

Representation of Identity Crisis in Relation to Mimicry and Sense of Belonging in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By The Sea*¹

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Abstract

*A new period emerged from the second half of the 20th century, and it has led to many debates regarding language, identity, race, gender, and culture. Simultaneously, a floor has emerged as postcolonial literature where literary figures raised their voices against all kinds of oppression in the cultural sense, and not remained silent towards experiences they had gone through all during the colonial period. With their anti-colonial rhetoric, writers living the shellshock over geographies of Africa and Asia passed on the story of their struggles to readers through their writings as first-hand experiences. Within this context, this study aims to examine the lives and backstories of two main characters in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea* (2001) from a postcolonial viewpoint. As one of the most prominent issues of the postwar period, identity crisis will be clarified in connection with mimicry and sense of belonging coined and discussed by Homi K. Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (1994) and by Frantz Fanon in his *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967).*

Keywords: Colonialism, identity crisis, immigration, mimicry, postcolonialism, sense of belonging

1.Introduction

Human being has evolved into what we are today and the process dates back to 60,000 years ago. Everything that has changed and developed until today was for a purpose; to be the best. It can be said that this desire of power will never change for the mortal spirit. With its history dating back to the 15th century, 'The Age of Discovery' or 'Age of Exploration' corresponds to a period that we can consider as the starting step of all efforts to be the strongest to survive. These discoveries, which were made to find alternative trade routes and explore precious metals, gained a diverse dimension as people

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discovered the unknown of the world. As a result of this entire search for power and domination of the world, Europe met with different identities, communities, and unknown lands that later became parts of their maps. "Exploration might reveal other prizes, of course-unexploited fisheries and fertile islands where fiefs and farms might be had for the seizing" (Horace, 1981, p.12). It was unavoidable for these new invaders to prosper and open up to the world as their cultures and traditions spread rapidly throughout discoveries. The overseas quest, led by the Portuguese and Spanish, played a role in the policy changes of many European countries. With the adoption of colonialism as a policy, while some countries gained power, some are doomed to the mighty. This power not only rewarded them with fertile lands, but also enabled them to become great powers on the way to the globalization.

Aftermath the process that started with the Age of Discovery, the concept of colonialism began to emerge. In Horvart's (1972) definition of colonialism, he says, "Colonialism is a form of domination" and adds "The idea of domination is closely related to the concept of power" (p.46). By carrying their own culture and identity to these places they discovered and occupied, they took a piece of themselves and made them accept it. Said used the terms in his *Orientalism* (1978) "Orient" and "Occident" in his analysis of the East and the West, which were the focus of conflicts in the colonial period. Power was the authority, and whoever implemented authority was served. Explorers who adopted an imperialist policy always presented colonialism as a result. Doyle's (1986) definition of imperialism also refers to the colonial order; "[i]mperialism is simply the process or policy of establishing and maintaining an empire" (p.45). Bringing your own civilization from overseas to the lands thousands of kilometres away from homeland would only be possible by adopting imperialism and the idea of power. Likewise, Said's (1994) definition of colonialism did not to address to a different issue and it was associated with imperialism, too. 'Imperialism' means the practice, the theory and attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory; 'colonialism' which is almost always the consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory" (p.9). It is obvious that the life of the exploited will be changed by these definitions where power and authority are superior. People faced a completely different culture and nation that were changed or even formed with imperialism. An inevitable conflict began with the formation of a hybrid culture practiced by missionaries and the language that was imposed. A complete transformation has taken place, not only in language and religion, but also in their identities, selves, way of thinking and even way of life. Through the missionaries, they threw people into an unfamiliar mire of belief, erected fences around them and determined boundaries. The consequence of all the intense colonial stream of actions of the Occident, a nation formation that has been corrupted and transformed in every aspect of belief has emerged, which has no choice but to surrender.

If we come closer to the present day from geographical discoveries, Industrial Revolution, the beginning of many significant developments, took place towards the end of 18th century England, when colonialism was at its peak and colonial activities changed drastically. When changes such as

workforce, natural resources, and population were experienced in many ways, negative effects of destruction were seen in terms of Third World Countries (Ayar, 2021). With the Industrial revolution, the arms race started, and as a result, Occident used their most powerful weapons and tools to take possession of the lands in Africa and Asia. "In 1800, Europe controlled 35 percent of the world's land surface; by 1914, they controlled 84 percent" (Parvanova, 2017, p.2). This meant that many black people were under domination, and they believed in white supremacy and thought they had the right to dominate them. To the Occident, the Orient was attributed as evil, savage, ignorant, monster, blackamoor (Boehmer, 2005). In one of Fanon's other important works, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), is a work that emphasizes contrasts such as black and white, Fanon said, whose ideas we will be inspired by, "You are making us into monstrosities; your humanism claims we are at one with the rest of humanity but your racist methods set us apart." (p.8) It is the people themselves who exalt or enslave people. But whichever they will choose depends on the white's interests. Adam Hochschild (1998) mentioned these people, who were not treated like human beings, in his work as follows; "whether they cut off our heads or that of a chicken it is all the same to them" (p.208). Racism always continued with the same aggressiveness, although technology developed and many revolutions were made, racism was progressing on the same parallel.

