

THE DEPICTION OF THE NATIONWIDE EFFECTS OF
COLONIALISM THROUGH ORDINARY PEOPLE'S LIVES
IN THE NOVEL *AFTERLIVES* (2020) BY A. GURNAH

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PS/U Postcolonial Nobel Prize
Laureates

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THESIS:

Abdulrazak Gurnah has managed to show the political and social life, and people's feelings of colonized East Africa around 1900 from the inner perspective, being a member of that identity, in his novel *Afterlives*.

THE OUTLINE:

- The author: Abdulrazak Gurnah
- Reasons of being awarded Nobel Prize
- Speech by A. Gurnah
- Plot: *Afterlives*
- The focus of the novel

THE AUTHOR: ABDULRAZAK GURNAH

- Tanzanian-born British novelist and academic
- Emeritus Professor of English and Postcolonial Literatures at the University of Kent
- Born in 1948, Zanzibar, Tanzania
- Moved to the UK in the 1960s as a refugee
- Works: short stories, essays and criticism, novels: *Paradise* (1994), *By the Sea* (2001), *Desertion* (2005), *Afterlives* (2020)
- Short-/longlisted for: the Booker, Whitbread, Writer's Guild, Los Angeles Times Book Prize, Commonwealth Writers' Prize.
- Won: Nobel Prize in Literature (2021)



REASONS WHY A. GURNAH WAS AWARDED A NOBEL PRIZE

- "for his uncompromising and compassionate penetration of the effects of colonialism and the fates of the refugee in the gulf between cultures and continents"
(Nobel Prize Press Release)
- "...two literary traditions meet and organically merge into a third, something exceptionally beautiful"
(Nobel Prize Award Ceremony Speech)

REASONS WHY A. GURNAH WAS AWARDED A NOBEL PRIZE

The other askari touched him on the arm and said, 'Amri ya Mungu. Mungu akueke, sisi tunarudi kwenda kuuliwa.' It is God's command. May God keep you, we are going back to be killed.

(A 119)

- Inclusion of local languages

'You are safe here, my brother. Hawa wazungu watu wema.' These Europeans are good people. 'They are people of God,' he said, then could not restrain a smile. 'I am not the doctor but

(A 120)

THE SPEECH BY A. GURNAH AT THE NOBEL PRIZE CEREMONY

- “In time, though, it became clear that something deeply unsettling was taking place. A new, simpler history was being constructed, transforming and even obliterating what had happened, re-structuring it to suit the verities of the moment. This new and simpler history was not only the inevitable work of the victors, who are always at liberty to construct a narrative of their choice, but it also suited commentators and scholars and even writers who had no real interest in us, or were viewing us through a frame that agreed with their view of the world, and who required a familiar narrative of racial emancipation and progress”.

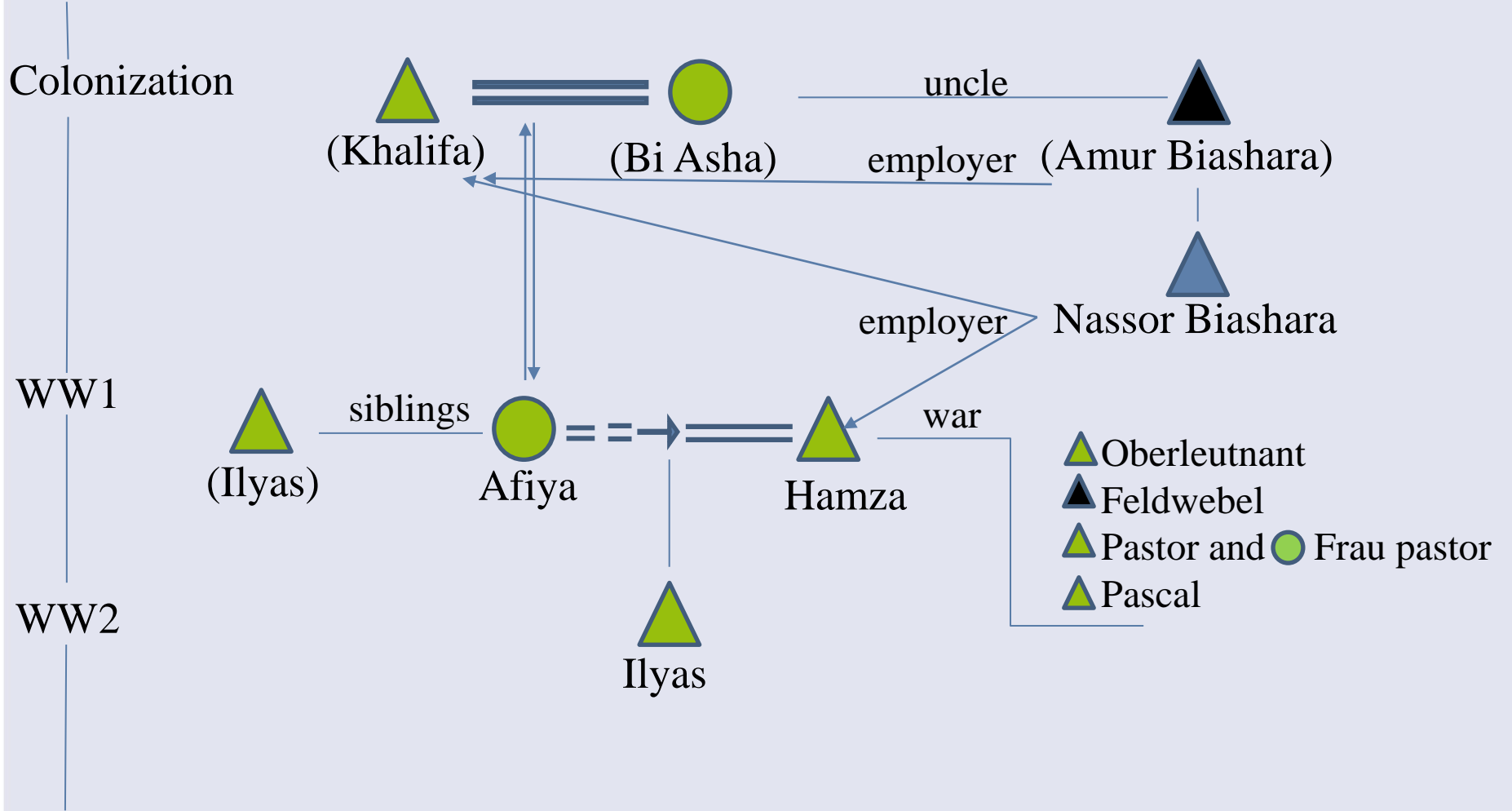
(Gurnah, Nobel Prize Lecture)

