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EDITORIAL

The Department of English and Culture Studies is pleased to bring out yet another volume on some of the finest writings in the field of literature and culture studies. Our contributors have written on various subjects that cover aspects related to perspectives on identity, culture and literature. We are confident that this collection includes some of the best, most stimulating and most readable of the articles on literature in English and that they are worthy reminders of the richness of the discipline. It is the hope that these articles will enhance the ethos and the sensibility regarding literature, culture, ideas and writing at large. We hope that our readers will access and enjoy discovering, or rediscovering, life, literature and thought as presented in these enriching articles.

Margaret L. Pachau

CONTENTS

	<i>Title</i>	<i>Pages</i>
1.	Revisiting Paradise: A Dystopian Approach to Abdulrazak Gurnah's <i>Paradiset</i> <i>Dr. Rajkumar Bera & Subhadip Das</i>	1
2.	Reading the Transgressive in <i>Fight Club</i> <i>Debasish Chourasia</i>	27
3.	Enduring Love: A Proclivity Towards Persecutions and Perturbation <i>Dr. Aadil Zeffer & Tahir Zaffar</i>	40
4.	Memory in Anne Tyler's Fiction: A Gendered Approach? <i>Dr. Nikita Gandotra</i>	56
5.	Re-presenting Neurodivergence: A Literary Exploration of Cultural Figurations of the Intellectually Disabled Individual <i>Sinchan Chatterjee</i>	75
6.	Re-retelling the Post-Colonial Adivasi Experience: A Study of Kamal Kumar Tanti's Post-Colonial Poems ... <i>Md Shalim Muktadir Hussain</i>	98
7.	Nautanki: Exploring the Musical and Magical Tapestry of India's Folk Theatre Extravaganza ... <i>Dr Pankaj Bala Srivastava</i>	112
8.	The Creation of a New Social Base of Identity by the Artistic Verbal Performer: An Analysis of Roluaha's "FapaTlanbo" <i>Vanzikpuii</i>	132

- 9. Themes and Motifs in Gen Urobochi's
Psycho-Pass Universe: Critical Reflections 151**
Arka Ranjan Banerjee

Revisiting Paradise: A Dystopian Approach to Abdulrazak Gurnah's Paradise

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Abstract: The description of paradise occurs in almost all the religious scriptures. In all literature it has been described as a place where peace, innocence, pleasure and beauty are beyond earthly measures besides having God's grace. It is the reward in life here after for which every righteous person aspires in this world. The connotation of paradise brings home the association of justice, compassion, benevolence and righteousness. Abdulrazak Gurnah is a Zanzibar born British diasporic writer who never shuns away from exposing cruelty, class conflict, caste discrimination, exploitation and slavery which existed deep rooted in the pre-colonial East African setting, otherwise viewed as the paradise of the earth. His novel *Paradise* traces the growth and development of its protagonist Yusuf, who is pawned off to a wealthy merchant Uncle Aziz. However, despite all the apparent beauty, the socio-littoral of this novel has a strong resemblance with a dystopian world and the motif and context of the novel can be interpreted from dystopian perspective. Besides, this article explores the strong and ironical intertextual relationship with John Milton's epic *Paradise Lost* from different viewpoints.

Keywords: Agent, Diaspora, Dystopia, Hegemony, Intertextuality, Paradise, Slavery

The protagonists in Abdulrazak Gurnah's works frequently relocate, either freely or involuntarily, from Zanzibar to England, from the East African coast to the African main land, or from the interior of Africa. Gurnah demonstrates that these accounts of migration or exile are a part of the complex history that existed even before the arrival of German or British colonialism. Arab kings, Omani sultans, and Indian merchants all made their way to Zanzibar over time. Gurnah's novels, which are recurrently concerned with questions of home and migration, show that estrangement may also be the result of a highly volatile society, the result of a complex interaction of competing and converging codes, laws, and expectations that make up the social reality.