Europe had colonies before the Industrial Revolution but had little influence over them at the time, but things changed in the late 19th century and a more thrusting facet of imperialism emerged. The Industrial Revolution created the need for colonies in direct proportion to the production speed in these countries. "Because the Industrial Revolution increased the production capacity of Western states astronomically, there was an enormous hunger for raw materials to satisfy demands" (Parvanova, 2017, p.1). It was necessary both to meet the need for raw materials, and the expansion of the lands of the empires would make the Empire dominant and powerful. For this reason, the West would both meet its own needs and have a greater say in the world. The lands that met all these were in Africa, fertile and quiet. "In brief, Victorian high imperialism was distinguished by the following: geographic magnitude; the mass organization and institutionalization of colonial power, often expressed in forms of aggressive nationalism; and, as the century matured, the formalization of imperialist ideologies, especially those pertaining to race" (Boehmer, 2005, p.30). Until the First World War, European countries captured many soils on earth and dominated them politically, economically, and culturally.

However, this chaotic environment that was influential until the beginning of the 20th century caused the nationalistic feelings to awaken in the peoples of the countries exploited by the World War II. As Frantz Fanon stated in his work *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), "for a colonized people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity" (p. 9). A person lives for the land of his birth; the land they belong to is their most precious possession. It is time to talk about these people who are treated like strangers in their own homes, who cannot defend their rights, and who live in poverty. This sense of land, which

was revived with the war, pushed people to tell something and made us hear what happened from the words of people who tried to live their lives in this way.

In Edward Said's magisterial work *Orientalism* (1978) has influenced many fields as well as creating entirely new fields of research such as Postcolonial theory. The postcolonial period in which colonial policies seem to have ended after a heavy destruction caused by Second World War in the Third World countries is continued without being shown. Stuart Hall² made a similar statement, “[s]o postcolonial is not the end of the colonization. It is after a certain kind of colonialism, after a certain moment of high imperialism and colonial occupation- in the wake of it, in the shadow of it, inflected by it- it is what it is because something else has happened before, but it is also something new”. Addressing colonialism with its unchanging aspect, Hall supported that colonialism would somehow continue its existence. Although we cannot see its presence, it is still possible to see its traces. As we get closer to today, it is very possible to think that people are liberated with technology and human rights. However, it cannot be said that human beings are independent in this struggle for survival created by them. The following words of Ania Loomba (2005) may come to mind, “so that nothing is 'post' about their colonization” (p.13). Colonization was not the only thing we could not leave behind, the most important reason for this situation that had terrible consequences was human arrogance and insatiability.

With *Orientalism* (1978), we consider the postcolonial era to have begun, previously spoken on the subject by Gikandi, Chinua Achebe, Apter, and Robert Young. Postcolonial or in another saying post-independence emerged as a reaction to the colonial period, which started with the geographical explorations of the powerful colonial countries, acting with the sense of dominating over people through enslavement and the world with wars. The main theme of the period was clear, colonialism, racism, imperialism, etc. Another writer who focused heavily on this issue was Abdulrazak Gurnah. One of the postcolonial writers, Nobel Prize-winner and Tanzanian-born Gurnah with a colonial background, entered our lives in a staggering way with his novels about hardships of the lives of displaced refugees, with whom he shared common feelings. He left his homeland in his early adulthood with the Zanzibar Revolution of 1964 and went to Canterbury, England. Strongly carrying the responsibility of being one of them, Gurnah crowned his success by winning the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2021. In most of his writings, we observe the turmoil brought about by the war with the problems in family life or identity crisis in the background of his characters' lives.

