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CONTRAPUNTALITY AND AFFILIATION IN ABDULRAZAK GURNAH'S *DESERTION*

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Abstract:
Edward Said, in his notable book, *Culture and Imperialism*, asserts that the nascence of the novel, which is a European invention, is inseparable from the thrusts of imperialism, and so, premised on this, identifies two paramount concepts tied to the evolution of the novel and how it should be critically approached. These concepts are filiation and affiliation. The filiative approach proposes that every novel should be treated as an offshoot of the other novels that have preceded it based on Western literary canons, while the affiliative approach proposes that the novel should be read as a cultural artefact of the society that produces it, without any fixation on literary, canonical and traditional inclinations. Both approaches inform Said's proposal of Contrapuntality as a framework for reading the novel. Hence, this essay applies the contrapuntal framework to the reading of Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Desertion*. The essay makes the following findings. First, Gurnah's novel is a postcolonial or cross-cultural text founded on affiliation, which foregrounds cultural specificity. Second, the novel reappropriates, rehistoricises and renarrativises Africa's historical and cultural realities hitherto desolated and disappeared by European and Arab coloniality. The essay concludes that the contrapuntal framework should be deployed more due to its fluidity in unearthing imperial subtleties.

Keywords: contrapuntality; affiliation; postcolonial text; cultural specificity; imperialism

1. Introduction

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said, the preeminent postcolonial scholar, addresses the genealogy of the novel and its sociocultural conditioning. According to Said, the novel, which is a European invention, cannot be entirely severed from the impulses of imperialism (Said 110). That is, the novel was born in European bourgeois society, which was predominantly agog with imperialism. Therefore, the novel came into being from the promptings of imperial ideology,

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which most European writers had imbibed (Said 108). In light of this, Said posits that the novel cannot be fully taken into cognisance in isolation from imperial aggression (Said 110).

The novel, which is a European fabrication, has also technically become a colonial import, owing mainly to colonial education. Based on this literary and cultural branching out, Said opines that the novel can be assessed based on two phenomena: filiation and affiliation. In the filiative approach, every novel is treated as an offshoot of the novels that have preceded it based on Western literary canons. In the affiliative approach, every novel is treated as a cultural product that cannot be severed from the society that births it, and whose interpretation is not confined by literary, canonical and traditional inclinations (Said 120). What Said insinuates is that a novel should be identified through the dynamic cultural patterns it embodies (affiliation) and not lines of descent in nature (filiation) (Ashcroft et al. 96).

In addition, while filiation prescribes a homologous world of texts seamlessly and serially connected, affiliation is preoccupied with linking the text to the author's status, historical moment, publication conditions, diffusion and reception, values and ideas drawn upon and assumed, and other extrinsic factors (Ashcroft et al. 97, Said 174-175). Hence, every novel possesses cultural autonomy, embodying its own inflections, pleasures, and formal characteristics (Said 153). The terminus ad quem of affiliation is to insulate postcolonial texts, such as Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Desertion*, from cultural stripping, displacement and stigmatisation (Said 331).

2. Theoretical Framework

Contrapuntality is a framework theoreticised by Said in *Culture and Imperialism* as a model for reading the novel (106). Contrapuntality, or contrapuntal reading, constitutes a series of tenets that can be applied to the reading of a novel. First, a contrapuntal reading pays attention to colonial assets in colonies (and postcolonies) and how they serve imperial interests, as portrayed in a novel. These colonial assets may simply be mentioned in passing by the author, but a contrapuntalist should be able to draw connections and inferences that border on imperialism. For example, Said states that there is a correlation between the portrayal of a colonial sugar plantation and its importance to the process of maintaining a particular lifestyle in England or the West (110).