Some researchers, however, have concluded that the presence of many different cultures and peoples along the East African coast proves that Swahili societies were not monolithic but rather multiple, with many different cultural and ethnic groupings organized in a rigid, static and hierarchical structure. Michael Lofchie says, "... although intermarriage occurred, it was not sufficient to blur the ethnic boundaries and fuse different groups together." (Lofchie 93). One of the main aspects of Swahili society, as Kelly Askew explains, is "the assimilation of new comers," therefore his emphasis on categories like "Arab," "Indian," and "African" presents problems. She continues:

Whatever the route and impetus that brought them there, every group of newcomers contributed to the development of Swahili town life and a semblance of unity was wrought out of great diversity.....The lingering tendency to divide Swahili society along Arab/ African

lines ignores the subtlety of social classification. 'Africans' comprised a great many groups.... (Askew 71-72)

Despite the potential problems with using labels like "Arab," "African," or "Indian," the descendants of Arabs and Omanis and Africans were at odds over issues of social privilege, power and socio-cultural status. During the colonial era, a chasm opened up in the political realm between the vocally silent majority of Swahili or "African" descent and the politically powerful minority of "Arabs" (meaning mostly an influential class of people around the governing Seyyid with Omani roots). The former group was able to achieve social prominence quite easily. Besides, there were other ethnic groups like Indians.

Thus, Gurnah shows that the notion that before colonialism African soul was innocent, holy and without any corruption is just a myth. The reality was that no primordial bond of belonging exists among the protagonists of his novels as well as in the society of Gurnah's literature. They become diasporic within their own society as the result of contestation and mixing of divergent social codes, conducts, values and cultures.

In the domain of literary theory, the concept of 'intertextuality' states that any work of literature has been influenced by a previous or contemporary work of literature. No modern text can claim absolute originality. Nearly all works of art contain some forms of reference to another work of past or contemporaneity. The essential premise of the theory of "intertextuality" is that all signifying systems are derivatives of signifying systems that came before them. A text is not a

unique original product of an author but a product of relationality, interconnectedness between ‘a text’ and other previous or contemporary text/ texts and to the structure of language. The concept of “intertextuality” also demonstrates the multiplicity of artistic forms that can be used to convey the same cultural, political or moral philosophy. The intertextual reference may be deliberate or explicit and implicit or thematic/ stylistic allusion or interconnectedness meaning can be shaped by perceiving this relationality by the reader.

In the late 1960s Bulgarian post-structuralist and theorist Julia Kristeva in her work, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, maintains that “A text is a permutation of texts, intertextuality in the given text,” where “several utterances, taken from other text intersect and neutralize one another” (Kristeva 45).

Jeanine Plottel and Hanna Charney say in *Intertextuality: New Perspectives in Criticism*:

Interpretation is shaped by a complex of relationships between the text, the reader, reading, writing, printing, publishing and history: the history that is inscribed in the language of the text and in the history that is carried in the reader’s reading. Such a history has been given a name: intertextuality.” (Plottel and Charney 67)

Abdulrazak Gurnah’s *Paradise* tells the experience of its protagonist Yusuf, dispersed within the continent of Africa. However, differing a bit from conventional diasporic novels, it presents a bitter reality of the protagonist’s native society of East African Coast through the ironical treatment of the title *Paradise*. In doing so, influence of John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* is clearly visible in this novel through the interconnection,

thematic concern, contrast and allusion between these two works. The novel depicts a dystopian social construct especially in relation to Uncle Aziz's world and the kingdom of Chatu in the interior. This novel does not show East African coast as a pure Utopian paradise but as a dystopian world and Gurnah's work recalls Milton's *Paradise Lost* or Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in the way of becoming an ardent example of dystopian fiction.

John Milton wrote *Paradise Lost* to justify the ways of God to man. It concerns the biblical events of the 'fall of man' and the temptation of Adam and Eve by Satan. It contains the beauty of the Paradise, especially of the Garden of Eden and the description of its exquisite flora and fauna, though the Islamic scripture the Quran also contains the description of the beautiful garden of Paradise. However, as the dominant religion of Gurnah's literary oeuvre is Islam, we can look into the description of paradise in the Holy Quran. The Quran describes paradise as "Jannah". According to it paradise is a "great kingdom" (Q. 76:20) stretching out over and above the entire world and "lofty" (Q. 69:22). There are four rivers of water, milk, honey and wine (Q. 47:15). There is also a spring on the higher plane wherefrom four rivers generate. Among most precious flowers and fruit trees there is the pomegranate tree which Prophet Muhammad brought with him from the paradise.