The sixth novel of him *By the Sea* (Gurnah, 2001) has a story about an elderly refugee who settles in England with a fake passport and encounters the son of the person whose identity he has taken. The protagonists of his novels in general, Saleh Omar and Latif in *By the Sea* (Gurnah, 2001), are those who

²(See Stuart Hall's interview with Julie Drew in "Cultural Composition: Stuart Hall on Ethnicity and the Discursive Turn," in *Race, Rhetoric, and the Postcolonial*, ed. Gary A. Olson and Lynn Worsham (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 230.)

are constantly searching for their identities. It is observed that in his novels, in which we see the deep traces of colonialism, he often includes postcolonial themes and associates them with his own life. The silence, inner and speech conflict situation that he refers to his characters also stem from his self-observations. He talks about the fact that the silence or loss of voice brought by the search for identity that he has committed in the characters of the novel during his long and tiring journey is a kind of ignorance. In his interview with Razia Iqbal³, he made an explanation that it is because he does not know what to do and how to defend himself against these bullying that he encountered for the first time. Not knowing what to defend himself against, he answers in silence. During this situation, which we frequently encounter in his novels, is actually a reaction to ignorance of him, on the other hand, a passive resistance against those who bully him, these characters are the embodiment of the sentence “silence is the most powerful scream.”

In this talk, he also tells how he started writing and when he does not know how to make friends, he relaxes himself by writing. As an outsider, he points to solitude and silence by saying that you will stay as long as people want you in their lives. These experiences of a homesick teenager, longing for his home, and alienation led him to write a novel. “My first novel was titled *Memory of Departure* (Gurnah, 1987) because even though it was published many years after the time I am speaking about, I was still leaving”. It was the memory of not being able to part, no matter how long it had passed. There are feelings that still have their effects and are waiting to be resolved in him and in his novels. As mentioned later in the interview, the feeling that resolves his loneliness and silence is desperation, Gurnah concentrated on his writings because he thought he had no choice but to shape himself properly. Refusing to label himself with a country like a British writer and simply stating that he is a writer, he assumes a certain responsibility if you let a definition build a fence around you.

Regarding Gurnah's writing style, he made the following statements about his own writing, “Negotiation between memory, loyalties, and ideas of the home have been both my lived experience and an important part of my writing subject. I am also interested in the way European colonialism inserted itself into the lives of people it colonized and the consequences of that intrusion” (Iqbal, 2019). Accordingly, it makes it possible for us to consider Gurnah as a postcolonial writer, although he does not prefer to be stereotyped. Along with the themes brought by immigration such as displacement and mimicry, feelings such as search for a home and the lack of a sense of belonging constitute an important part of Gurnah's novels. In tandem with what has been mentioned so far, this article intends to examine *By the Sea* (Gurnah, 2001) in terms of Homi Bhabha's critical terms of cultural identity, mimicry, and sense of belonging in the context of postcolonial theory from Frantz Fanon's point of view.

2.Literature Review and Theory

³Razia Iqbal (2019) *Belonging, Colonialism and Arrival*, Wasafiri, 34:4, 34-40, DOI: 10.1080/02690055.2019.1635756

“I shall demonstrate elsewhere that what is often called the black soul is a white man’s artifact.”

(Fanon, 1986, p.16)

The period following WWII was witnessing an era that brought with it the demands of decolonization and freedom for both the public and their individual identities of the colonial states under the auspices of the West. Although they were released from physical, armed oppression by their struggle for independence, it would not be easy to get rid of the spiritual consequences of violence. Experiences that affected people psychologically made it difficult to continue life and also constituted an obstacle to new beginnings. Colonialism is a process that leaves a permanent mark on the lives of communities under the control of powerful countries and observes a unilateral relationship of interest. Dizayi (2015) explains that colonialism does not only mean being dominant over a country but also means a cultural bond with the colonizer that they cannot break even now. They were not only putting a country under their own yoke, but they were also trying to instil their own culture and traditions and pass on their heritage from generation to generation. Their personalities and mind-sets, perhaps even the days they celebrated, belonged to the West. Although genuine feelings and thoughts were running through their genes and blood, these voices flashed within them as a sound that was too weak to get out.

First of all, the term identity crisis is an umbrella term that gathers postcolonial concepts within a single framework is quite comprehensive and versatile as it covers the changes seen throughout the colonial period. As the source and result of changes, the identity crisis that an individual experience due to being affected by the environment has the potential to affect the whole process of living. Their ancestral culture, identity, language are crucial principles to keep them vivid and to be conscious of their own selves. There are prominent literary figures that have examined such difficulties throughout the colonial process of the oriented ones such as Homi K. Bhabha, Gayatri, Chakravorty Spivak, and Frantz Fanon. The injustice that was widespread all over the world showed itself distinctly in the East. Life has never been unchallenging and safe for the Orient who was shaken by colonial activities while trying to survive rather than defending their rights. They have been colonized, enslaved, and seen as non-human for centuries but the postcolonial period was a perfect fit to express themselves. It is very difficult for an Orient to create a safe space for himself and adapt to that new domain after sentences of Homi Bhabha in his *The Location of Culture* (1994) that have penetrated their brains for years: “The black is both savage (cannibal) and yet the most obedient and dignified of servants” (p.82) as the traces of years are too deep and too painful to be forgotten. As the definition of colonialism, even the moral damage they have taken or the transformation they have undergone poses a threat to their present life and the future of their selves. Life may seem crueller for identities who forget who they are and see that their identity is gradually fading and losing its colour. But with the postcolonial period, the black began to show self-worth that the whites gave themselves. It was no longer the differences, but the similarities, that were being talked about. As Bhabha clarifies in the preface to Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks* (1967), "The Negro is not. Any more than the white man" (p.231), so people realized that they were no different from

