

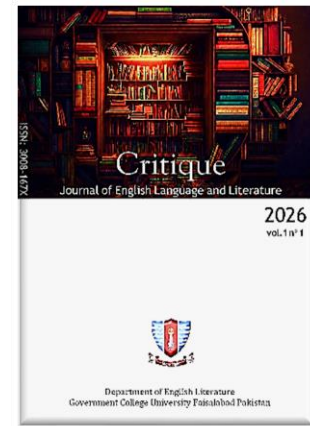
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Mehreen Naz and Nimra Saeed

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Department of English Literature
Government College University Faisalabad, Pakistan

Manipulation and Misuse of Power in Gurnah's *Afterlives*: A Subaltern Study

Mehreen Naz¹  and Nimra Saeed²

¹Department of English, Times Institute, Multan, Pakistan

²Department of English, The Women University, Multan, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

This research aims to interpret the novel *Afterlives* through Spivak's postcolonial theory of the Subaltern. The novel explores the challenges faced by native Africans under German and British colonialism. The novel also represents the native Africans' suffering not only through European domination but also through coercion mediated by colonial and local power structures. Spivak's theory of subalternity provides a distinctive perspective to highlight the trauma of those whose voices are silenced by colonial power. This theory further provides a lens to examine how the subaltern characters are politically, socially, and epistemically marginalized. Using qualitative textual analysis, the study examines how the characters experience otherness and marginalization as portrayed in the novel and how the characters rebuild their lives after colonial impact in the form of displacement and loss. The results show that Gurnah's *Afterlives* highlights the African suffering and survival under subaltern conditions while also exposing the complex relationship between Germans and Africans.

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Introduction

Colonialism has had a lasting impact on the world. It shattered the development of societies and cultures. Abdulrazak Gurnah is a Tanzanian, postcolonial, and Nobel Prize-winning novelist. Postcolonial narratives seem to be Gurnah's foremost subjects of study. Salman Rushdie and V.S. Naipaul are only two of the many postcolonial writers on whom he published several pieces of writing. Themes like colonization, marginalization, identity, dislocation, banishment, nostalgia, and misery are present in his novels. He admitted that he had no intention of writing about the conflict or the atrocities of war on people's lives. He wanted to make it clear to the audience that acknowledging the historical background of war and colonialism is necessary to highlight how people respond to difficult situations in society both during and after war. Through his novels, he illustrates colonialism and its aftermath, particularly focusing on the loss of identity, social issues, and the lives of refugees in East Africa (Prono).

The novel *Afterlives* by Gurnah came out in 2020, following his novel *Gravel Heart* in 2017. As depicted in the novel, the colonizers and the colonized have quite a complex

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR Mehreen Naz  nh577829@gmail.com

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interaction. It is a thought-provoking novel. The Financial Times describes it as a book of subtle beauty and tragic depth. The novel takes place in an unnamed place near Tanzania. It portrays a time when a significant portion of East Africa was affected by German colonial rule. The novel focuses on the characters' struggles during and after the First and Second World Wars, representing experiences of loss, genocide, savage reprisal, and uncertain fate. Gurnah highlights the violence, despair, destruction, and oppression through his characters during war, including Khalifa, the trader's clerk of Gujrati-African descent, and his wife Asha. The other characters are Hamza, who willingly joined the German colonial army, Ilyas and his sister Afiya. These characters lived in an unnamed location on the Swahili coast in what is now Tanzania from the time of German colonial control to the decades after independence. On the coast of East Africa, a young boy named Ilyas is taken by German colonial soldiers in front of his parents. Hamza also returns from the war with many physical and psychological wounds. It is due to this depiction of colonial rule and war time atrocities that Gurnah's novel was longlisted for the Orwell Prize for Political Writing in April 2021 (Jeraj).

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's 1988 Publication "Can the Subaltern Speak?" formed the basis of postcolonial theory, particularly for examining subaltern silence and marginalization. The term subaltern was used for those people who are marginalized from society and have no opinion in it. Spivak stated that the subalterns are the most disadvantaged and impoverished people in society, and they lack an impactful voice within complex power structures. She also problematizes that within Western discourse, the West is positioned as the subject of power and the East is constructed as the object of representation (Spivak). Within this textual and theoretical context, the present research aims to elucidate the representation of characters as subaltern in Gurnah's *Afterlives* and analyze the survival of Gurnah's characters after the destructive effects of colonial life. So, this study poses questions, how are the subaltern characters portrayed by Gurnah in the novel *Afterlives*? and how do Gurnah's characters, being subaltern, survive in the harshness of colonial life?