Second, a contrapuntal reading should connect the structures of a novel to the ideas, concepts, and experiences from which it draws support (Said 107). That is, the literary structures of a narrative are substantiated by the ideas, concepts, and experiences that give birth to it. In other words, the stylistic devices of a novel are conditioned by the thoughts, feelings, sentiments, and character that go into crafting the narrative. Third, a contrapuntal reading should take account of the process of imperialism and the process of resistance to it, which can only be achieved by extending the reading of the novel to include what was once forcibly excluded (Said 106-107). This can only be done by drawing out, extending, and giving emphasis and voice to what is silent or marginally present or ideologically represented in such a novel (Said 106). The implication of this is that the analysis of a text should be premised on what went into its crafting and what the author may have excluded because every text (cultural product) is a vision of a

moment, and moment (history, place, societal character) influences an author's artistic vision (Said 107).

Lastly, a contrapuntal reading should take into cognisance an author's perception and worldview because, according to Said, there is "*no such thing as a direct experience, or reflection, of the world in the language of a text*" (108). In solidifying his argument, Said uses Joseph Conrad as an example. Said argues that Conrad's Eurocentric perception and worldview are responsible for his writing of *Heart of Darkness* (108). Said opines that Conrad, a European, was born into and grew up in a milieu that had a long history of stereotyping and misrepresenting indigenous peoples, which, no doubt, he had imbibed (108). Hence, it was impossible for Conrad to craft a novel such as *Heart of Darkness* devoid of these Eurocentric biases, stereotypes and misrepresentations (108). In sum, the contrapuntal model allows for cultural specificity and particularity in the reading of the novel.

3. Synopsis of *Desertion*

Desertion is set in the late nineteenth century and borders on events whose chain reactions surge into the mid-twentieth century. The story unfolds in the period when colonialists are busy building inroads into Africa. One dawn, the Englishman Martin Pearce wanders out of nowhere, bruised and battered, and ends up in front of Hassanali's shop. Hassanali thinks he has seen a ghost, but, on closer examination, realises that it is indeed a human being, a white man. Hassanali takes Pearce to his house and caters for him. Eventually, Pearce falls in love with Hassanali's sister, Rehana. The District Officer, Federick Turner, is opposed to their relationship because he thinks it is condescending on the part of Pearce. Pearce and Rehana's relationship produces a daughter, Asmah. Asmah later has her own daughter, Jamila, by another Englishman. Jamila is stigmatised because of her lineage, and her relationship with Amin is forbidden. In 1963, Amin's brother, Rashid, migrates to London to study, but lives as an exile due to the Zanzibar Revolution, which makes it impossible for him to return home. Rashid, during a conference, meets Barbara Turner, the granddaughter of Federick Turner. Barbara introduces Rashid to her mother, Elizabeth, who is the daughter of Pearce, and during a lunch meeting, Rashid tells her, to her utmost surprise, that Pearce had a daughter with Rehana whom he had deserted to return home. Elizabeth, in her seventies, discovers she has a stepsister, Asmah, and wonders if she is still alive. Rashid decides to return to Zanzibar to reconnect with his roots, and Barbara opts to follow him, and hopefully, they can find Jamila.

4. Textual Analysis

Desertion sets off in the late nineteenth century in a small town close to Mombasa. European colonialists are in the business of snatching indigenous lands, subjugating indigenous peoples, and plundering indigenous resources to serve their countries. The colonial empire is in full swing, and Africa is on the receiving end of its brute force. The advent of European colonialism initiates the winding down of the Arab slave trade and the influence of the Gujarati Indians. *Desertion* is a projection of how the European colonial invasion of Africa has adversely affected the lives of ordinary indigenes who grapple with a significant paradigm shift in the course of

their realities. The novel, which unfurls in the latter part of the nineteenth century and transits into the 1950s, is transcultural, transgenerational and transcontinental.