the white, even all the organs that lie beneath their white and black bodies. The similarities that accompanied them on their journey to find themselves were a chance to start life anew. The most distinctive feature of the postcolonial period is to explain problems arising from the newly formed hybrid nation's search for identity. Thence, the matter of identity became one of the most repressive topics in postcolonial societies.

Colonized people are also stuck between the dualities brought about by the similarities and differences between the white and the black and have difficulty deciding and choosing between two identities (Mahmood, 2014). Choices and radical decisions that these dualities bring to former colonized human life cause a person to distance himself from his identity, country, and culture. As a result, it leads to the formation of a hybrid culture, assuming different identities, and to remain in ambivalence in the people who migrate or are displaced. The reason for the existence of these ambiguous dualities between two cultures and two nations is the fact that one is meaningless without the other. As Edward Said indicates in *Orientalism* (1978) that “[T]he Orient was almost a European invention” (p.9). The West will never be able to move away from the East, as they will never be able to get closer. In this transformation of identity, which can cause the birth of a new person as well as finding a part of them, the only thing that forces the black one is the presence of the white. It is the white that confuses the black and makes them accept that he is superior. As a result of this “Wherever he goes, the Negro remains a Negro” (Fanon, 1986, p.173). For the indigenous who knew their hostile well, the transformation was inevitable. This is how they became what they feared to resemble.

3.Mimicry

Bhabha (1994) introduced the concept of mimicry in his work *The Location of Culture*, as the eastern feature, eastern lifestyle, and philosophy began to be studied. He studied like a group of writers, on the results of the problematic interaction and obvious hierarchy between the East and the West. We see westernized easterners who have become stereotypes, with this term of mimicry, which is encountered by those of eastern origin because of the dualities they experience in the West. These dualities that we see in the identities of the colonized originate from the ambiguity of the attitudes on both sides. With mimicry which is one of the important reasons that dragged immigrants into cultural trauma by victimizing and alienating the colonized as the “other”. And to be accepted, they had no choice but to imitate the West.

The duality between the two parties cannot simply be called mimicry. At the same time, as Lacan said, they had to adapt to an already established order, and they had to be good enough to camouflage with that order. Although this makes adaptation problems inevitable, we can see it as a parody of the West. A person cannot stop being himself while imitating someone else, so a completely different culture emerges, which we call ‘Third Space’. This term, which is Bhabha's theory, is the habitat of stereotypes. This constructed identity will always exist between the colonizer and the exploited (Kara, 2021). Mimicry can be explained as adopting the characteristics specific to it in the environment you are in

and adding it to your life. In more postcolonial terms, mimicry is the imitation of the superior by the subaltern with its original aspects such as tradition, language, religion, and dress. As Fanon said in *Black Skin White Masks* (1967) “The black man wants to be white” (p.11). Although this is not possible because of society's unrealistic standards, the black tends to imitate the superior in order to reach the power of the white. However, during this copying, it is seen that one leaves his/her own culture consciously or unconsciously. In this case, a different area is formed, which is very similar to the superior, but with the remaining features of the selves that it suppresses. Homi Bhabha explains this term as “almost the same, but not quite” (Bhabha, 1994, p.86). He tells that the colonized did not get far from him as a result of a process he went through, but he could not stay like himself. As Gurnah mentioned in one of his interviews, “That people come from so far away, to a place like Europe, and have to change or transform. they have no choice; you can't continue as you are” (Nasta, 2004, p.356-357). The colonized cannot move too far from his world, but he cannot remain as himself.

Bhabha also emphasized the importance of mimicry “emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 85). The colonial culture was imposed with its cornerstones as it reached the indigenous people, increasing the chances of immigrants imitating them. However, although they may resemble the colonists, they cannot be exactly like “self”, because they are people who have not yet had the chance to discover their selves (Ayar, 2021). It was very common among the natives to provide a safe environment for them to adapt to this new western environment. “To be sure, mimicry does not exhaust the possibilities of advanced societies. There is a creative element as well. On the other hand, mimicry is the principal, if not the exclusive, capacity of underdeveloped societies, trying to become modern” (Goodheart, 1987, p. 182). Although it may seem like a meeting of different values and cultures, it reveals a clear ideological difference in terms of power and hierarchy. Addressing the West with its technological developments and other developing features may be a chance for underdeveloped communities. Imitation is not always disturbed in terms of showing their own capacity and accelerating their development processes. As a result, they had to reject their own identity in this process of imitation, and it was a very painful way to give up the culture they were born into. But the most important thing they sacrificed themselves while developing themselves was their selves and everything that belonged to them.