Paradise, in Gurnah's novel, is completely enclosed reminding the wall of the biblical or Islamic paradise. In the house of Uncle Aziz the garden is also divided into four quarters, with a pool at the centre and four water channels running off it in the four directions reminding the scriptural paradise. The quadrants were planted with trees and bushes.

All exotic and beautiful flowers and fruits were there including pomegranates, orange and lily.

Beyond the pool, towards the top end of the garden, the ground rose into a terrace planted with poppies, yellow roses and jasmine, scattered to resemble natural growth. Yusuf dreamt that at night the fragrance rose into the air and turned him dizzy. In his rapture he thought he heard music. (Gurnah 43)

All this description essentially commemorates the Islamic description of the most privileged part of the paradise. And yet this beautiful garden has been constructed on the basis of tears of many Yusuf, Amina or Khalil. Apparent paradisiacal beauty of the garden only adds to the dehumanized, oppressed condition of the people in the dystopian world of Uncle Aziz. That's why Amina throws off her amulet, given to her in childhood to keep away evil, for it could not protect her from the greater evil—— Uncle Aziz. Where does she throw it? ——In the garden ——the symbol of dystopian world itself.

Another very important point in the narration occurs when the main expedition to the interior begins. When the main expedition to the interior begins, the porters, guards and the ordinary laborers were gathered in the third class railway compartment without minimum facilitation and were piled up like their trading goods. The image of pandemonium resembles the inside of the train compartment. It was cramped and gloomy in the carriage and smelt of sticky earth and wood smoke. Like fallen angels in Pandemonium they growled and snapped at each other, talked a lot about anything and disagreed with each other. Before long they engaged in quarrel and fighting with one another. Manyapara came to visit them like a fallen

angel visiting the situation. In the night the compartment was full of homosexual activities.

Paradise is the fourth book written by Gurnah. Yusuf, the protagonist, is a handsome young man who is sold into slavery when he is just twelve years old. The plot covers the first five years of his existence, finishing when he is seventeen and still a minor. Yusuf, accompanied by his wealthy merchant uncle Aziz, is about to leave for a life of servitude, and the story opens just before he departs. The news that his father had pawned him off to a wealthy merchant as “rehani” dashes any hope he had for a better life or even just a short vacation with the person he held in high esteem. Khalil, another pawned off in Aziz’s wonderland, clarifies blatantly to Yusuf about why they are both there: “You’re here because your Ba owes the Seyyid money. I’m here because my Ba owes him money.” (Gurnah 24) Yusuf’s five-year stay in Uncle Aziz’s house serves literally an eye opener for him, his growing up into maturity to realize that he has lost the paradise of his parents’ home, however harsh and extreme its natural environment may be. Yusuf is first informed by Khalil that he is a slave upon his arrival: “As for Uncle Aziz, for a start, he ain’t your uncle.” (Gurnah 23) This episode alludes to Book-IX of *Paradise Lost*, when paradise has been destroyed and Adam and Eve are filled with remorse, blame, and shame. In *BK-XI* of the same epic, Michael the archangel reveals Adam a vision of what would happen up till the “great flood,” and this event is also celebrated. Khalil performs the same function in this tale, awakening Yusuf from his fantasy by revealing the harsh reality of his future: “He ain’t your uncle, you foolish Mswahili boy. Sooner or later you got to learn to kiss the man’s arse. Seyyid,seyyid not Uncle, Uncle. Come on, you say it after me, Seyyid” (Gurnah 32).