The advent of colonialism ushers Europeans into Africa, and Africans, through widespread colonial myths, begin to conjure exotic representations of Europeans. Colonial myths are falsifications that seek to justify, legitimise and romanticise colonial invasion. Colonial myths are viable weapons of imperialism. The Myth of Invincibility, which projects Europeans as superhuman, godlike, and invincible, is brought to the fore. An Englishman, Martin Pearce, is the object of this myth:

> *"There was a story of his first sighting. In fact, there was more than one, but elements of the stories merged into one with time and telling. In all of them, he appeared at dawn, like a figure out of myth. In one story, he was an upright shadow moving so slowly that in that peculiar underwater light his approach was almost imperceptible, inching forward like destiny."* (3)

The above description of Pearce projects him as a superhuman, fantastical being. This shows that many indigenes were made to believe that Europeans were sort of supernatural in order to frighten and subjugate them. This portrayal is quite ironic because the circumstances that have brought Pearce to the town are anything but magical. Pearce wanders out of nowhere, beaten, battered and battling for his life, and collapses in the clearing between the mosque and Hassanali's shop. Initially, when Hassanali sees Pearce, he thinks he has seen a spectre or spirit (23). But he gets closer to discovering that Pearce is just an ordinary man, wounded, exhausted and on the edge of death. This demystifies the Myth of Invincibility that Europeans, just like Africans, are vulnerable humans. Hassanali, who is half-Indian, half-Swahili, jostles to keep hold of Pearce against the desires of the bossy, self-important Hamza. Hassanali succeeds in taking Pearce to his house to treat and care for him. Hassanali's wife, Malika, and sister, Rehana, are perplexed by the strange being in their house. If it were an indigene or the so-called "*washenzi*" (uncivilised) that wandered out of nowhere looking battered and dejected, would Hassanali and company be so enthusiastic to want to care for them?

Hassanali invites the traditional healer Mamake Zaituni to treat Pearce. Who would have thought that an Englishman across the world in Africa would be treated by a traditionalist? Pearce is originally a Christian, but at this point, when he is battling for his life, religion is insignificant. A sophisticated Englishman is being subjected to traditional medicine. Hassanali also invites Yahya, the bonesetter, to check Pearce's body for fractures. Luckily, there are no fractures. Another widespread myth that the indigenes believe is that the bones of Europeans heal themselves (24). After some time, Pearce begins to recuperate and regain full consciousness, and is eventually taken to the District Officer Frederick Turner's house.

The colonialists treat Africa as a place where they can exert their excesses without repercussions. Pearce narrates to Frederick how he almost ended up dead. Apparently, Pearce is part of a hunting expedition led by Weatherhill, ravaging the African landscape, poaching wildlife. Pearce gets fed up and sick of the hunting game and pleads with Weatherhill to let him off. Initially, Weatherhill does not want Pearce to desert the group, but later gives in. Weatherhill releases Pearce, who is to be accompanied and protected by some Somalis. On their way to the coast, the Somalis attack Pearce and almost kill him. Pearce is able to wriggle his way to the

town, where he is found by Hassanali. Unfortunately, poaching is still rampant in modern-day Africa, and many wildlife species are on the verge of extinction.

The Arab slave trade comprises the Arabs "*raiding all along the coast, kidnapping and looting at will*" and "*making slaves*" (83). Hassanali's town is treated as a plantation colony by the Arabs. There are Arab-owned plantations tilled and guarded by indigenes. The Arabs, led by the Al Busaid sultans, deploy Baluchi mercenaries to conquer the coast and make thousands of slaves to work on their plantations. Baluchi mercenaries are indigenous soldiers who execute the bidding of the Arabs. Yahya, the bone setter, is a former Baluchi soldier. One of the reasons why colonialism succeeds in Africa is that there are indigenes who are willing to serve the interests of the colonialists. One of the interests of the colonialists is the establishment of plantations. These plantations serve Arab interests, yet they are situated on indigenous lands. Hence, there are Arabs in their countries who are beneficiaries of these plantations. These plantations enrich Arab lives at the expense of the indigenes. The Arabs control the resources of the indigenes in what is described as imperialism. Furthermore, the advent of European colonialism in Africa eclipses the Arab slave trade, and Frederick boasts that the "*Arab landowners will have no choice but to sell soon*" (45).

Sooner rather than later, the Europeans establish their own plantations producing all sorts of crops like rubber which indigenes cannot buy because they are meant to service European nations: "*The rubber from the new European plantations was, of course, not available for purchase by people like them. That went straight to the government ships and was sent to Ulaya for their own use*" (61). The colonialists commandeer indigenous resources to enrich themselves and their countries, which is a clear indication of imperialism.