4.Sense of Belonging

Everyone belongs to an identity from the moment they are born, and this identity is shaped by our social life and upbringing. And it allows us to decide what and who we will be in the end. Our identity, with which we feel our first belonging, gives us some rights when we are born into a certain ethnic group, and sometimes it takes it away. But our identity is more than belonging to the origin it represents (Seife, 2021). As a result of identifying with one's own identity, a sense of belonging develops. Fanon, in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), describes the difficulty of colonies in finding their own selves as follows: “colonialism forces the people it dominates to constantly ask themselves this question: In reality, who

am I?" (p.250) It is very difficult for people who have moved away from their selves at this stage to find something of their own.

Every soul wants to feel the sense of belonging to something or to have something that belongs to it; it could be a community, family, colleague, substance, or jewellery. Human nature has a desire to be accepted and wants to be supported. Schermerhorn (1970) addressed this sense of belonging in terms of ethnicity. He elaborates on ethnicity that cultural values and practices with symbolic examples such as kinship, religious affinity, language, and dialect add a lot to our sense of belonging in terms of devotion to ethnicity. It is not unfair if we think that the sense of belonging is to the land where we were born, we open our eyes to life. From the moment we are born, we are raised with certain values and those values are reflection of our current state. The vacant side of every person who grew up lacking these values is interested in trying to fill that emptiness.

Sense of belonging is a blanket concept, just like identity crises. It encompasses our natural needs to belong to a religion, speak one's own language, and live according to its own traditions. It is among the most important consequences of problems that Gurnah also deals with in his own novels, because the theme of escape does not always have a happy ending, it creates consequences that harm human nature, such as the concept of belonging. Since many of their characters have migrated to the colonizer countries, the first problem that new lives face is often the inability to adopt, the inability to belong, the inability to personalize. While displaced people seek a new identity for themselves, they also try to internalize those identities. For the colonizer, who constantly experiences dualities between these two lives, migration ends with fragmentation rather than a new beginning. "For all those millions of violently dispossessed refugees produced in this century, there is still some reason to mourn the loss of home and of belonging" (1998, p.142). It is quite possible that we can see the traces of these fragmentations even now, both psychologically and physically.

5. Discussion: *By The Sea*: A Postcolonial Analysis

The story in *By the Sea* (Gurnah, 2001) shows stages of lives of people who shaped their personalities in the cruel lands of Zanzibar and migrated to England or other colonial lands for survival rather than a fresh start. The novel, which begins with Saleh Omar's escape from his homeland to England with a fraudulent passport, ends with the resolution of a past conflict. In the intersecting stories of two fellow countrymen whose family problems in the past are reflected in their current lives, I will discuss the terms 'mimicry' and 'sense of belonging' that address to the identity crisis from the perspective of Bhabha and Fanon. One of the most important and inclusive topics of *By the Sea* (Gurnah, 2001) is that Saleh and Latif grapple with identity crisis. As a result of seeing themselves as worthless and insignificant, they believe that their life is not as valuable as a the white. As Fanon also mentioned in *Black Skin White Masks* (1967), "Negro is a stage in the slow evolution of monkey into man" (p.17). What is

referred to as something related to an animal that has not yet completed its evolution is actually nothing different from humans. The effect of this non-human situation, which has been internalized for centuries, on black people is not only an identity problem from their own age, but also stems from their ancestors. For Gurnah, he is abundant in reflecting this effect on his characters, and reflects us how deeply a crisis is experienced with the stillness of the book and the dull movements of the characters.

At what age are you supposed not to be afraid for your life? Or not to want to live without fear? How did he know that my life was in any less danger than those young men they let in? And why was it immoral to want to live better and in safety? Why was that greed or a game? (Gurnah, 2001, p.11)

People diverge from each other by virtue of their identities and their unique beliefs, meanwhile, these beliefs are crucial factors that bring them together on a common ground. Couze Venn makes those beliefs clear in *The Postcolonial Challenge Towards Alternative Worlds* (2006) as “Subjectivity and identity are necessarily inter-related when it is a matter of analyzing conduct or beliefs...” (p.80). Identity is a topic about life and freedom in which no one is accepted unequal, and that it will make the loudest noise about taking it away. As a refugee who feels likewise worthless and deprived of human rights in Saleh, he can do nothing but react with self-talk. Saleh has such a deep identity crisis that the readers of the book get angry with Saleh intermittently throughout the novel saying that why he does not show a reaction, or why he does not say anything. But the effects of the trauma are so powerful that people in this period are busy with living rather than explaining themselves. As an Orient who knows that he cannot be understood even by speaking, we see that he has become quite adept at mocking himself.