Literature Review

Afterlives by Abdulrazak Gurnah explores themes, such as identity loss, colonization, and relocation. The literature review examines the opinions of different scholars regarding Gurnah's characters and how they relate to a broader discussion of colonialism.

A study titled "Love after Atrocity: A Nobel Laureate's New Novel Crystallizes the Pain of Colonialism" was conducted by Bethanne Patrick. This study examined the novel *Afterlives* through the lens of colonialism. The three protagonists in the novel Khalifa, Afiya, and Ilyas live through years of colonial violence. They each experience various kinds of deprivation, salvation, and injustice in the aftermath of colonial brutality. The novel closely follows some of the German occupiers. Ilyas, meanwhile, is off to war, conscripted into the Schutztruppe to fight against the British in the First World War. This study shows that colonized people faced different forms of oppression (Patrick).

Rom Charles conducted another study titled Never read Nobel Prize winner Abdulrazak Gurnah? Start with *Afterlives*. There are two primary subjects in the novel. It begins with an account of European colonialism and continues with a general look at village life. The erratic pattern remains the rule for Gurnah's characters, especially a young man named Ilyas, who becomes Khalifa's best friend. Ilyas was kidnapped as a child by an African mercenary and eventually sent to a German mission school. Another young man named Hamza provides a fascinating account of what it was like for East Africans serving their European occupiers. Long before Hamza's life is woven into the main storyline, we see him struggling to navigate the impossible currents of German desire and disgust

Another research by Imbolo Mbue was carried out on the novel *Afterlives* from the Perspectives of Colonialism and Postcolonialism (Mbue).” The German Empire is presented as a living, breathing organism with a desire to grow and reproduce, and, if threatened, to fight for its survival at all costs. Gurnah depicts the white man’s racism plainly: “I was born into a military tradition and this is my duty,” (Gurnah 30), a German officer says to Hamza. “That’s why I am here — to take possession of what rightfully belongs to us. We are dealing with backward and savage people and the only way to rule them is to strike terror into them” (56). To do their bidding, the Germans dispatch a group of African recruits called the Askari to torture villagers and slaughter local chiefs who offer resistance (Mbue).

The scholar Janice Ottersberg reviewed the novel *Afterlives* in 2022. He states that the novel provides a view of the culture and world of early 20th-century Eastern Africa. At the end of the 19th century, Germany established its foothold in East Africa through its colony, the Deutsch-Ostafrika. This unrest continued through the First World War until the Germans were defeated. Life during this time is told through the lives of four main characters: Khalifa, Hamza, Ilyas, and Afiya. In Mombasa, Khalifa, who is of Indian-African descent works as a clerk to an opportunistic moneylender and merchant of shady character. Hamza joins the Schutztruppe where he and the troop are subjected to abuse and humiliation by their German officers, then he becomes an Oberleutnant servant. As a youth, Ilyas runs away from home and is kidnapped by the Schutztruppe to serve as a carrier; he is later taken in by a coffee farmer and educated. Afiya, Ilyas’s sister, is living under cruel conditions when Ilyas rescues her after returning home; but when he rejoins the Askari, Afiya is taken in by Khalifa (Ottersberg).

In 2021, Samir Jeraj conducted a study titled “Abdulrazak Gurnah on Afterlives and Colonial Hypocrisy”. This study was conducted from the perspective of postcolonialism, illustrating how German imperial power and British colonialization disrupted Tanzania. The novel's characters are tremendously affected by these turbulent events. The novel's title shows colonialism's aftermath on the characters' lives. The characters' connection to one another supports the notion that the novel *Afterlives* focuses on society. Disruptions in families’ social ties are compensated by an unpredicted act of mercy. Khalifa, for example, was born to an Asian father and an African mother, allowing him to move freely between the two cultures. The interaction between these two societies, Tanganyika and Zanzibar, is not uncommon. However, he adds that German colonial officials expressed limited concern for expanding education and improving living conditions (Jeraj).

