

## **Silenced People's Silence : A study of Psychology of Silence in Admiring Silence by Abdulrazaq Gurnah**

**Nada Kadhim Hussein**

**Master in English literature**

**Directorate General for the Education of Rusafa II**

**Division of Research and Educational Studies**

**Journalofstudies2019@gmail.com**

### **Abstract:**

Abdel Razzaq Gurnah (born in December 20, 1948- ), winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, is among the best novelists who dealt with 2021 silence that some people adhere to. Gurnah interpreted people's silence as a result of pressures that people are subjected to, which is , for instance , the cruelty of a tyrannical government that controls the people's fates by force, persecution and abuse, so it becomes obligatory for them to keep silent, otherwise they will face an inescapable fate. At other times, Gurnah believes that silence is a bad state in someone's life because he wants to hide secrets that may be from the past or the present and that revealing them means that this person's life will be destroyed or he will lose the family he had after suffering what he suffered in the past He does not want his family members to know anything he hides In the novel ( Admiring Silence) (1996), Gurnah presents people from the Tanzanian people who were subjected to persecution that was practiced by the tyrannical government. Among these people, is the protagonist whom the author did not give a name, rather left his name to the reader's imagination to imagine him and how does he look like , but with details from his life that the novelist masterly give . This person had left his mother country to go to London to live a new life and raise a family. He does not want his family members to know anything about his past because he believes that in the events of the past there is something wrong that, when known, shall cause him much harm. In the novel, the protagonist returns to his mother country and is full of fear of the secrets to be discovery. The memories there pass heavily and slowly and that increases his suffering

**Keywords:** (silence, alienation, language of silence, diaspora, enslavement and persecution).

## صمت الشعب المسكت: دراسة سيكولوجية الصمت في الإعجاب بالصمت لعبد الرزاق جرنه

ندى كاظم حسن

المديرية العامة لتربية الرصافة الثانية

شعبة البحوث والدراسات التربوية

الملخص:

لعل عبد الرزاق قرنج ( ولد في ٢٠ كانون الأول ١٩٤٨ ) - الفائز بجائزة نوبل للآداب لعام ٢٠٢١ من بين افضل المؤلفين الروائيين ممن تعاملوا مع الصمت الذي يلتزمه بعض الأشخاص لقد فسّر قرنج صمت الناس بانه قد يكون نتيجة لضغوطات يتعرض لها الأشخاص كان تكون قسوة حكومة طاغية تتحكم بمصائر الشعب بالقوة و الاضطهاد و التعسف فيصير لزاما على الأشخاص التزام الصمت و الا فانهم سيواجهون مصيرا سيئا لا مفر لهم منه . و في احيان اخرى يرى قرنج ان الصمت حالة سينة في حياة شخص ما لأنه يريد ان يخبئ اسرارا ما قد تكون من الماضي او الحاضر وان افتضاحها يعني ان تتحطم حياة هذا الشخص او ان يفقد اسرة ما كان قد كونها بعد ان عانى ما عانى في الماضي و يريد الفرد اسرته ان يعرفوا شيئا مما يخفي في رواية ) الإعجاب بالصمت (١٩٩٦) يقدم قرنج اناسا من الشعب التنزاني الذي رزح تحت نير الاضطهاد الذي مارسه الحكومة الطاغية و من بين هؤلاء شخص لم يمنحه المؤلف اسما بل ترك اسمه لخيال القارئ ليتخيله و يتصور شكله و لكن بتفاصيل من حياته سردها المؤلف ببراعة . هذا الشخص كان قد ترك بلده الام ليغادر الى لندن ليحيا حياة جديدة و ينشئ اسرة ال يريد لهم ان يعرفوا اي شيء عن ماضيه انه يرى في ان في احداث الماضي ما يشينه . في الرواية يعود بطل الرواية الى بلده الام و كله مليء بالخوف من اكتشاف الماضي لعائلته و تمر الذكريات مثل شريط يمر ثقلا و بطيئا مما يزيد من معاناته

الكلمات المفتاحية : (الصمت , الغربة , لغة الصمت , المهجر , استعباد و اضطهاد) .