The European occupation of Africa is in motion, and the British are scrambling for African lands and building railways to aid estate development. Burton, the estate manager, takes pride in the British imperial vision and describes the colonial agenda as a ploy to "*open up*" Africa (31). During Burton's conversations with Frederick Turner, he racially slurs Africans as "*stone-age vagrants and blood-thirsty pastoralists*" (31) and savages who "*wear skins and live in huts made of leaves and dung*" (84). That is, colonialists view Africans as primitive, backward, and animalistic. There is a drive of colonial missions expanding in Africa. From the Lutheran mission to the Methodist mission, the terminus ad quem is the subjugation of indigenes under the guise of Christianity and civilisation. Some indigenous tribes, such as the Masai, try to repel colonial advancement by attacking missions. Frederick misconceives the Masai as "*unruly godlings of the shrivelled landscape in the interior of this land,"* who are like lions, thirsty for *"blood and cruelty*" (37). The Masai are not unaware of the colonial agenda, but unfortunately, the colonialists pose as a more sophisticated and deadly sect. Frederick describes Africa as a "*shrivelled landscape*", which correlates with the Myth of a Vast Wilderness that seeks to project Africa as a continent with neither vitality nor vigour. Frederick also racially slurs Africans as "*dark, unfamiliar people*" and "*fiendish brigands*" (41-43). Racist aspersions by Burton and Frederick are offshoots of otherness, wherein Africans are misrepresented and treated as inferior other.

Burton and Fredrick are preoccupied with the "*future of Empire*" (82). Burton, in fact, supports the genocide in Africa: "*Burton wanted no allies, quite sure that the future for British possessions in Africa was the gradual decline and disappearance of the African population, and its replacement by European settlers*" (82). Burton views Africans as worthless "*niggers*" who should

be wiped off the face of the earth (83). He preaches total annihilation of Africans and is critical of the Arabs, whom he opines have corrupted Africans with their religion and culture.

Burton's conversations with Frederick also bring to the fore the Myth of Civilisation. Europeans misconceive and misrepresent Africans as uncultured and crude, and so have, as a burden, taken it upon themselves to civilise or enlighten them. Burton describes African cultures as "*barbarisms*" (84). According to the colonisers, Africa is riddled with disorderliness, and Africans can neither think for themselves nor lead themselves. Hence, they disparage their political systems and belittle the authority of kings, chiefs and elders by deposing them and replacing them with District Officers like Frederick Turner. This is implied when Federick says: "*I have a responsibility to the natives, to keep an eye on them and guide them slowly into obedience and orderly labour*" (84). Burton, as expected, opposes Frederick's approach and asserts that the only language Africans understand is brute "*force*": "*Force them … you can only make them work by coercion and manipulation, not by making them understand that there is something moral in working and achieving … if you want prosperity and order in Africa you have to have European settlement*" (84). Fredrick says the only means to achieve that is through murder, which Burton concurs with: "*We are already murdering them. We murder them to make them obey us. In reality, we simply have to leave them to their own devices without interference, and they will do their dying themselves*" (85). Suffice it to say that there is no limit to what Europeans are willing to do to achieve their colonial agenda.

Unlike Burton and Frederick, Martin Pearce has his reservations about the colonial strides of Europeans in Africa: "*I think in time we'll come to see what we're doing in places like these less heroically*" (85). Fredrick dismisses Pearce as "*An anti-Empire wallah*" (85). Despite Pearce's reservation, he still believes Africans are "*beasts*" and that Europeans have come so far out of their way to "*improve*" Africans (85). Contrary to Pearce's notion, Europeans did not invade Africa with any good intention—they came to steal, to kill and to destroy. Burton accentuates the Myth of a Vast Wilderness when he says that in Africa, "*there is nothing but beasts and savagery*" (86). Likewise, Frederick refers to the Africascape as a "*filthy maze*" and Africans as little pests and black dogs (99-106) while his wife Christabel, who opts not to follow him to Africa because she is irritated by the indigenes' "*grating*" and "*whining*" voices which she had experienced in India (116).

