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(DE) COLONIALITY OF POWER, COLONIALITY OF KNOWLEDGE, AND (DE) COLONIALITY OF BEING: SCRUTINIZING ONTOLOGICAL HIERARCHIES, EGO-POLITICS OF KNOWLEDGE/EPISTEMIC LARCENY, AND STRATEGIC SILENCE IN *THEFT*

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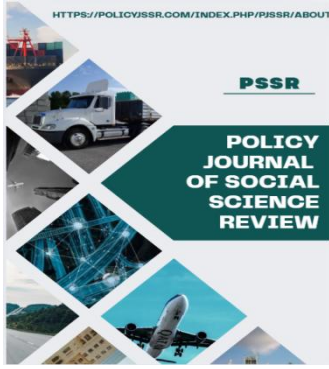
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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to elucidate the perpetual marginalization/larceny of the non-Western epistemologies/ontologies, instigated by (de-) colonial power structure(s) in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Theft*. Drawing on the theoretical underpinnings of decoloniality, it foregrounds the ways in which (de-) coloniality of power consolidates the ideological structures of colonialism, sustains the hubris of the zero point/ego-politics of knowledge, and (re)engenders the (de-) coloniality of being in the modern/colonial world(s). The interlocking mechanism of the (de-) coloniality of power and of knowledge exploits the lived experiences of the characters: Raya, Fauzia, and Badar. Raya and Fauzia are afflicted by the colonial control of power/economy/gender; Raya is forced into marriage with Bakari Abbas, enduring the sexual assault, while the colonial gender differences afflict Fauzia, validating Karim's extramarital affair with the Western tourist, Geraldine Bruno. The scarcity of the coloniality of power/economy deprives Badar of the colonial/modern knowledge, foregrounding the theme of epistemic marginalization. Hawa is entangled in the colonial matrices of knowledge, totality of knowing, and the globalization of language(s). Provoked by the myth of modernity and seduced by the Western epistemologies, Hawa denounces her own accord/culture/tradition/language/praxis of knowledge, adopting British culture, language, and ethics of living. Badar and Fauzia deploy a strategic silence to raze the overlapping relationship between the coloniality of power and of knowledge to dismantle the coloniality of being. In *Theft*, the colonial ontological differences pervade the colonial epistemological differences: you are inferior ontologically and therefore epistemically; you are inferior epistemically and therefore ontologically, spotlighting an analytical transition from post/post-colonialism to decoloniality. The paper aims to demolish the hubris of the zero point/ego-politics of knowledge, disempower the colonial power structure(s), and obliterate the interwoven dynamics of the coloniality of power/knowledge, advocating the strategic implementation of silence to disrupt the coloniality of being.

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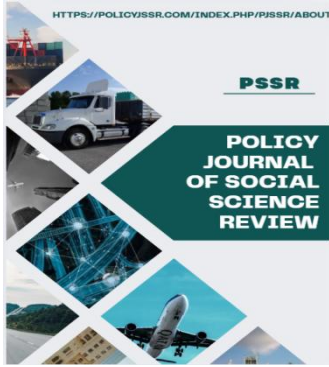
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Introduction

According to Maldonado-Torres, decoloniality advocates the “dismantling of relations of power and conception of knowledge that foment the reproduction of racial, gender, and geopolitical hierarchies that came into being or found new and more powerful forms of expression in the modern/colonial world” (Gatsheni 14). Acosta propounds that decoloniality denotes the “decentering and reversal of the ideological structures of colonialism” (32), crippling the Eurocentric epistemologies, cosmologies, and ontologies. Decoloniality as an option relentlessly challenges Western ways of knowing, living, and existing – dislodging the Western assumption of the universality/globalization of knowledge – and resisting the totality of European epistemologies. In this way, decoloniality consolidates the un-Westernization of non-Western worlds / countries / civilizations / cultures, thereby bringing indigenous cultures, traditions, and rituals to the forefront and obliterating regional, ethnic, and racial distinctions. The theoretical arrangement of (de-) coloniality engenders plurinationality, pluriversality, interculturality, and epistemic (dis-) obedience, demonstrating the urgency of de-linking from the unjust, hierarchical, and segregationist regimes of Western epistemology, while reinforcing re-linking with the indigenous ontologies, epistemologies, and cosmologies within the (post) modern/(de)colonial world(s). The paper claims that decoloniality

disrupts the structures of power formed during colonialism, which exist right up to the present, even after the formal end of colonialism.