## Introduction

Silence can be either a sustainable state in a society if the ruler is a tyrant, and thus silence is among the means that a person resorts to in order to prevent the oppression of the tyrannical ruler, as objection and confrontation will not have good consequences. Colonial repression causes the silencing of marginalized men and women in different walks of life, or it can be a reaction by some people who have unpleasant past that they are keen to hide from their beloved people or others. It can be something embarrassing for a person to tell one's embarrassing history to any one because

he feels it is going to be his point of destruction and loss. Between these two status of "Silence" Abdulrazzak Gurnah, the Tanzanian novelist expresses the negative and less positive influences of a person to be silent .He presents a person who chooses to keep silent in the face of tyranny just to be safe .If he chooses to "Talk" and " object" to the tyrant government in Zanzibar, he shall face his inevitable death. He decided to leave this dangerous place, with all its misery and fear, to go to London to start over a new life. Despite his new world being safe and comfortable place to live in, yet he cannot forget his original country, Zanzibar, which kept him struggle to forget all his painful history and events. Hence he became a victim of two "silences" and his life. The following pages shall disclose this man's inner and outer feelings in his way to survive in the present with all those aching moments he endured in the past, which he cannot talk about, to keep his respect and dignity among the people he knows and loves. He tried to "hide his past" yet it is impossible for him to do so for a long time.

### **Why did certain Characters choose to be silent?**

Gurnah , employs silence to highlight the notion that both language and tale are limited means to express representation of the experience of a migrant .The migrant sometimes feel his inability to talk about his memories ,therefore he leaves the space

for others to give their own version of the past events as they understood and comprehend .This multiplicity of versions may cause gaps in the true past stories. As a result, those pauses in narrating the vents provide a space for considering individual opinions, worries, and struggle a migrant has.

*Admiring Silence* (1996), set in present-day England and Zanzibar, tells the story of a stranger who moves from Zanzibar ,his native country, to England to start his life once more . It addresses the broader issue of alienation within his emigration to England from a previously colonized country. The main character is an English secondary school writer and literature teacher who settled long ago in England. After 17 years in the UK, he travels to Zanzibar for the first time since his departure. In his tales, he speaks to the readers about the time when he was a child and his memories in his youth , with his comments on what happened then from an adult's point of view. He communicates with his family whom he left back in Zanzibar depended on his writing them letters. This makes it easier to hide details about life in England, and over time comes liability. A temporary visit to his hometown thus breaks his long silence and reveals the relationship between the English woman Emma, and his Amelia, his daughter, and since he came to England, he kept it a secret.

This man' silence causes his relationships to fail. Interestingly, it turns out that his inability to maintain healthy relationships with people is due to Abbas, his father, who deserted his wife and the narrator from far away time .The narrator introduces Abbas as an uncle, who leaves no explanation as to the reason for his departure and has never called his family in Zanzibar. Emma attributes the narrator's father's silence to "the fact that he had no control over his life" (*Admiring Silence*: 53). Her remark that his being under dominance or non-dominance is due to his silence that the protagonist keeps silent in most of his interactions with those around him, as well as his narration as a narrator.

People deal with silence either as a condition they live or a reaction to certain condition they go through. Being that stated, the characters in this novel loss have to have their position in conditions that are imposed on them by people and experiences that this shall give them more control over their lives more than they do on themselves. The conditions that lead to silence are the Zanzibar society's acceptance of oppressive governments and tyrannical regimes, respectively, and the narrator's family issues, which cause him feel ashamed and insulted. In his new country, these conditions arise due to the segregation or ethnic emotions that the immigrants are to face. Silence can be understood as a reaction, and resistance to be applied by the protagonist to take a stand against those who treat him as the other. His silence is a

moment of refusal to speak to anyone who makes racist remarks. Silence is not to accept or submit to others .The novel's title *Admiring Silence* suggests a double meaning: as a condition and a response (or a choice taken by a character) to conditions(s) .

Gurnah uses the title of his novel to refer to the oppressors who dominate and force others to remain silence. The tyrant government in Zanzibar, and silence adopted accordingly. He also expresses his gratitude to the main character's intentional refusal to interact with people who show discriminatory attitudes and calls it "admirable".