Europeans believe they are superior to Africans and that the black race is ideally suited for avocation. That is, blacks are inherently slaves or rather, everything about them points to subordination. Habitually, Europeans denigrate African civilisation and culture. Frederick belittles African oral traditions and asserts that "*no African language had writing until the missionaries arrived*" (96-97). Although this has been widely circulated and believed, researchers have shown that many indigenous tribes had forms of writing, most of which colonialism destroyed. Frederick also insinuates that Africans are underdeveloped because they "*haven't invented the wheel yet*", which shows "*what a long way they have to go yet*" (96). He also accentuates the Myth of Civilisation when he asserts that Africa is "*chaotic and infantile*", which has necessitated colonial invasion (97). Colonialists obsessively cling to the false notion that Africa is orderless, ungoverned and immature, and so is in need of civilisation.

In the colonies, miscegenation is officially frowned upon by the colonialists. Frederick views Pearce's admiration for Rehana as condescending and not respectable. Empire business

should not involve "*dalliances with subject floosies, at least not from its officers, at least not officially*" (117). Rehana is described as an "*exotic jewel*" and a "*muscular amazon*" (117). Pearce is not deterred by these reservations, and he begins a relationship with Rehana. After some time, they are forced to leave due to mounting pressures from the Omani Arabs, who describe their affair as a sinful act. Rehana and Pearce move to Mombasa, and their union produces a daughter, Asmah. Eventually, Pearce leaves Rehana and returns to England. Pearce's friend, Andrew Mills, a Scottish water engineer, moves into Rehana's apartment, and the townspeople begin to describe her as a courtesan. Notwithstanding, Pearce and Rehana's relationship reverberates across generations, continents, and cultures.

The story jumps to the 1950s, and spotlights three siblings, Rashid, Amin and Farida, whose lives are conditioned by colonial programming, especially in regard to colonial education. Farida cannot get into the prestigious girls' school because she does not pass the entrance examination, which leads to her frustration and unwarranted judgmental remarks by family members and neighbours. Due to her inability to pass the entrance examination, Farida is considered unintelligent, although it is not explicitly stated, it is rather implied. Hence, the contention is how colonial education has become a yardstick for measuring an indigene's intelligence. So, does it mean that before colonial education, Africans were unintelligent? All these insinuations are part of the Eurocentric ploy to demean Africans. Later on, Farida settles for tailoring, which she excels at. Her brothers, too, are affected by colonial impositions. Amin busies himself in teacher's college while Rashid is fascinated by European culture and desires to travel abroad to study on a scholarship.

It is almost impossible for Africans to live without the hovering shadows of colonial consequences, even in the minutest spaces. Amin gets into a relationship with Jamila, who is Rehana's granddaughter. Their relationship is vehemently opposed because of the stigma attached to Jamila's lineage. The townspeople view Jamila's bloodline as an abomination due to a string of reasons. Jamila's grandmother, Rehana, is referred to as "*a child of sin by an Indian man, a bastard*" because she is born out of an illicit affair and abandoned (204). Rehana grows up and has an affair with Pearce, which produces Asmah. When Pearce deserts Rehana, she becomes the mistress of the Scottish engineer Mills, which the townspeople view as sinful and filthy. Jamila does not know who her father is, except that he is some English drunk who Asmah took home. It is—in the eyes of the townspeople—a series of scandalous affairs which Amin's mother sums up thus: "*This woman that you say you love, she is like her grandmother, living a life of secrets and sin. She has been married and divorced already. No one knows where she comes from and where she goes, or who she goes to see. They are not our kind of people. They are shameless…*" (204).