Do you remember that endless catalogue of objects that were taken away to Europe because they were too fragile and delicate to be left in the clumsy and careless hands of natives? I am fragile and precious too, a sacred work, too delicate to be left in the hands of natives, so now you'd better take me too. I joke, I joke. (Gurnah, 2001, p.12)

The protagonist of the novel, who describes himself as a fragile object, also underlines that he is at least as valuable as they are. However, they know that this is only about humiliation and contempt for white people and so they pretend that they do not even know their language and just try to bring their lives to a liveable level.

People like you come pouring in here without any thought of the damage they cause. You don't belong here, you don't value any of the things we value, you haven't paid for

them through generations, and we don't want you here. We'll make life hard for you, make you suffer indignities, perhaps even commit violence on you. Mr Shaaban, why do you want to do this? (Gurnah, 2001, p.12)

Struggling for a liveable life, Saleh is just taking the first step into his new life, both literally and figuratively, when the challenges that await him are hit by the airport attendant one by one. Woodward explains the term cultural identity as follows “the matter of becoming as well as being. It belongs to the future as much as to the past” (1997, p. 52). Their past, which only formed the background of their lives as a conflict and made them feel the question of who I am, was their main reason for existence. Saleh could have acted like himself, even though he was sure without anyone knowing that he would not be accepted, there were many things and people that reminded him of that. On the contrary, if he acted like a white, this would come to mind, “the White man's artifice inscribed on the black man's body” (1986, p.16). This artificial feeling was more than he could handle in this mess.

In this turmoil, Saleh does not think that he deserves the best for himself, either. “Sometimes I think it is my fate to live in the wreckage and confusion of crumbling houses” (Gurnah, 2001, p.1). This quote, which he confessed us on the first page of the novel, also allows the reader to foreshadow the continuation of the novel. In this way, it is possible to understand not only the novel, but also the feelings of people who have such common life experiences. The turmoil in the house and the situation Saleh and Latif live in with their common past makes them feel like they will be doomed to bad things for the rest of their lives. The fact that his own destiny is valueless like a pile of garbage and means nothing to Occident is a very important issue that bothers Saleh, and he talks to himself for a long time in the novel. Probably it is because he does not see himself as a person who is worth listening to, that he tells all these feelings to the reader, not to the people who are against him. He has closed himself to the world in such a way that he has turned into a person who has no activities other than meeting his daily needs and does not enjoy life. Each of his movements brings a memory back from his past and leaves him condemned to live in the past.

Although Latif was a professional and respected personality, the fact that he was black made him more insignificant. Latif tried to clarify his own identity by looking up into the dictionary. “Someone called me a grinning blackamoor in the street, speaking out of a different time. A grinning blackamoor. Picture the sight” (Gurnah, 2001, p.71). When people said such a word, he also wondered how he actually looked from an outsider's eye. In addition, Latif, who could not understand why he was subjected to such an accusation, saw that there was no reason for

some evil in the world and that a person could only be humiliated for pleasure or cheer. As a result of this sad enlightenment, he made some inferences on his own.

Another example of identity crisis arises as a result of a word or insult that Latif, who is verbally abused, does not even know what it means. The Zanzibar origin Orient, who attempts to search for the meaning of the word, finds himself feeling humiliated even by the walls of his house. "This is the house I live in, I thought, a language which barks and scorns at me behind every third corner" (Gurnah, 2001, p.72). Humiliation is like a curse that haunts him, just as he thinks his destiny is living in crumbling houses. In fact, besides being a common feeling experienced by displaced people, it is one of the most difficult one to overcome. The word 'black' he encountered in the dictionary and the word groups associated with it contained only negative meanings, such as "blackhearted, blackbrowed, blacklist, blackguard, blackmail" (Gurnah, 2001, p.72). He could handle a passer-by calling him "blackamoor", but he was caught off guard to see so much black. They continue their lives as people who make up a large section of people who cannot speak out in the vine of this information, which has been adopted as a general opinion and approved by everyone. The symbol of 'silence' in the novel stems from this, they do not know how to react, but they experience their feelings so deeply that they can express themselves like "despicable and disheartened, smeared by the torrent of vituperation" (Gurnah, 2001, p.72). Like a savage, as Bhabha said for black people, he is in a stream of thought that we understand that he is aware of everything. "Of course I knew about the construction of black as other, as wicked, as beast, as some evil dark place in the innermost being of even the most skinless civilised European" (Gurnah, 2001, p.72). For a person to call himself such cruel adjectives, something has to be stubbornly taught that way.

