ignored and robbed as they were not citizens of Germany. The nature of the Schutztruppe and similar military groups was also a direct representation of colonial powers and racial superiority. (Gurnah, 2020, p. 92). The belief of Africans being half-lives became a norm in the continent, the colonists also possessed a certain degree of pride in their position and role in the nation. In the name of 'Zivilisierungsmission' (civilizing mission) they lied and killed for the empire. Their only intention was, according to the German Oberleutnant in the novel, to "take possession of what rightfully belongs to us because we are stronger. We are dealing with backward and savage people and the only way to rule them is to strike terror into them and their vain liliput majestat sultans, and pummel all of them into obedience." (Gurnah, 2020, p. 86). However, the real nature of the imperial pursuit was clear to the imperialist officers themselves. The Oberleutnant tells Hamza in his parting words: "We lied and killed for this empire and then called it our Zivilisierungsmission. Now here we are, still killing for it." (Gurnah, 2020, p. 118).

The lack of political, civic, social and environmental rights further contributed to the postcolonial struggle for colonial subjects. The environmental degradation that has been caused by colonization has directly affected the lives of Ilyas, Hamza, and Afiya. The poverty which Ilyas experienced during his early life forced him to leave his home behind which ultimately led to him being kidnapped. Similarly, it also forced his sisters to live with neighbours who treated her as a slave at their house. The novel *Afterlives* is seen to engage with the themes of genocide and settler colonialism, both of these aspects are directly linked because settled colonialism seems to eradicate Indigenous culture by forcing their own, through both the examples of Ilyas and Hamza, Gurnah has shown that colonialism is never an innocent and apolitical project (Ullah et al., 2023, p. 48). Both the characters had to migrate several times

due to the socio-political instability, the relocation of communities, the rise of diseases and direct acts of violence directly affecting the inhabitants. European colonizers around the world held the opinion that their culture and education were far superior to the other people and this is also evident in the works of Gurnah as well. The Germans in the novel also considered them to be superior, and even after training the native population to be Askari, they were still not allowed in the same living area and had to live separately. The findings show how Indigenous people were exploited as they were deemed to be inferior.

Economic Exploitation of People in *Afterlives*:

Exploitation in the novel takes place at different levels. On the surface the readers are introduced to the backgrounds of Ilyas and Hamza, and the complicated childhoods both faced. While on the background, Gurnah has shown how the exploitation of nature has deteriorated the quality of life for the people, there has been rampant poverty throughout the country and indigenous people have lost their culture and heritage. The Askari were the primary agents that represented the colonial power and were responsible for destroying the local environments and their people if they showed resistance against the German invasion. The askaris were unpaid, underfed and died countless as a result of a war which has no relation with them besides bearing with immense hatred and abuse from their European imperialist officers in the novel. The people of the country were exploited against their will if they did not comply and answer as seen with the old man being executed for not disclosing the land (Abbas et al., 2023, p. 7). Due to these problems, the book has revealed that many of the people have started abandoning their villages. The decision to move to some other place and abandon their villages shows the serious impact these genocidal practices had on the people. The Germans constructed the railways to transport the army and merchandise for the safety of their empire. They did coffee plantations disturbing the natural environment where they needed native workers, thus, monetizing nature for their own benefit. (Gurnah, 2020, p. 37-38).

The external crisis that has been going on in the society was further weaponized to influence both global events and local unrest. The intricate detail and experience of the characters in the novel in the broader picture show the historical movement. The decision of Hamza to join the German force, unlike Ilyas, shows his determination to find a proper goal in life. The economic exploitation of people was not limited to direct abuse but rather also focused on resource depletion, displacement and economic instability caused due to all of these factors. The German impact on the land has led to the people losing their identities, the novel is, therefore, a multifaceted narrative which shows the complex connection shared between all of these different elements (Abbas et al., 2023, p. 9). Through the lens of postcolonial ecocriticism, the exploitation listed by Gurnah in the novel has been assessed within the research. The direct connection that human relations have with environmental changes has shown the need for a deeper understanding of the culture of the indigenous people and appreciation of them.