Times of India reviewed the novel as the story of Ilyas and Hamza amid an African colonial struggle in which the Germans, British, Belgians, and French were fighting for dominance. Young Ilyas was taken from his parents by German soldiers. In contrast, Hamza was purchased and then raised under the supervision of a commander who claimed ownership over him. After the war, Hamza returns home where Ilyas had stayed earlier and turns to Ilyas' sister, Afiya, in search of affection. This review highlights the suffering of African people, how they were kidnapped or purchased, and later how they fought against European colonial powers to achieve freedom. (The Times of India).

Theoretical Framework

Postcolonial theory is a response to colonial notions and a counter to how the colonized people are portrayed by the colonizers. The proponents of postcolonial theory are Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, Homi K. Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak. The concept of postcolonialism is traced to Edward Said's work, *Orientalism*. According to Edward Said, the effects of

colonialism are still felt, which include conflict, violence, bureaucratic domination, civil wars, and death. Languages and civilizations have been enforced by Western colonial power, whereas the cultures of the Orientals are neglected or distorted. He added that another defining feature of colonialism is the concept of ‘Othering’ (Ashcroft 85).

The Wretched of the Earth (1963) and *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967) are two of Frantz Fanon's most significant works on colonialism. These two pieces provide insights into how colonization affected a nation's indigenous population. He looked at the psychological impact that colonialism had on both the colonizers and the colonized (Ashcroft 91).

However, the present study has been conducted using a qualitative approach because the data is in non-numerical form and analyzed through textual analysis of the novel *Afterlives* by using Spivak's theory of the Subaltern. The study focused on the interpretation and analysis of the selected novel. Since the data gathered used a qualitative research methodology, the novel has been used as primary source. Moreover, the researchers used a close reading technique to get a deeper understanding of the text. The research gap was made clear through a critical review of existing scholarship.

Subaltern Theory by Gayatri Spivak

The present study has taken postcolonial concepts from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's “Can the Subaltern Speak?” for textual analysis. It explores the impact of colonialism and colonial power on the colonized. The word subaltern describes those who are disengaged from society and do not have the power to speak. The colonial or the subject, according to her, is a perception of the political issue, whereas the idea of other or object is another concept given by colonizers. They are referred to as ‘others’ by European colonizers. She stated that the most marginalized and poor members of society, known as subaltern, have no voice. She further states that the identities of subaltern people are quite different because they are unable to express themselves. The voices of colonized people are silenced by powerful colonial forces. According to her, subalterns lack social standing and therefore are not acknowledged by society. She explored the idea that the East is positioned as the object and the West is presented as the subject (Willette). The subject speaks and is heard, whereas the object is not allowed to speak. The subalterns are the inferior people, and therefore their voices are seized by the colonizers. Spivak's work includes aspects of postcolonialism such as epistemic violence, oppression, and marginalization. As a result, the term subaltern explores societal problems how the people are displaced, oppressed, or marginalized (Spivak).

Analysis and Discussion

The novel *Afterlives* has been set on the coast of East Africa. It was the time when the largest part of Africa was under German colonialism. In the novel, Ilyas, Afiya, and Hamza are affected by colonialism and used by German troops. These three characters are the true representation of subaltern under German and British colonialism. Ilyas, who is the defender of the Germans, is kidnapped by German troops. Later, he serves the Germans. His separation from his parents and sister highlights the effect of war on how people get separated and marginalized from society. While serving the Germans, he later changed his name from Ilyas to Elias Essen and died on the Sachsenhausen mission in 1942. Being a subaltern, he is not able to raise his voice in front of Germans. Afiya, Ilyas's sister, also suffered and lived under the control of those who beat her. After 10 years, she met his brother. Ilyas's identity is split up under colonialism. The village people did not recognize him. But soon, Ilyas left her sister and gave her responsibility to his friend Khalifa, who looked after her. Her separation from his brother demonstrates the lives of subaltern. The character of Hamza also suffered a lot. He was sold by his parents, and then the merchant's

cruel behavior forced him to run away. In addition, Gurnah's *Afterlives* demonstrates that the people of East Africa have hope and try to rebuild their destroyed lives.