It is a few years before independence, and the indigenes' disillusionment with colonial rule spurs them to resistance, manifesting through freedom rallies and speeches. The colonialists, the British and Omani Arabs, do not take the rise of the indigenous voice for granted and hence vehemently try to suppress it. The liberation struggles are prolonged, but the British eventually fold and grant independence to Zanzibar. The wave of independence sweeps through the African continent, and most colonial territories become independent nation-states, which are Eurocentric constructs because no iota of consideration is given to the peculiarity and uniqueness of the constituent peoples.

Migration has been engrained into the tapestries of most postcolonies. In 1963, Rashid gets a scholarship to study at the University of London, and eventually migrates. African immigrants are described as "*strangers arriving at unknown destinations*" (210). On getting to London, Rashid's excitement and expectations are instantly swallowed by diasporic disillusionment. He finds it herculean to wriggle free from the grip of estrangement and unbelonging: "*What I had seen of the city terrified me with its hugeness and rush, and I was not to lose the edge of that terror for several months, and perhaps not to lose it fully ever*" (211). He meets many other African immigrants, which is a testament to the migratory trend of the modern age and the postcolonial temperament of the metropolises.

African immigrants are victims of racial hostilities and are constantly disregarded. Rashid feels alienated in his class, especially by the English students. He observes how their body language, particularly their facial expression, hints at this:

> *"It was not easy to get near the English students, even those in the same class. The feeling of resistance was there from the beginning, a feeling I sensed but was not sure of. I had not known what to expect, but I sensed it in the slightness of the smiles I was given in return for my beaming ones. I saw it in the way eyes slid away, and in the frowns when I followed the other students out of the class, trying to join in whatever they were doing next. I saw that I was not included in the rendezvous outside the library, in the coffee bar, or wherever else. I saw this in the quick looks of mischief they exchanged, and in their suppressed smiles."* (213)

African immigrants are treated like strangers, and they suffer social exclusion. Rashid is deserted at the periphery of every social gathering in his class. One time, he overhears Charles, one of the students, discriminating against him as he hovers on the edge of the group at the end of a class. Charles asks: *What is he doing here?* Rashid reveals that Charles did not use *he* but a derogatory term which he does not care to remember (213-214).

African immigrants are prone to homesickness and nostalgia. They miss home regularly because living in the West is a tedious and unfamiliar business. Although Rashid communicates with Amin via letters, it is incomparable to familial warmth. His dreams of returning home are truncated when a revolution breaks out in Zanzibar. The post-independence era in Zanzibar is characterised by sociopolitical and economic decadence, corruption, and malignance. But what truly stirs the Zanzibar Revolution is the Omani Arabs' occupation and control of the Zanzibari government despite the proclamation of independence by the British in 1963. The Zanzibar Revolution is a gory one, with casualties on all sides.

Rashid is unable to return home, and so, he begins to see himself as an exile. Although the exilic feeling did not just commence, it is accentuated by the crises back home. He is plunged deeper into diasporic alienation and unhomeliness:

> *"In the months that followed, I began to think of myself as expelled, an exile. … For the first time since arriving in England, I began to think of myself as an alien. I realised I had been thinking of myself as someone in the middle part of a journey, between coming and going, fulfilling an undertaking before returning home, but I began to fear that my journey was over, that I would live all my life in England, a stranger in the middle of nowhere."* (221-222)

Every day, Rashid drifts into alienness, which has become a kind of badge he wears everywhere. To be an immigrant is to be severed from familiar spaces. He begins to accept the complex realities of his blackness against a predominant whiteness. He realises that his identity is a construct of his skin colour—a phenomenon referred to as epidermalization (Fanon 14). He slowly grows into the lies that this dichotomy breeds, uttering them with increasing ease, as he defers to "*a deadening vision of a racialised world*" (222). Racism is a construct of otherness, and Rashid opines that it is a choice that limits the complexity of possibility and a mendacity that serves and "*will continue to serve crude hungers for power and pathological self-affirmations*" (222).