With the tales he recounts for himself and the other characters, particularly Mr. and Mrs. Willoughby, Emma's parents, the narrator occasionally becomes silent. These tales might be created as inventions to console his alienation. Satirical plays mimicking the typical and discriminatory views of ex-colonial immigrants, and retellings of several imperial adventure stories. For instance, Pocahontas's story gives us a glimpse into what it was like for him to be a stranger in England. Like Pocahontas, who married an Englishman and left her tribe to live in England, he has left the country and lives an isolated life in England. The story the narrator tells goes hand in hand with his silence. They are therefore discussed in the context of his silence. These stories help highlighting the hero's silence, but not all

stories have the hero deliver a certain message. When this silence is translated directly into the narrative text, it fills a specific period of the narrative but does not occupy the whole text space.

*Admiring Silence* treats silence as a disorder brought on by racial, familial, and social entanglements. The novel's portions that depict Zanzibar as a community under the control of an authoritarian dictatorship are where the social dimension of silence is most frequently seen. Meanwhile, political and economic powers are speaking out, silencing the most vulnerable Zanzibar citizens. When German or British colonial control is established, nothing changes for the betterment of the populace; on the contrary, the colonial administration helps some communal groups that are already economically dominant for the advantage of the Empire, especially under conservative British imperialism. The brief history of Zanzibar's is also mentioned in a similar way in *Admiring Silence*, which suggests that the common people who have been in charge up to this point ,because history never acknowledges them while documenting the succession of policies of the individuals in power, , are only gears in the great ruling machine.. Watson R.W (1955:25-26) states that these policies foster the development of economic elite while centralizing political power under British colonial control. This political move [by the British government] changed pre-existing social structures, strengthened economic dominance, and

generated and extracted the greatest amount of wealth for the throne. Britain promoted Zanzibar as an Arab state where only Arabs were in positions of governmental authority in order to achieve this goal. It was simple for the British to install Arabs as their political representatives because Due to their worldwide sea trade routes, local Arabs were wealthy and dominated the economic ruling elite. Gurnah paints a picture of Zanzibar after independence as a place where neither the rulers nor the ruled have changed. Ironically, this portrayal of the act of silence is tied to the narrator's criticism of Zanzibar's malfunctioning sewage system which is described on the pages that follow.

Because Zanzibar has so many different ethnic groups, Language plays a role in the question of power and authority because ethnicity is determined by language in Zanzibar. Possessing political or economic power implies having control over language, which in turn implies having influence over speech. The main linguistic and economic causes of conflict in Zanzibar are as a result of the severe inequalities that mark the economy there. Repression of local languages and the imposition of a governmental framework that restricted access to education and social mobility were two examples of Zanzibar's particular working-class oppression. Only the linguistic elite of Zanzibar had full access to the elite school system in this restricted system. This refers to silence by those



who have control over speech, which is interpreted to be the subordinate languages that suffer oppression which is a symbolic act. Such a deed has other bad aspects, such as education being manipulated for social advancement. Consequently, it is a struggle for the right of people in Zanzibar to use their own language. The practice of "admiration of silence," which Gurnah exemplifies by mentioning one of them by the name of Tembinok, is one of the acts that is referred to be social oppression that prevents people from expressing themselves.

chapter One of *Admiring Silence* starts as follows "He is an admirer of silence in the island; broods over it like a great ear; he spies who report daily; and had rather his subjects sang than talked" which is stated in *The South Seas* by Robert Louis Stevenson when he has been profoundly impacted by Tembinok, the monarch of Apemama which as he sees him as "the last tyrant, the last dictator." Gurnah's epigraph shows that all tyrants use their influence to quiet others who are under their control. Stevenson's characterization of Tembinok is similar to how the narrator describes the "tyrants" who value silence:

We keep silent and nod - for fear of our lives - while bloated tyrants fart and stamp on us for their petty gratification. It is tyrants who commend muteness in

their subjects, like the ayatollah with his fatwa - another admirer of silence. (*Admiring Silence*: 134)

According to the narrator, Khomeini's conduct of imposing silence on his victims through fear qualifies him as a devotee of silence.