The Portrayal of Subaltern in Afterlives

The subaltern are those who are excluded from dominant social and political structures and are denied the power to speak under colonial rule. The state of being subaltern in society is an aspect of postcolonialism that how subalterns are displaced from their homeland and then forced to change their way of living. Abdulrazak Gurnah through his characters shows subaltern conditions: Ilyas was kidnapped by the German colonial power and after a long time, he came back to his town. The officer assistant, Habib, helped him to get a job with a teacher named Maalim Abdalla. They usually walked and met at a specific place called the Baraza. It is a meeting place in East Africa and their walk came to an end at Khalifa's home who was a Gujarati trader's clerk. This setting shows how colonized people live under colonial conditions.

Did they make you pray like a Christian? Khalifa asked. You won't tell anyone if I tell you, will you? he asked. They made you sin, Khalifa then said (27).

Khalifa and Ilyas both are good friends. Ilyas tells everything about himself to Khalifa, and how he is kidnapped by Germans. The subaltern aspect can be seen here in the way marginalised people are forced to change their religion. The character of Ilyas offers prayers like a Christian. This shows how German colonizers use their power to subjugate and control these characters. Ilyas says to Khalifa that God knows better what is hidden in my heart. He even defends Germans, saying that he works for them and it enabled him to attend school. Here, Ilyas speaks in favour of the Germans and says that they have been very kind to him. Africans were suffering for many years under European colonization and countries such as Germany had become successful in manipulating the lives of many people, making them believe that they wanted to help them and enlighten their minds as well (Fatma). The character of Ilyas believes that the Germans are kind to him and want to make him civilized. It is because he was first abducted by the Germans, then kept in confinement, and after that he was sent to a German school. For subaltern characters like him, there is no way to escape.

Was there still fighting up there? Khalifa asked. No, I don't know. Ilyas said. It was very peaceful. There were new farms, schools, and towns (28).

Ilyas continues his conversation with Khalifa about Germans. Khalifa is curious whether the war is going to end or not and asks Ilyas. But here in above lines, the subaltern aspect is indicated as speaking in favour of Germans. Fatma stated that white and the West are depicted as perfect human beings, with great brains and the ones who bring light to African countries (Fatma). This colonial influence is shown through Ilyas's character when he says that common people get the chance to attend school and then work on farms owned by German. He further justifies German rule while also mentioning that only some bad people spread brutality; otherwise, they are generous people, whose generosity can be seen in providing him with employment. However, colonial education worked as a tool of imperial control, shaping colonized people according to the needs of colonizer. As Spivak argues that colonial education system created a dichotomy between European knowledge and indigenous knowledge. Moreover, foreign schools strengthened German language and privileged their education system while marginalizing local African knowledge (Spivak).

I don't know what happened to the old people. I've never been back to the village where we used to live, Ilyas said. Ten years, Ilyas said. Remembering his neglect of his parents and how badly

it made him feel afterward, Khalifa said (28).

Ilyas's separation from his parents is an aspect of subaltern how he was displaced from his hometown. In Ilyas's case, the subaltern is one who is excluded from society. This is an effect of colonial domination that the colonized people are not allowed to go back to their homes (Bhagwat). Spivak stated that "my Indian situation may be interpreted as a depressing quest for the lost origins that make up my identity. But I am completely aware that the rooms of inspiration are not easily accessible" (Spivak 6). Khalifa asked Ilyas why he does not want to go home and how many years have been passed since he was far away from his home. Ilyas responded that he is close to his home but the aftermaths of colonialism left him devastated and he does not want to recall and rethink it. Abdulrazak Gurnah told in an interview with Shane Creevey that we remain in our thoughts and our actual world, even when the past is over, it remains in the present and in an imaginary world that continues. I suppose that it never dies because the past is present (Creevey). Khalifa insists that Ilyas should go because he feels, Ilyas will regret his decision with time. This shows that the past is still present in these characters' thoughts and imaginations.

Ilyas didn't know how to pray and did not know the words. There was a mosque in the nearby mountain town but no one at the farm or the school told him he should go there. By then he was a grown man working at the Sisal estate (31).