- “there was something I needed to say, that there was a task to be done, regrets and grievances to be drawn out and considered”.
- “just as I learned to read with greater understanding, so a desire grew to write in refusal of the self-assured summaries of people who despised and belittled us.”

(Gurnah, Nobel Prize Lecture)

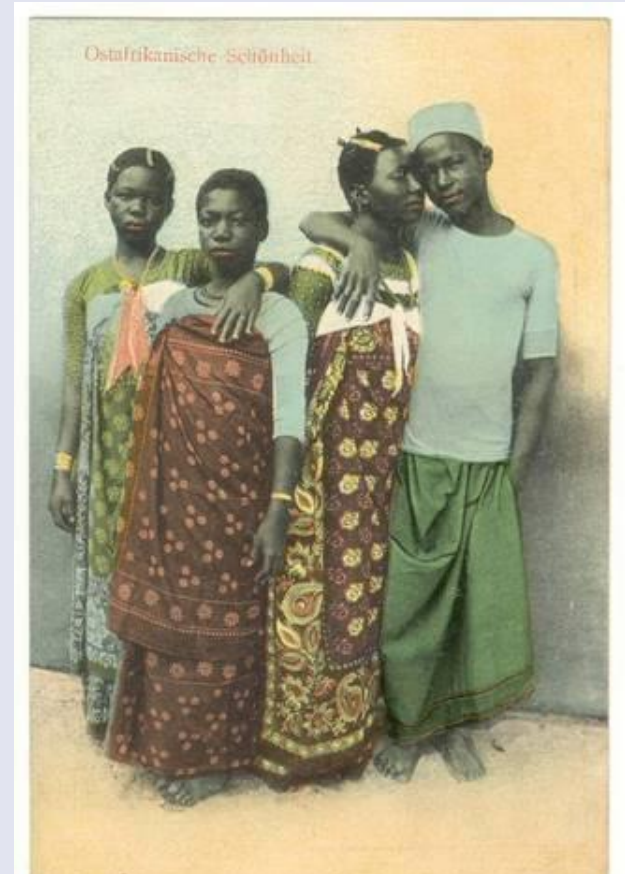
THE PLOT: PROTAGONISTS IN AFTERLIVES

Time line





German East Africa



“East African Beauty”
Zanzibar, Tanzania
Early 20th century

THE FOCUS OF THE NOVEL

- Social context:
 - Multicultural society
 - Humanity of the foreigners
 - Wickedness of relatives
 - Religious affairs
 - Thrive for literacy
- Effects of colonialism:
 - Poverty
 - Wars between the Germans and the locals
 - The locals being pulled to WW1 and WW2



Imperial German units in
German East Africa, c.1914

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He started with the tutor the year the Germans arrived in the town and was with him for five years. Those were the years of the al Bushiri uprising, during which Arab and Waswahili coastal and caravan traders resisted the German claim that they were the rulers of the land. The Germans and the British and the French

(A 5)

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The pastor thoroughly examined the wound, exercised Hamza's limbs, interrogated him at length and looked serious and grave whatever the result of his inspection.

(A 122)

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The officer came in and brought a chair to the side of the bed. Hamza could not keep his eyes open and fell into and out of consciousness, but each time he opened his eyes the officer was still there at the side of the bed. He had cleaned himself up but was dressed in the ragged clothes he had worn in the field. He wore his usual mocking smile as Hamza strained to hear. He could follow the words better now. The Oberleutnant said, speaking slowly, soothingly: 'It seems that you will survive after all. What a lot of trouble you are. Now you will be lying here recuperating in this beautiful mission while ... go back ... troop and continue

(A 118)

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It is an evil practice, lending money to borrowers who cannot afford to repay it and then taking their houses from them. It's theft. And that's what Uncle Amur did to my father and to us.'

(A 13)

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... They were now in the land where the schutztruppe fought the Wahehe nearly thirty years before and then carried out the atrocities of the Maji Maji war some fifteen years later. The people who survived those times and who were now burdened with further depredations on their lives and provisions were worn down by schutztruppe violence and were not likely to show kindness to deserting carriers.

(A 111)

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Thanks for your time and attention