Since the majority of Gurnah's books feature migrant protagonists who are placed into existing power structures in their host countries in a post-colonial setting, as another condition that silence is considered, migrancy is examined in chapter one in the context of silence. The main character of *Admiring Silence*, is an immigrant from East Africa, who, as a result of being marginalized and alienated in England, is compelled to keep quiet. He migrates to England before he ever meets Emma, leaving his family behind in Zanzibar. However, after his arrival in England, where discrimination against him is still a problem, life has not been simple. During his first few years in the country, while he makes a living as a waiter at a restaurant, he receives criticism from the proprietor Peter, who is upset with him for making advances at Emma after his arrival in England, where discrimination against him is still a problem.. He glares at Emma and "sends her away with a harsh flick of his head" (*Admiring Silence*: 58). He makes it plain that his indignation at the narrator's actions is racially motivated by

saying, " That's the kind of idiot country we have become . . .Thousands can just walk off the plane and live off us, but you're not doing that in my kitchen, young man" (*Admiring Silence* : 58) ,if the narrator so chooses, he can "doss on the State," but he cannot "doss on" Peter.the author continues (58). Thousands "dossing on the State" refers to immigrants from Pakistan or India, who Peter believes are to blame for frauds of passport , crime and drug overdoses level increase , as well as people from colored skins who will bring the civilization to its end , as the narrator reveals later on the same page (*Admiring Silence* : 58-59). For Peter, the main character is simply one of them, a potential "bogus fiancee" for Emma. He also remains silent in their company because, to Emma's parents, especially her mother, he is just another intrusive stranger. He acknowledges to the reader "in her [Emma's mother's] presence I often felt like a third person, as if I was absent and the conversation was being reported to me later" " (*Admiring Silence*: 72). Both Emma's parents disapprove of her relationship with a black man. Additionally, Emma's pregnancy and delivery of their daughter, Amelia, has added to her parents' shame.

Moreover, the narrator tries to read Mr. and Mrs. Willoughby's minds after confronting their "hate" and "lustreless glances," (AS 85) respectively:

I could feel the stirrings of a tragic story: confused offspring of mixed parentage (meaning European and some kind of hubshi) doomed to instability and degeneration as the tainted blood cursed through generations, waiting to surface in madness, congenital bone weakness, homosexuality, cowardice and treachery (*Admiring Silence* :86).

He knows the prejudice he faces and Westerners' anxiety over the return of the Other. The narrator's inferences highlight the price the intermarriage' sons and daughters will have to pay in addition to posing a threat to the Self. They are thought to contaminate the European blood that is pure, produce a decaying society, and be afflicted with what are considered to be the maladies of the era, such as infidelity or homosexuality. It is challenging for him to defend himself and nearly impossible for him to express how he really feels about individuals who think he's carrying the race's curse. The following is how he summarizes the results of his speaking efforts :

At times, I felt invisible to them. My voice sounded strange when I spoke in their midst, as if I was speaking in an incomprehensible tongue. I found myself losing track, confusing words, and becoming tongue tied. When they talked about me (or even to

me), it felt that they were pitying me, that I was a victim of unavoidable natural forces, a cyclone or a cholera epidemic or an inherited deformity.

*(Admiring Silence: 30)*

His isolation and silence are brought about by the authority they have over him. Due to his ongoing silence among the English, he has grown far from his own voice. All of the emotions he describes are manifestations of his complex of inferiority, which was brought about by being rejected by society. Mr. and Mrs. Willoughby's appearances—white European appearances—are what alienate him since they serve as a constant reminder of his otherness. The black guy loses his sense of self as a result of those self-fixing stares, which casts him in the category of the Other. The protagonist's anonymity may also be explained by the fact that he lacks a recognized name or identification among the English-speaking population. His anonymity, however, demonstrates that he is one of many, a member of the underprivileged group that includes migrants, exiles, and black people with their suffering.