Johan Jacob claims that Gurnah writes back to Jseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* where Marlow journeys to the inner station in search of Kurtz and ultimately both of them discover the inner darkness of humanity in the name of civilization. (Schwerdt 97) It opens the eyes of Marlow. Here in this novel under discussion, Aziz takes Yusuf on business trip to the interior of the continent which parallels the psychological journey of Marlow. Almost the same psychological maturity dawns on Yusuf first at the Aziz household then on the final business trip to the interior, to the Kingdom of Chatu. He realises the presence of evil under the guises of geniality, courtesy, meekness and commitment. Chatu, the ruler of an interior Kingdom welcomes them, gives them shelter, makes promise for fair business and slaughters them and plunders them in the dark of night.

That the garden of Aziz household is not like a real paradise but more like a dystopian hell becomes prominent from the first day of Yusuf's arrival. A pack of dogs continues to haunt him every night waiting for the right moment to pound upon his flesh. Their appearance, the scars on their body, the snarling, their sharp canine, and their circling around Yusuf's sleeping place make us believe that the dogs are the devil's followers. They are waiting in patience to snatch away the soul, the life force of Yusuf to hell. They devise plan to destroy the inner paradise of Yusuf and tear him as if Lucifer planned to ravage God's paradise. Importantly, the biblical paradise ultimately became the place of desire between Adam and Eve and here in this novel the garden becomes also the place of desire between Yusuf and Amina, two victims of Aziz.

The novel uses the interruption of infancy to reveal the presence of evil paradise and how it destroys innocence. By

focusing on children, Gurnah seems to challenge the view that imperialist forces are corrupting the stable African families and innocent African children raised within the continent's moralizing traditions. Children's development is shown to have been negatively impacted by reasons other than colonial incursion.

Eldred Jones makes the valid point that instead of becoming an ardent longing for a lost paradise many depictions of childhood in Gurnah's novel reveal a dark reality of brutality, hardness(especially paternal), egocentrism and extreme bruising of the fragile child-psyche.

The major children characters in *Paradise* experience upheaval that causes them to uproot and start over in a new place. The uprooting takes place on many levels, both physically and psychologically. While Amina, another female child protagonist, is frequently expected to redeem the burden of slavery by marrying uncle Aziz, Yusuf is pawned off to settle the family obligations. But that's not the same as true independence. Amina no longer has to worry about being enslaved, but she still can't make any major choices for herself. Instead, she has become further enslaved in Aziz's cruel paradise, ruining her own youth for the sake of Aziz's lust. She understands the pointlessness of her life. After her foster father defaulted on a payment to Uncle Aziz, she was stolen from them and is now in the hands of Uncle Aziz's wicked pollution. As she blossoms into a young woman in Uncle Aziz's ironic paradise, the wealthy merchant quickly proposes marriage, taking advantage of her vulnerability and ending her childhood innocence in the process. Khalil remarks sarcastically, "Yes, your Uncle Aziz married her last year. So now he's my brother and your uncle, and we're one happy

family in a garden of paradise” (Gurnah 207). In Amina’s poignant tone subdued agony comes out: “I’ve got my life at least. But I only know I have it because of its emptiness, because of what I have been denied” (Gurnah 228-229). She has resigned to her fate and any suggestion of a solution to her problem is a dream, unattainable.

Most of Gurnah’s novels shed light on Islamic rituals and cultures. Uncle Aziz seemingly puts on the appearance of an Islamic angel. The author describes him:

His habitual dress was a thin flowing kanzu of fine cotton and a small crocheted cap pushed back on his head; with his refined airs and his polite, impassive manner, he looked more like a man on a late afternoon stroll or a worshipper on the way to evening prayers than a merchant who had picked his way past bushes of thorn and nests of vipers...(Gurnah 3)

He performed namaz five times a day and managed to look calm and at ease whatever the situation may be. With this appearance he never forgets to lend money to any family when required or to give Yusuf a ten anna piece everytime he stops with the family ————just like Lucifer who in the very polite way tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden. He does not hesitate to pluck the beautiful little flower like Amina from her family and entrap her in his “paradise” only in order to extract her honey and to exploit her when she blooms into a beautiful woman. Khalil too is no exception. He is Amina’s foster brother whom Uncle Aziz took away in childhood to look after his household work and his business as Khalil’s father owed Uncle Aziz some money and could not repay. Khalil could not but throw light on the dark side of Aziz’s

character when he bursts out: “You don’t have a sister, may be, or he’d have taken her”(Gurnah 25).He also says that, “If the Seyyid was desperate for money, he sacrificed a handful of his creditors to raise it” (Gurnah 47). Thus in the guise of scriptural ‘paradise ‘, Uncle Aziz’s world can be revealed to be a dystopian world where “Big Brother” like figure Uncle Aziz controls everything.