The lives of the characters are disturbed under colonial control. Ilyas, who was once colonized and is now back in the town, goes in search of his parents. It is the time for Maghrib prayer, and Karim invited him to start the prayer. However, Ilyas under German colonialism, has forgotten his religion. Karim said to Ilyas that he should lead the prayer. Ilyas feels hesitant because he was working on a Sisal estate. Sisal cultivation was introduced by German East Africa in the last decades of the 19th century. Abdulrazak Gurnah highlights the problems of Africans being subaltern in the service of German colonizers through the character of Ilyas. But the person who is working for Germans cannot go to the mosque or live according to his religion. Religion seems to play a fundamental role in explaining White colonization in third-world nations (Fatma).

Ilyas thought about this for a moment then he said, left her for other people. What does this mean? The man spoke now; his voice was very weak. Your sister is given away. Is my sister here in the village? he asked at last (33).

Ilyas came to know that his parents had left a girl. He is shocked that the baby is 15 or 16 months old. She is alone now. The man continues to tell him all the situations that his parents faced after him. This shows the life of subaltern—how their families are disturbed and Ilyas's poor parents have no voice. They are identified as subaltern (Guleria). Ilyas's parents suffered a lot after his kidnapping. His mother was ill, and his father too was ill with diabetes. Ilyas is asking them if her sister is still alive and where she has been. The man then told him in a sad tone that her sister has been living near the village. Abdulrazak Gurnah, through his character Ilyas, portrays the life and experiences of a subaltern and gives us a true picture of Zanzibar. These lines demonstrated that the lives of marginalized people affect their family structure. In the novel, Ilyas's parents, sister, and he himself suffered a lot of problems.

One day she was in the yard helping her aunt with the washing when they heard someone calling out from the front door. When I was hungry, I begged for food or stole some fruit. I arrived in a big town on the coast and saw soldiers (44).

After a long time, Afiya was reunited with her brother Ilyas. Ilyas shared his experiences

with her that how he had left home and what had forced him to leave home. Gurnah shaped the life of Ilyas in a way that first he left his home, then he was kidnapped and reached the place where German troops marched. Ilyas recounted seeing troops strolling down the sidewalks. He went with them. A group of Askari waited on the platform for the train. A Shangaan Askari forced him onto the train and refused to allow him to get out. The Askari instructed him that Ilyas had become a gun soldier. Ilyas assured that he was an Indian guy whom the Askari had kidnapped from his house. This is how Ilyas's journey started under German troops and how he became an Askari and an agent of colonial power. Another study referenced Spivak's thoughts on subaltern and stated that she strives to unsettle the roots of the conventional self. The concept of the Self is another paradox she confronts with after depicting the experiences and sufferings of marginalized and disadvantaged individuals in developing countries. The self represents power and the West, whereas the Other represents the powerless and the East (Bhagwat and Arekar). In the novel, others are forced to live under German colonialism. When Ilyas sees the troops that are marching, the Maji conflict was taking place at that time. The Maji Revolt had been an aggressive war within German East Africa by Islamic and animist Africans fighting German colonial rule. The Germans were victorious. From 1905 to 1907, the conflict took place for three years. Maji's protest was nearing its end after its violent suppression, and was crushed at a high cost to African lives and livelihoods. The uprising began near Lindi and then swept throughout the country and villages in the West and South. When the German authorities recognized, military weapons were not enough to suppress the revolt, and it started starving the citizens. The Schutztruppe considered every person a soldier in the affected areas. They destroyed towns and burned houses, destroyed crops, and discontinued food supplies.

They don't stand a chance, the British, Ilyas said. The Germans are gifted and clever people. They are much kinder than the British. I don't know about kindness, said one of the café experts.

There is no one as stern as a German (49).