Traumas experienced by the narrator, particularly those resulting from familial problems that predate his arrival in England, are another factors in his forced quietness. His regret describes his sentiments of guilt and sadness as a result of certain noteworthy facts about his life, such as the fact that his father

abandoned him and his mother and that he had to grow up with a stepfather: "Age breeds aches. I could have told her ages ago- that my father was Abbas and he left my mother before I was born" (*Admiring Silence*: 215 ). For this reason, he withholds information from the reader about his mother, stepfather, and father in his narration, which paralyzes the plot. At some point, he tells the reader that Abbas, whom he initially portrays as his uncle who is running away, is actually his father and that Hashim, whom he introduces as his uncle and father, is ,in fact, his stepfather. Additionally, he withholds from the reader for a while the fact that Nassor Abdalla's daughter, who is married to Hashim is his mother, and their union is a traditional reaction to the embarrassment caused by Abbas' absence. The "analepses" in the narrative text are narration flashbacks to those scenes that were either skipped or not revealed. These return-backs are how the contents of the silences are revealed.

### **In an attempt to break Silence: Revealing Hidden Past events within Exile, migration, and Storytelling**

The narrator discusses such traumatic events in his life through narrative. However, narrative serves more purposes than just erasing unpleasant memories and takes on various shapes and purposes as needed by the storyteller. In order to fit in with Emma's English pals and shed the burden of his past, his stories

might be categorized as either fiction to make his life seem better than it is empire stories that replicate the colonial discourse, or stories that focus on his situation as an outsider in English culture. The narrator's motivation for telling stories is because he wants to get away from the weight of his history and the difficulty of his marginalization since, in his opinion, stories can help him find a solution to his problems. As a result of the experiences life has forced upon him, his stories serve as instruments to correct the problems in his life, to maintain control of it and to make his existence bearable. Additionally, he creates stories about himself out of his desire to fit in with Emma and the other people in England. He just wants to blend in with the English neighbors without feeling alienated, "I imagined that I looked as they did, and talked as they did, and had lived the same life that they had lived, and that I had always been like this" (Admiring Silence: 62). Given that he has severed his ties with Zanzibar, the narrator feels alienated both in his native country and in England, a feeling shared by exiles. This study of the connection between exile and migrancy allows us to better understand the narrator's feeling and his description of the setting of this novel. In his book (Aftermaths: Exile, Migration, and Diaspora Reconsidered:16) Peter Yoonsuk Paik writes:

With our parents and their world, we feel the force of memory that ties us to an origin which might the

supply the very substance that we critique in our intellectual endeavors, but it lies in the nature of time that we should look for distance there. We do not expect to remain unchanged in the intellectual identity of a history and perhaps of a community or nation that lies in our past.

He indicates that postcolonial writers by rejecting the designation of exile, and they have reinvented their identities. and adopting the title of migrant instead. He considers the reality of exile itself. He claims that exiled writers are preferred to provide the readers with an "objective" picture of both their home society and those in which they are now living. On the other hand, their perceived privilege associated with their in-between situation helps to prepare a foundation for creating the "binary logic" between "a romanticized 'homeland' and an alienating 'here'". What it means to go from exile to migrant is described by Paik that the migrant's identity suffers significant changes as a result of his displacement, which alters him self-perception and frequently causes her to feel conflicted about both her old and new existence. Since the past's contours deals with the present rather than against it, he is no longer able to simply or nostalgically think back on it as a dependable anchor in his life.



It may be accepted to argue that Gurnah's portrayal of a character who experiences a sense of identity ambiguity, The in-betweenness of the protagonist, as well as his continual displacement and alienation .Since his recollections are associated with Zanzibar , the narrator is unable to leave it behind. However, because of the social and familial upheavals from which he runs, his old existence does not bring him any solace. It becomes more evident years later, when he returns to Zanzibar, he finds that even before setting foot in England, he has already cut his links with his family and nation. He has lived in England for a very long time with his girlfriend Emma, his daughter Amelia, and other family members. However, due to the discrimination he faces, which makes him feel alone and alienated, he still does not feel like a part of English life. This is a transition between two identities marked by a sense of displacement and an unease with the past.