A dystopia (dys=bad, topos=place) means a bad place. It is a speculated community or society that is frightening. It is often treated as an antonym for Utopia, a term coined by Thomas More. However, the relation between utopia and dystopia is not just opposite. Rather many elements and components of utopia can be found in a dystopian society. Margaret Atwood in her aerticle entitled “Margaret Atwood: the road to Utopia”once said, “Within every dystopia, there is a little utopia.” (Atwood 7) But most famous comment about this relation comes, perhaps from, Zsanelle Morel who, in “The Fine Line Between Utopia and Dystopia” says, “It is common for Utopia to fall short of their ideals or conceal dark secrets that would throw the once utopian society into complete chaos, dissolving into a dystopia.” (Morel 1)Distinguishing features of a dystopian society are fear and distress. The tyrannical or exploitative ruler or the government holds total control over its citizen through the use of propaganda, extensive information censorship or through the suppression of free thought and individualism. Denizens of a dystopian society are under constant surveillance. They are reduced to a level of dehumanization. Jane Donawerth writes in “Genre Blending and the Critical Dystopia”: “These dystopian government establishments often have protagonists or groups that lead a resistance to enact a change within their society.” (Donawerth 33)

According to Miami Dade College, the protagonist in a dystopian novel is trapped and tries desperately to get free. He/She believes that something is seriously wrong with the society in which he/she resides. Through his/her point of view the reader is made aware of the horrible flaws of the dystopian world. The protagonists of the novel under discussion Yusuf, Khalil or Amina all feel that they have been entangled into Aziz's 'Paradise' where from no escape is possible. While Amina is literally entrapped for the rest of her life with no one to talk freely or lighten the burden of her life except an old woman Aziz's another wife, Yusuf and Khalil realizes that they have to work for the merchant until they can repay their father's debts or until their father's death. Although Khalil's parents abandoned Khalil, he cannot leave Aziz's household. Yusuf gradually realizes that that he has been trapped to work for the merchant and has to continue forever. Although at the end of the novel Yusuf leaves Uncle Aziz's household to join German army, it is only transferred from one servitude to another. It is also not a proper deliverance or maturity. The case of Amina is more poignant. She is literally prisoned in the palace like house adjacent to the paradise like garden. She is not even allowed to talk to outside people, even not to go outside. Her movement and behaviour are conditioned, monitored and restricted. She was also a pawn once and was compelled to marry Aziz in order to save her family and herself. Khalil says, "she is the repayment of my Ba's debt" (Gurnah 207) Amina herself says mocking at the possibility of protection by an amulet from the evil : " He said it would protect me always, but it didn't" (Gurnah 228). She expresses to Yusuf how her life has become emptiness.

Interestingly, another potential weapon to take control over the people in the society of dystopian literature is the

persuasive use of propaganda. Here in order to dominate Amina and the likes, Uncle Aziz always likes to tell her that “most of the occupants of heaven are poor and most of the occupants of hell are women” (Gurnah 229). Amina concludes her defeat by saying: “ If there is Hell on earth, then it is here”(Gurnah 229). The garden of Aziz household becomes literally a paradise for both of them only for sometimes when they fall in love with each other. This falling in love is perhaps a symbol of the struggle against the all-powerful, all pervasive Aziz, the figure head of this dystopian social order. Another important feature occurs when Khalil becomes afraid of going into the city. He is afraid of having been lost if they would go into the city. In fact he is quite uncertain and suspicious out of any space outside the periphery of Aziz house hold. Towards the end of the novel even though, he is free to go he says to Yusuf, “I have nowhere to go” (Gurnah 207). This inevitably reminds us one of the features of dystopian society where citizens have a fear of the outside world. In the same way Amina, at the end, refuses to leave Aziz and elope with Yusuf. She simply calls Yusuf a dreamer.