After some years, Rashid, despite the challenges, is able to complete his PhD and secure a job at a university. He, via a letter, informs his family of this new development, and they are more than joyous and proud. He is also informed that the Zanzibari post-revolution atmosphere is much calmer. One thing he initially fails to inform them about is his marriage to the Englishwoman Grace because he knows they will be disappointed in him. But as fate will have it, Grace divorces him. Rashid is left heartbroken and lonely, and he eventually tells Amin about her. Amin, in response, sympathises with Rashid and tells him that his plight is relatable because he felt the same way twenty years ago when he was forced to sever his relationship with Jamila. Rashid takes an interest in the circumstances that surrounded Amin and Jamila's love and their eventual separation, and he desires to write a story about it.

One day, Rashid, while working on the story about Amin and Jamila, receives a telegram from Amin informing him of their mother's death. Rashid grieves and regrets his inability to see her before passing away, and he is also not able to attend the burial ceremony. This is one of the fruits of exile—the prolonged absence from family members whom one might never get to see again. Amin informs Rashid of his total blindness in one eye and the waning sight in the other, which is the same infection (glaucoma) their mother suffered from, for which there is no medicine or hospital in the town to cure him, as there was none to cure her. In addition, Amin tells Rashid that Farida is now a poet whose book *Kijulikano* (*That Which is Known*) has been published to great praise. A few weeks later, Farida, while attending a reading in Rome, parcels her book alongside Amin's handwritten notes to Rashid.

Before Rashid gets to read Amin's notes, he attends a conference in Cardiff on "*mixed-race sexuality in English writing*," organised by an old friend (257). Rashid presents a paper on "*race and sexuality in settler writing in Kenya*", and in the discussion phase of his presentation, he mentions the story of Rehana (257-258). After his presentation, a lady walks up to him and says she is interested in the story of Rehana and her affair with an Englishman. To Rashid's utmost surprise, the lady is Barbara Turner, the granddaughter of Federick Turner. Barbara informs Rashid that her grandfather kept a memoir about his colonial service. However, Frederick abandoned the colonial service in 1903 when he returned home because his wife "*hated the empire, and he missed her too much to carry on"* (259). In 1905, Federick stops writing the memoir almost around the same time when John, Barbara's father, is born. Rashid further learns that Federick and Pearce became "*firm friends*", and this also could have been a reason why Federick abandoned the memoir. In fact, Federick and Pearce consolidate their friendship by consenting to the marriage of their children, John and Elizabeth. Elizabeth, now in her late seventies, asks to meet Rashid. During their meeting, Rashid tells Elizabeth all he knows about Rehana Zakariya. Elizabeth, to her utmost surprise, realises that Asmah is her stepsister.

Subsequently, Rashid gets to read Amin's notebooks and resolves to return home because he feels guilty for perpetually staying away. He realises that he has been, for too long, disconnected from his roots. His encounter with Barbara and Elizabeth also spurs this new consciousness. Rashid and Barbara seem to be in a relationship, and she opts to go with him to Zanzibar. She is also hopeful they can find her cousin Jamila. Rashid's decision to return to Zanzibar is symbolic because it foregrounds the concept of what home means to the postcolonial subject. Despite living many years in England, he still cannot call it home. Africans have suffered agelong dispersal to the farthest corners of the earth—a phenomenon which has severed them from their roots and left them culturally displaced. While colonialism engendered the mass displacement of Africans in the past, postcolonial migration or exile is responsible for the massive dislocation of Africans in recent times.

5. Conclusion

From the analysis, it can be concluded that colonial legacies are enduring even after colonial departures. *Desertion* portrays how the lives of ordinary East Africans are dishevelled by colonialism. The novel is crafted by an East African writer who draws from a vast pool of history and the cultural values of his people. The narrative, founded on indigenous historical and cultural realities, resists cultural stripping, dislocation and denigration by revealing the colonial and imperial factors that have engendered them, and the resilience of indigenous peoples against the sandstorm of silence and stigmatisation. By deploying contrapuntality, it is revealed that the Europeans and Arabs siphon Africa's resources to build their countries and enrich themselves, and that colonialism affects the indigenes in diverse ways, as shown through Pearce and Rehana's relationship, whose consequences reverberate across generations, continents, and cultures.

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Conflict of Interest Statement
The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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