The protagonist is viewed by Emma's companions as "a victim of historical oppression" (*Admiring Silence*: 61), fleeing a nation that was once a colony, and as a black man from African who may not have been imagined outside of his society culture . They anticipate the protagonist to present one of those framed tales, which the protagonist accomplishes in a way that is appropriate, because their perception of him is made by their assumptions about the Other's culture. Stories temporarily distract the narrator from his difficulties by his putting off his concerns

about the present and more about the past, However, they don't genuinely address his issues since fabricating stories and suppressing certain facts about his life only serve to keep him from facing the truth. At first, he is unaware of the deterioration in his relationship with Emma. Because she notices his inconsistency, Emma realizes that he is lying to her. She eventually stopped paying such close attention to his stories, according to the narrator. He believes that her love of stories, which stems from the fact that she is researching them for her PhD dissertation, helps her realize the importance of his stories.

The narrator claims that Emma eventually switches off the lights and starts to complete the stories for herself by herself. Emma gradually distances herself from the narrator and takes charge of their relationship. Of course, his unreliable narration is not the cause of his troubles; rather, it is merely an unsuccessful attempt to make his life look better. His problems from his past and his lowly status as a migrant, which hinder him from building a new house and a new self, two things that, are connected. The family, not belonging to a particular country culture, is what defines home. Years later, the main character states his definition of "home" when on a trip to Zanzibar, feeling homesick: "It wasn't England that was home (so you can roll back the red carpet, or file away, if you care, reproaches against the alienated native), but the life I had known with Emma.( *Admiring Silence* :170)

Zanzibar is no more a home for Gurnah's anonymous narrator before he departs, as his father has passed away. After a while, he feels as though he has lost his mother's love and care and that there isn't much left on the island of his youth to hold onto. After leaving Zanzibar, he stops going back there for a while and instead , he sends letters to his family, never mentioning Emma or Amelia because he fears that his family will have trouble to adjust to Emma's culture, history, and religion. He is not content in his current situation, which includes improper contact with his family. He is not content in England, which has never been his new home and is not in proper communication with his family either. As a result "Home" is merely a location in his mind where he recreates memories of Zanzibar, his own country, and where he may live peacefully among the English without feeling out of place.

Belonging to a certain home are merely "debilitating myths" that leave him helpless. He is unable to call either England or Zanzibar his home because he is burdened by his background in Zanzibar and by how alone and alienated he feels there. They are "debilitating stories" because of this (*Admiring Silence*: 90). Gurnah's characters lack a sense of rootlessness, and this is made possible by the fact that they are migrants, exiles, or part of diasporic societies. As in *Admiring Silence*, the sense of belonging to home is only momentarily felt. It is then better for him to keep

silence and press his feelings of non-belonging and loss of identity down there in his mind and heart.

## Conclusion

*Admiring Silence* proves that silence is not necessarily positive, but rather a way for a person to escape from any clash with the unjust and tyrant governments of his country ,that force their subjects to remain silent and bear it with its bitterness and cruelty in return for its cruelty and injustice. Silence may be an escape for the silent person from his bitter reality in the past, which he does not wish to talk about, because it is a source of inconvenience, lack of dignity and derogation .If he chooses to live a new life, he does not want those who live it with him to detract from his importance and existence ,because of his ill past , especially as he thinks of living a new life that he chose for himself in the diaspora, thinking that perhaps he enjoys his new life with resting and recovering his lost humanity.

Not giving a name to the protagonist means that he feels less important to himself and to the people around him. This person wanted to escape from the bitter reality he lived in his country in Zanzibar, with all the tragedies and injustice he suffered, and he found no alternative but to escape to another world in which he

might find himself by keeping his previous secrets down. He feels that he is in a better condition in his new life, but the memories remain to chase and disturb him, and this pain increases when he decides to return to his country. He began to feel that he is torn between the past and present, and his presence in the land of the diaspora increased his sense of loss, in addition to the fact that he is a black skin man in London. It is constant pain and a feeling of continuous torment that is transmitted by Abdul Razzaq Gurnah with such vigor that the reader feels that he is united with the protagonist of the novel,

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