Khalifa takes Ilyas on the Baraza, it is a meeting place in East Africa where many people gossip about several things. First of all, Khalifa gives a brief introduction of Ilyas to others that he attended German school and worked for a farm owned by Germans. They are all talking about the horrors of war, different from the previous minor conflicts between Waswahili and Arabs. They were bad enough, yet this one is monstrous. They have hill-sized fighter planes with warships that could navigate undersea. The novel exposes British and German brutality and colonial power and how they oppressed Africans through various means. Ilyas speaks in favour of the Germans, claiming that they are God's gift to them and that they are far better people than the British. All the other people in the café oppose Ilyas because they are all aware of the brutality of the Germans. Mangungu tells Ilyas that Germans are unkind and that they are stricter and crueler than Arabs. The Germans have altered Ilyas' thinking as he says that he has only received compassion from them. Contradicting Ilyas, another person says that just because one person is polite does not entail that all Germans possess the same quality. Over those years, Germans spread violence and murdered thousands of Africans, leaving a vein of blood and skeletons all across the country. Many dead bodies were hanging on both sides of the roads as a result of German colonization.

They were fighting an enemy who was just as savage in retaliation, Ilyas said, undaunted. They had to be harsh in retaliation because that's the only way savage people can be made to understand order and obedience (49).

Ilyas argues with Mahmudu, Mahfudh, and Mangungu about Germans and British. This is how their colonial control shapes people's perception in such a way that the natives think that Germans are civilized and sincere to them. Ilyas, who worked under the Germans, has the opinion that they are not harsh, and they take revenge only from those people who treat them brutally. The Germans, according to him, have been kind ever since they arrived. In the same dimension, another study quotes Spivak, stating that she has a clear grasp of the extent to which oppressed and marginalized people's experiences are being adversely affected by the dominant economic, social, political, and academic tactics (Bhagwat and Arekar) to shape the minds of the Africans. Mahfudh said that German Askari is equally violent and merciless because they have acquired these traits from their commanders. These people are making every effort to persuade Ilyas that Germans are brutal rather than civilized human beings.

Despite such encounters, it was still a great surprise to Khalifa when Ilyas announced that he planned to volunteer for the schutztruppe. What was this to do with you? his friend asked. This is between two violent and vicious invaders, one among us and the other to the north (50).

Ilyas's decision to join the German army puts everyone in shock. Ilyas is Khalifa's friend; he is concerned about him and wants that he never joins the army. Khalifa is aware of German brutality because Africa is soaked in blood. Opposing his friends, Ilyas announced his decision to join the Schutztruppe. These lines show that the minds of subaltern subjects are shaped by German colonial power. Spivak's views how subaltern people are made other and how their sense of self is erased (Spivak) support the shaping of Ilyas's consciousness. Both the Self and the Other represent the Germans as superior and Africans as inferior respectively. In the novel *Afterlives*, the concept of Self and Other is used to define the relationship between the Germans and Africans as well as the relationship between German troops and Ilyas. Khalifa told Ilyas that enlisting with the group of German soldiers is one of the worst decisions because the mercenaries are notorious for their violence and inhumanity. He explained how the rulers cleverly manipulated the natives to fight against their countrymen to suppress the revolt. They are engaged in a conflict unrelated to the natives. He warned Ilyas that he could be badly wounded, but Ilyas thought that everything would be great after joining the army. Everyone at the café is discussing how cruel the Germans are, how they oppress people, and how many people have been slaughtered. Yet Ilyas does not rethink. Khalifa continued by arguing that his sister Afiya should be his only priority.

She did not know how he could send her back there, after all, he had taught her to see the cruelty of her life with them. Ilyas knew that he was posted to Dar es Salam for training. Khalifa said to Afiya that this fight is nothing to do with him (51).

After a long time, Ilyas and her sister rejoin. But this process of colonization again separates the two. Ilyas, whose mind is changed now just wants to join the army. Abdulrazak Gurnah reveals the lives of the protagonists by describing the surroundings in which they live. His characters attain their identity from certain regions. This is how Gurnah portrays the lives and experiences of Ilyas and Afiya and their life-changing experiences as subaltern. Ilyas says goodbye to his friend Khalifa, reinforcing the concept of subaltern as people without agency and any central societal position. Ilyas does this because his German school and work on a farm in German's custody shaped his thinking to join the army. He was informed that he would be assigned to boot camp in Dar es Salaam. Dar es Salam is a city in Tanzania. Afiya was told by Khalifa that he was not involved in the conflict. But he was

killing alongside Askari, whose hands were already soaked in blood. Khalifa expressed concern that Ilyas does not care about his sister. These lines show that subaltern characters are forced to be marginalized and separated from their families and hometowns because they have no voice or agency.