In the novel, it is shown how Europeans take the best land available without any form of tax and forced labour. The whole idea of colonialism has been based on exploitation. In the novel we see that in order to get victory in the war with Germans, the British Navy started the blockade on the coast of Tanga thereby closing waterways and ending trade causing disaster for the life of the coastal town while German imperialists confiscated all nature's plenty like rice, coffee, tea, salt-fish for their soldiers making all these natural resources scarcer. (Gurnah, 2020, p. 96). The instrument of German colonials to extend their imperialistic endeavour in Tanzania was the troop called Schutztruppe, the members of which fed themselves on whatever they found in the villages and farms, plundering and confiscating everything wherever they could. (Gurnah, 90). Gurnah has presented African institutions in a distorted manner as they continue to overcome the postcolonial sea. In the studies of postcolonialism, it is shown to create superior yet corrupt systems that focus on the relationship between the people (Alam, 2023, p. 17). Economic exploitation can happen in many different forms. Gurnah has shown

that the mistreatment of Ilyas was due to poverty and war. Ilyas was kidnapped as a child by an askari soldier of the Schutztruppe force. He was rescued and brought up by a German imperial officer who sent him to the Christian church. However, he was never sent to a nearby mosque which was necessary for a muslim boy to foreground his culture. (Gurnah, 2020, p. 22). Due to the cultural significance of this type of exploitation, the author has presented different effects of child abuse, all of which result in psychological abuse (Muhammad, 2022, p. 45). The mental turmoil which Hamza faced made him feel psychologically abused. The psychological abuse that Ilyas experienced was primarily due to fear. Eventually, it led to him forgetting his mental pressure. The characters which Gurnah has introduced into the novel speak of different identities, all three protagonists suffer from some kind of displacement. Exploitation here takes the form of cultural exploitation too and with the help of hegemony and ideology. The sense of superiority of German culture and rule over native culture, customs was being instilled in the head of the innocent Africans from the very beginning. The characters are constantly in search of new identities. For Ilyas, considers himself to be part of the German culture and thus agrees to volunteer for the Germans only for he is in the false illusion. Hamza, on the contrary, has been shown to reconnect with his past heritage and has a more grounded role in the move. The migration efforts have been incredibly devastating as described by the author (Saxena, 2021, p. 4). The tragic journey of Ilyas highlights his fascination for power, status and identity as he is seen to be willing to part with his one living relative in life. The second abandonment which he carries out in the novel has been defined by researchers to be full of neglect and shame. Near the end of the novel, the tides finally change as Hamza and Afiya get married and have a child, who is named after his late uncle Ilyas. After travelling to post-World War II Germany, he decides he will study there and seek the answers about his uncle thereby helping the novel come full circle. Interestingly, again the impact of cultural imperialism manifests even in the postcolonial period as he is given the scholarship by the German Democratic Republic given at that time only to influence and ideologically control Germany's past African colonies. Thus, Gurnah's *Afterlives* records the critical and analytical exploration of the processes of colonialism, European imperialism and colonial legacy reverberated in the lives of the characters in this novel in the postcolonial era even after their lives, land and nature have been destroyed. Through the present research article, this has come out. Besides, in this capitalist era, as a consequence of colonialism, histories of working-class people are erased in the archives of dominant discourse along with the simultaneous exploitation and commodification of natural resources of Africa. In this vein, the present research article has focused on how Gurnah refuses the eradication of sufferings of those downtrodden native Africans.

Conclusion:

The present research has closely analysed *Afterlives* by Gurnah, the research has revealed that it is a powerful novel that reveals the negative effects of colonialism on the native people. The violence and trauma which the protagonists have to face within the novel have helped in building who they are. The violence and traumatic experiences are the factors which provide more context for the novel. With the character of Ilyes, it can be seen that being kidnapped and brought up among other kidnapped students in a German regime made him more sympathetic towards their cause. He submitted towards their cause while thinking his people were unfit to rule and therefore help from China was needed. The acts of violence and slavery are not something unique to the colonizers as shown in the novel as the black people in the novel also practised them against their own people as seen with the case of Ilyes's sister. The research shows how Germany was fighting multiple wars at this time and the trauma caused psychological changes among the people. The gaping wounds that are left behind by family members when their young get listed for war have been shown. The negative side of the war has also been shown by Hamza, who has been a first-hand witness to what the Askari are doing.

Both the characters have witnessed white dominance in Tanzania, Ilyas has embraced it while Hamza stands as a force of resistance. Overall, the research has been successful in showing the impact of colonialism in Africa, the research has observed three different themes which highlights the exploitation faced by these people and environmental degradation due to colonialism.

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