All the denizens of Aziz’s paradise, except Yusuf conform to uniform expectation of this built up social sphere. Individuality and note of dissent are highly reprimanded here. The conformity is clearly evident in Khalil’s constant kissing of Aziz’s hand or constantly bullying and guiding Yusuf about the ways of Aziz household or constantly preventing him from going to the garden or inside of the house. Khalil, though himself aware that something is terribly wrong with the Aziz household, acts as an agent of the figurehead of this dystopian world. He does not wish to disclose much information regarding Aziz household or regarding the dwellers of the house or

regarding himself to Yusuf. He passes to Yusuf only those informations which are necessary for Yusuf to obey the rules of Aziz's Paradise. However, Uncle Aziz, the figurehead of this dystopian world never himself advances to teach the protagonists any lesson. He just wears the appearance of a genial and pious man on whose behalf act people like Khalil, Zulekha, his first wife or horrible manyapara, Mohammad Abdalla. Different patterns of exploitation run through the novel. When Zulekha's first husband who was a rich merchant dies, she marries Aziz, then an honest but not wealthy businessman, for future support and protection. After marrying her Aziz exploited all her money and wealth and became a famous and rich merchant. Now he neglects her and marries Amina, a much younger prey to his lust. Now Zulekha is suffering from lack of love and imagines a disease which stretches from her cheek to her heart. She wants Yusuf to touch on her aching heart thereby wanting to seduce him. Now this kind of protest against the oppressive, loveless and dehumanized condition of Aziz household is ultimately subsided and controlled with Yusuf leaving the Aziz household. However, Yusuf's every movement and activity is under constant surveillance either by Khalil, or by the 'old men' on the benches or by the mistress of the household or by 'manyapara' Mahammad Abdalla when he was on the business trip with his Uncle Aziz. The literally fearsome picture of the dystopian world becomes clear when Yusuf goes to the interior on a business trip. Here Manyapara acts the role of chief devilish agent of Lucifer Aziz. The totalitarian surveillance makes itself prominent when Mohammad Abdalla clearly threatens the rest of the caravan: "I'm warning you, no pilfering. If I catch anyone, I will cut his backside to

pieces”(Gurnah 58-59). While in the train, he continued to visit the porters and others of the trip coming from another part of the train. The threat is evident from his physical appearance proving the truth in his nickname – ‘ the Demon ‘. He struck fear in the citizens of Aziz’s world – here the business caravan. He creates an atmosphere where any independent thought, freedom or individuality or passing any independent opinion is restricted.

Interestingly, the exploitation of the elements of the nature like the porters and other helping hands who are the sons of innocent soil is systematically orchestrated by the merchant through the devilish figure of ‘Manyapara’ Mohammad Abdalla, a ‘hard hearted twister of the souls’. His description goes on like this:

It was Mohammad Abdalla who hired the porters and the guards and ...struck fear in all of them. ... His scowling, snarling 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 relish of this power...He had a reputation as a merciless sodomizer. (Gurnah 46)

When any one of the team caused even the slightest problem, this man dealt with him with utmost cruelty. Yusuf felt an ominous feeling when this man called him to come with them on a business trip to the interior of the continent and saw in him the future possibility of ravaging his innocence for gratifying of lust.

Importantly, Uncle Aziz’s beautiful garden is maintained by not a free person or the most powerful person but by a slave – Mzee Hamdani. Every morning this pious man comes,

does all the works of gardening, sings short verses from the Holy Scripture prays to the almighty in the garden and goes. Thus, the garden silently exploits a part and parcel of nature in the form of a human slave. This man almost imperceptibly follows his duty without any question. Even when freedom is offered to him, he refuses. Thus, the oppressive system of the dystopian world built the beautiful garden by exploiting slave and the psychological hegemony is such that Mzee Hamdami fails to see the real meaning of freedom.