The recruits were on the march with varying degrees of consent, some were volunteers, and others were volunteered by their elders who themselves were under duress. Others were silent and anxious. Hamza was in the latter category, silently wretched about what he had done (55).

It is the first day of Hamza under German officers after they kidnapped him. All this happened in the Boma camp. They told Hamza that he was a stupid person. As Hamza's condition was not good, they told him that in the army his body is made tougher and stronger. This shows the cruel treatment in these camps to turn colonized human beings into violent objects so that they use them later as they want (Arbia and Mihoubi). Through the character of Hamza, Abdulrazak Gurnah highlights the experiences of people who lived in postcolonial Zanzibar and were then sold to German soldiers. Some soldiers are recruited and are forced to join the army, while others join voluntarily. The Schutztruppe was strong and also prepared to get involved in the war against other men. Several of them interacted casually, parading with enthusiasm, while others were aware of all of this effort, so, they anticipated their initiation into the language of contempt, grinning at the statements of their escort. But Hamza is the only one who is anxious and watching all this with unsaid words. He cannot speak as a subaltern under colonial subjugation, so he regrets his decision to join the German army. The incident gave him the strength to go along with others even though he met nobody else. When the sun rose, they walked to the boot camp to begin their journey. One of them sings a song in the Kinyamwezi language. Hamza was aware of this. The song revealed the oppression under German colonization. All of the troops sang that they were prepared. These are the troops of Mdachi – German army.

The sun clamped down on his neck and shoulders, and the sweat poured off his face and streamed down his back, Hamza's anxiety returned. Everyone knew about the Askari army, the Schutztruppe, and their ferocity against the people and about the stone-hearted German officers (57).

The soldiers are marching and are obsessed with the lyrics that they are singing. There is the first day of Hamza among the German troops and their march. The weather is getting hot, and he gets tired of all of this because he is not used to German ferocity. Hamza's worries increased, so he went back and surrounded himself with fear. The idea of subaltern is connected to the weak. Categorization and oppression are prevalent throughout all societies, and subaltern's problems are an indispensable part of societal life (Spivak). The above lines also represent that Hamza thinks of himself as weak and in a miserable situation. When he left what seemed unbearable, he impulsively offered his services. He became aware of the company he was selected to deal with. All were familiar with a Schutztruppe, an Askari troop, and their cruelty towards the inhabitants. Gurnah, through the character of Hamza, depicts the journey of a soldier who is forced to join the German troops. His fear regarding the acts he had committed flared so violently that he experienced life-threatening consequences.

They walked all day, most of them barefoot, some wearing leather sandals. The Germans built this road, their escort said. Hamza's legs and back ached so much that he walked by rote and instinct, without any choice but to keep moving (57).

Gurnah's account in these lines portrays the struggle of Hamza under German troops. This shows that subalterns' lives are not easy; they are forced what Spivak argues to stay silent and accept all the situations under colonial power (Spivak). Hamza is a soldier, but he is of a lower rank, representing a subaltern. Several troops are there; half of them are shoeless, and others have been wearing leather boots. The Germans, according to their escort, constructed this route through the forest deliberately to ease the men's suffering. The soldiers sprang to life when the escort informed them that they were getting close, like animals approaching their enclosures, on the last stretch of the march, which he did not recall. Willette also states that Spivak's essay situates the subaltern within a position that is unclear and fractured (Willette). Hamza's life is also split between the East and the West because he deals with anxiety daily. He is lonely and unclear about his life and role to play in German troops.

Survival of the Subaltern

Afiya was thirteen years old when the British took control of the coast. It was now more than two years since Ilyas left for Dar es Salaam. They heard nothing from him (107).

Ilyas's sister, Afiya's displacement shows what we deduce from Spivak's theory, how subaltern have no luxuries to survive. However, Afiya still has hope that his brother will come. The British forces returned to Tanga on July 3, 1916. Khalifa and his friends discussed the brutality of the war that surrounded them. Afiya asked Khalifa about Dar es Salaam. Khalifa told her that war was going on between Germany, South Africa, and the British. But the most prevalent fight is with Africans. Several Askari, Schutztruppe, and African soldiers are killed. Khalifa gets news about Ilyas from Habib. He was a fellow clerk of Ilyas in the Sisal estate. But now he had no more news regarding Ilyas. He tells Khalifa that Ilyas was posted as a signalman. No one is left there because the British forces, after landing, took the manager of Germans as a prisoner. Ilyas was posted to Lindi district.