It is easy to judge, love and criticize people so quickly. While Latif is drowning in the sea of thoughts capturing him, life is flowing by. And there is no action he can take or anything he can do against another bullying that awaits him. Regarding this, Spivak adds a new term to our lives in her work "*Can the subaltern speak?*" (2003). She gives the basis of situations faced by men. "It is, rather, that, both as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant" (p.28). Although men are dominant, there has been a relationship based on domination between the white and the black for centuries. With the superiority of men over men, cruelties were reflected on women and children, lives and dreams disappeared as if they were nothing.

'Pig,' Ibrahim said, grinning from ear to ear, and turning to share the joke with Georgy.

'Muslim man, he don't eat pig, he don't piss alcohol. Clean clean clean, wash wash wash.'

Black man.' Georgy laughed out loud at black man. I don't know if it was the thought of a black man who was a Muslim that made him laugh, or the comedy of a dark-skinned man in a frenzy of clean clean clean, wash wash wash, or if they were sharing a private joke. (Gurnah, 2001, p.53)

Another example was when Saleh was fighting to start a new life by the sea. In today's world, although these insults and persecutions occur, people have learned to rebel and defend themselves. Saleh, on the other hand, does not know what to do with the person who is hostile to him, he empathizes. After this dialogue between them, he is undecided about why they acted like this: he wonders if they were laughing because he was a black Muslim or because he was cleaning like crazy. Whatever the reason, Saleh thought it was the result of the chaos that drove them to this situation and chose to relax, but that tragic, traumatic voice inside him was set to defend himself:

How could they know that I had not been witness or victim to degradations and violence that would have at least required their humane silence? Nobody had swung a baseball bat into my face, but how could they know, and how could they know that I had not witnessed even worse? After whatever horrors they had been through, how could they stop knowing that such horrors can happen to anyone? (Gurnah, 2001, p.53)

In *Black Skin White Masks* (1967), Fanon shows us the expression of the anxieties and feelings of non-whites and we see how important racism is psychologically in the downfall of the black. Talking about the apparent supremacy of the white, blacks' desire to be white now makes sense because only then will life be livable (Dizayi, 2019). In this quote, Gurnah made such a right point that it was actually the common pain and problem of all black men. It was not a case of the white suffering more on an equal difficulty. "Silence" was one of the main terms of the story of the novel and we can understand why it was so intensely handled from their inner voices. We can perceive silence as a kind of escape, and sometimes as resistance. Here, on the other hand, there is the search for justice in the inner world of the character who cannot suppress his inner voice.

In a world where his beliefs, identities, belonging and everything that belongs to them are questioned, Saleh's beloved maps now had a new meaning. These lines, which made him feel the greatness and splendour of the world in his childhood, now evoke the feeling of belonging somewhere and being under the patronage of someone. "New maps were made, complete maps, so that every inch was accounted for, and everyone now knew who they were, or at least who they belonged to" (Gurnah, 2001, p.15). But there was a problem, long before the maps were

owned by black people, they had the feeling of belonging to something long ago. But freedom was one of the most important human rights that they forgot. The struggle of people who experience the deepest sense of belonging and cannot claim rights from what belongs to them is not limited to their identities. There is also a sense of belonging to something, which is a human feeling.

Before maps the world was limitless. It was maps that gave it shape and made it seem like territory, like something that could be possessed, not just laid waste and plundered. Maps made places on the edges of the imagination seem graspable and placable. And later when it became necessary, geography became biology in order to construct a hierarchy in which to place the people who lived in their inaccessibility and primitiveness in other places on the map. (Gurnah, 2001, p.35)

Being at the end of a hierarchical order, the indispensable part of that order is people. Although there is no feature that distinguishes any of them from each other, separating them into stages does not comply with the order of nature. But for centuries, the place where we will live is determined by maps, our rank is determined whether it is middle class or aristocracy. Being away from uncertainty may seem like a good thing, but this belonging does not always make one lucky. This splendour, which continues by blood ties, is a blessing to some people and a punishment to others. While drawing these borders, they make people belong to a group and it is very difficult to get out of these borders. Whenever we want to go beyond these limits, then examples of mimicry appear. Both of the main characters in *By the Sea* describe their journeys from East Africa to England, emphasizing the bond between their old and new selves, thus they reveal the processes of change between cross-culture (Steiner, 2006). As we adapt to a different culture, we see how difficult it is for us to give up ourselves, where we belong, and turn into someone else.