There is the contrast between the garden of Uncle Aziz and the garden behind the house of Hamid Suleiman whom Yusuf meets on his first expedition to the interior. Instead of exotic flowers and fruits and water channels it consisted of “scrub and thickets full of snakes and wild animals” (Gurnah 66). There was bush beyond their backyard which was used for rubbish. Out of it rose fumes of putrefaction and pestilence. Besides, the geography there was of dry parched lands. However, in the midst of this apparent roughness Yusuf found the kindness, compassion and benevolence of the people of this land with whom he came to live. Unlike the dystopian world of Aziz household, here, in the household of Hamid Suleiman Yusuf got the scope for his emotional wellbeing. Hamid and his wife treated him as their relative, sent him to Koran school and in this place he also meets Hussein, the mystic person who warns all to remain in the path of the Almighty. Hussain here serves as an angel like figure and Hamid and Maimuna acted as Yusuf’s foster parents. Thus, here he finds paradise like surrounding, while the apparent surrounding was just the contrary.

Towards the end of the novel, Gurnah attacks the notion of so called African innocence prevailing in the pre-colonial

African culture. Chatu's people attacked them without any previous hint and plundered all their trading goods. At the core of the interior of the continent Chatu, with cool brain and calculative method, murdered some of the members of the caravan and captivates Yusuf in order to bargain with Uncle Aziz. Gurnah shows that even at the core of the African primitiveness there exists dystopia, the cruelty and taste of revenge instead of supposed paradisiacal innocence and purity.

Although the term 'intertextuality' gained popularity with post-structuralist Julia Kristeva, almost no modern or postmodern text of literature can claim of true or unique originality. The parameters and definitions of originality have become blurred in the case of complex modern or postmodern literature and interpretation can be inferred building relationality of allusion, influence, thematic concerns or contrast with any other previous or contemporary work/works of literature. Professor Graham Allen in his book *Intertextuality* states:

Intertextuality seems such a useful term because it foregrounds notions of relationality, interconnectedness and interdependence in modern cultural life. In the postmodern epoch theorists often claim, it is not possible any longer to speak of originality or the uniqueness of the artistic object ... since every artistic object is so clearly assembled from bits and pieces of already existent art. (Allen 200)

In this vein comes the interconnectedness between Gurnah's novel and a dystopian fiction as the author sensationally brings about the dystopic socio cultural picture of Aziz's 'paradise' or that of coastal East Africa to the purview

of literature through *Paradise*. Yusuf lives a diasporic life having been doubly dispersed, though, within the African continent. The reason for his diasporic existence was the dystopian picture of his society and which has its root in the highly volatile, multiethnic East African socio-cultural sphere. The ironic use of the scriptural picturesque garden, the same treatment of the title, thematic concerns and conditions of the characters at once take us to the latent intertextual reference to the Garden of Eden in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. The interpretation highlights the similarity between Uncle Aziz and his agents on the one hand and Lucifer and his devilish agents in Milton's *Paradise Lost* on the other hand corroborating the dystopian nature of Uncle Aziz's world and thereby that of East African coast at large. The cruelty, satanic cunning and devilish exploitation by Aziz and the exploited predicament of innocent protagonists like Yusuf, Amina and Khalil remind of the cruel victimization of Man by Satan in the Garden of Eden. Ironically, here the protagonists become prey to Aziz's exploitation and egocentrism in a seemingly beautiful Quranic paradise like garden where the society is an illusion of a perfect utopian world, where underneath of apparent Quranic beauty occurs most brutal victimization and physical, moral and sexual exploitation. However, like the snake in the Garden of Eden, dystopian elements lurk within that utopian illusion of Aziz's world or of Chatu's Kingdom or of the entire African East coast. Here in this world economy is directly related to the cause that the novelist is revealing as the source of the tyranny and the novel regularly contrasts the privileged lives of the elite ruling class with the dehumanized existence of the marginalized working class. At the end of the fiction here, the protagonists protest to break their entrapment,

but protest in vain. The novel, thus, brilliantly merges the latent intertextual references to *Paradise Lost* with the features of a perfect dystopian fiction situating the thematic concerns of the age old epic in a different socio-cultural context.

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