Khalifa gets suspicious and thinks that Ilyas is no more alive, or maybe something bad has happened to him. Khalifa is informed that Belgian soldiers have seized Tabora. It was an extremely brutal war. Through the character of Afiya, Gurnah demonstrates the lives of subaltern and their survival under duress as they are displaced from their homes and separated from their loved ones. Spivak also claims that the subaltern person seems to be unpredictable and diversified. In the present context, subalternity is marked by displacement and fragmentation. Another study validates our point by mentioning that subaltern do not always raise their voices, but the effects of colonization put them in a situation that they will use to survive in every situation (Khatoon). At Khalifa's home, Afiya lives quietly with the hope that her brother will come back soon. She got support from Bi Asha in reading the Qur'an and other religious stories related to God's prophets. She was delighted at Afiya not only when she accompanied her during worship but also when she recited the Quran with her. After getting separated from her parents and brother, it is the first Eid of Afiya, which she celebrates with Khalifa's family. After Ilyas, he is the only person who looks after Ilyas's sister like a daughter.

Sooner or later, he was bound to recognize something. When he stumbled on the post office building, he sat down with relief and waited for his fear to diminish (142).

Hamza comes back to his native town, entirely shaken by the horrific events of the war. It is something he brings to mind about the past when his home was near the roadway, which he sees with a gloomy face how it collapsed into the tiny passage. In his case, he as a subaltern is first displaced from society, and then colonialism shattered his mind, identity, and place. Later, he fully separates himself by having concerns that his sleep deprivation

would disturb other people. The treatment of German troops during war left him suffering from trauma as well as insomnia. Abdulrazak Gurnah, through the character of Hamza, clarifies the elements of resistance and survival of subaltern during and after the war. In the novel, Hamza depicts the horrible experiences of colonial rule and its aftermaths that he suffered as a soldier in German forces. Later, he comes back to his town and rebuilds his life through work and hope. The capacity to make a decision or take an initiative is referred to as agency. It clarifies, whether people may behave independently or whether their actions are influenced by the very process of their identity formation under colonial subjugation. As it is argued that people will have the capacity to recreate their right world and the effort to rediscover themselves (Ashcroft 2007). Similarly, Hamza, in search of a job, went to a building he had seen. Hamza's struggles to overcome the sorrow the war has caused, seek work, and restore his life contain elements of resistance and agency.

Conclusion

This research concludes that in the *Afterlives*, the idea of subaltern has been demonstrated through the atrocities committed by German colonial power in East Africa. Subalterns are people who are displaced, and not allowed to speak under colonial rule. The findings of this study demonstrate the muteness of subaltern people and the struggle of these oppressed people during and after the war in Africa. The findings highlight that Africans being subaltern suffered a lot, but with the passage of time, they learnt how to rebuild their shattered lives. Gurnah's characters rebuild their lives with affection, kindness, and a whole sense of connection with society. The characters of Ilyas, Afiya, and Hamza have shown how they survive the horrors of war and restore their relationships with affection and kindness. Abdulrazak Gurnah thus suggests that good fortune does not always remain the same; but it changes. It has been demonstrated through the study that African people first suffered war and then came to know how to live life quietly. Moreover, future research may be conducted by selecting other works of this kind for comparative analysis or may examine the present novel under different theoretical perspectives.

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Notes on contributors

Mehreen Naz is affiliated with Times Institute, Multan, Pakistan. She is actively engaged in academic research with a shared focus on linguistics, particularly within the framework of subaltern studies. Her works explore language as a tool for representation, identity formation and power dynamics among marginalized communities.

Nimra Saeed is associated with The Women University, Multan, Pakistan. Her research interest lies in linguistics, with a specialization in subaltern studies. She engages with critical theories to examine how linguistics structures and narratives combine to the visibility and empowerment of subaltern populations, particularly in socio-cultural settings.

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