Latif was frightened to meet someone from his own culture and people, even if he was educated, knowledgeable and cultured. And he said the following about his fellow countryman, whom he met in a completely different land; "I suppressed the dread I always felt when I was required to meet someone from nativity" (Gurnah, 2001, p.73). Although there was nothing to feel like he belonged to on different levels, other than his colours, he felt just as lonely and isolated as Saleh. That is why, they could not get over their past problems and let it interfere with their current lives. Or they just unconsciously included it because the ancestors that would bind them to their lives and their deep ties to the past reminded them of who they were. Although their devotion to the past and their desire to be the human they once were, living in

a different culture pushed them to become a different person as well. This was the first thing Latif thought of when he found out that he was going to meet with Saleh:

Would they tell me, or think to themselves, how English I had become, how different, how out of touch? As if it was either here or there whether I had or not, as if it proved something uncomplicated about alienation, as if I was no longer myself but a self-treacherous pretence of myself, a processed stooge. (Gurnah, 2001, p.73)

While the only thing that was important for colonialism at first was new lands and mines to be cultivated, it also included the idea of changing the social order and adopting its own existence (Kara, 2021). Latif was one of these people who left their country and embarked on a new journey and was processed like a new-born baby. But he knew a little too much about life to be able to handle it. He had his own realities, but he had managed to adjust to his new life. At least that is what he thought before he had a memory of Zanzibar.

6. Conclusion

The matter of identity, loss or questioning has always been a controversial and noteworthy topic. Postcolonial writers who theorize the effects of wars carefully consider many topics such as ‘*mimicry*’ and ‘*sense of belonging*’ under the title of identity crisis. Various arguments have been made about people searching for their identity and reality throughout the decolonization process. One of the important names, Frantz Fanon discusses the effects of colonial influence on the awareness of the black or colonized individuals and the problems that lead to identity crisis or loss of these influences in his *Black Skin, White Masks*. In the postcolonial period, as the ‘marginalized’ individuals or the newly independent nations continued their search for identity, psychoanalytic analyses such as the confusion and mental imbalances of the person were made. In this period, when the writers began to overcome the impact of colonialism on the colony by revealing the reaction of the people, they mention that the colony internalized the feeling of inferiority and that they built an identity by turning to imitation to become equivalent. Just as Said distinguishes these two cultures as *Orient* and *Occident* in every respect, they seek to find something to distinguish themselves among indigenous people. However, although they take on a new identity, this image imposed on them eventually transforms itself into the original reality, that is, that transformation never fully takes place. There are people who camouflage just to keep up with the environment.

Everything on earth has a lifespan, even colonialism. Although we could not say it was over, the effect of the changing order forced colonialism to adapt. The material and moral traumas and destructions of the wars have been a chance for the colonial countries, and they have gained the right to declare their independence. The fact that postcolonialism is such a comprehensive title is due to the fact that it touches on issues that concern everyone, such as human rights, independence, and justice. *By the Sea* is the story of love and betrayal, but also tells the story of two Zanzibarian men who are shaken by the

revelation of their lost reality in the whirlpool of time. Our subject is that two men, who have just come to terms with the impact of difficulties they face on their journey to England, on their identities, their pasts haunt them as they struggle to live. How can a helpless man, whose only refuge is silence, lead a healthy life in a country where nothing is familiar?

The result of the study concludes with the life and story of the two main characters in Abdulrazak Gurnah's postcolonial novel *By the Sea* (Gurnah, 2001) from a postcolonial perspective, with the term identity crisis addressed by Frantz Fanon. Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, discusses the effects of colonial influence on the awareness of the black or colonized individuals and the problems that lead to identity crisis or loss of these influences. Problems of identity crisis caused by the inferiority of exploited communities are explained in this article with the terms 'mimicry' and 'sense of belonging' in Bhabha's terminology. The crisis experienced by the characters is reflected in both their inner speech and their behaviours throughout the novel. As a result of the crisis, we can see reasons more clearly behind refugees' behaviours and the underlying traumas causing the identity crisis. As a result of this study, we can see that the term identity crisis is shown to the reader as a passive resistance against oppression with the silence of Salih.

With the desire to rule the lands they brutally occupied, the Westerners exploited the natives and made them accept that they were despicable. So much so that when they were on their own, or even in their minds, they could not say that it was the opposite. Whatever they wanted to make them feel and adopt through this pressure was very easy, and now the stories of these people's clinging to life are conveyed to us by writers with a colonial past such as Abdulrazak Gurnah. Although there are stories of survival, we see that, like Salih and Latif, they are not always complete; a part of them is always missing.

Ethics Committee Permission

This article is not part of a working group that requires ethical committee approval.

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The authors contributed equally to the article.

Conflict of Interest

There is no financial conflict of interest with any institution, organization, person related to our article titled Representation of Identity Crisis in Relation to Mimicry and Sense of Belonging in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By The Sea*

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