(De) Coloniality of power, an extension of decoloniality, articulated by Peruvian sociologist, Anibal Quijano, perpetuates a (de-) colonial structure that “continues to shape the world order and also human subjectivity despite the end of the historical stage governed by a colonial and slave-owing legal order” (Mignolo et al. 21). Abdulrazak Gurnah accentuates the hierarchical relation(s) of power in *Theft – Badar* “sat on the floor, to avoid any possibility of offending...he was to blater e their servant boy, their boi, he understood that now” (Gurnah 33-35) – aligning with Quijano’s ideology of power structure(s) formed with the arrival of colonialism and still functioning. It is the control of subjectivity/economy that thrusts the colonized into the labyrinth of the coloniality of power; arguably, those who hold the power/authority in today’s world control the way of living/epistemologies, intensifying the perpetuation of domination, exploitation, and dispossession, which were formulated during the colonial period and continue to exist. The coloniality of power augments the perpetual stewardship of the power relations, constantly influencing the social/political/economic and epistemic structures in the contemporary world. The coloniality of power foregrounds the ways in which present structures of power reinforce disparities, social inequalities,



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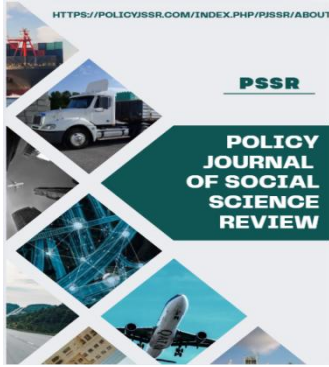
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racial differences, and economic injustices, following the ontologies, epistemologies, and functionalities of the colonial(ism) era.

Coloniality of power underwrites the legitimacy of disparities, injustices, and subjectivities, prompting the imbalanced regulation of power based on economic/epistemic/gender prestige. Anibal Quijano propounds that coloniality of power “exactly highlights the permanence and long-duration of subjectivities” (Mignolo et al. 24). This asymmetrical power relation between the West and non-Western world continues to “exist in the minds, lives, languages, dreams, imaginations, and epistemologies of modern subjects in Africa and the entire global south” (Gatsheni 11). Gurnah evinces the practices of Euro-centered power, stressing that “it was all part of the joy of power, to chasten, to terrify or to expel at will” (2), exposing the pernicious nature of (the coloniality of) power, which deprives humans, particularly formally colonized nations, of the rights in every sphere of life. The coloniality of power has become the cornerstone of (de-) coloniality, as it has lasted longer than colonialism, pervading the instances of Western colonial/modern world order, forms of knowledge, and power. The paper claims that, as a variant of de-coloniality, (de-) coloniality of power plays a crucial role in dethroning the invisible vampirism of epistemologies of modern/colonial/imperial world that

survived long after the formal culmination of direct colonialism.

The despoilation of life in the disguise of modernity/civilization is the core agenda of the coloniality of power. As a (de-) colonial weapon, (de-) coloniality of power demonstrates and cripples the continuities of the “social hierarchical relationships of exploitation and domination between Westerners and Africans that has its roots in centuries of European colonial expansion but currently continuing through cultural, social and political power relations” (Fasakin 904). The coloniality of power determines the control of knowledge, and ways of living. *Theft* evinces these asymmetrical relations of power in the post-post/(de)colonial world, “there was no more school for him [because] there was no money...he felt a panic cutting through his misery” (Gurnah 32-36). In so doing, coloniality of power engenders, destroys, and controls the coloniality of knowledge; those having control of power/economy are in charge of ontology and epistemology. The adherence of coloniality/modernity is a prerequisite for the formally colonized nations to be esteemed as civilized, non-barbarians/primitive/uncivilized, hiding the vicious functionalities of coloniality, which acts as a darker side of modernity. (De-) Coloniality of power amplifies the epistemic/social marginalization, emphasizing the ontological and epistemological reciprocity: the ontologically superior one is also superior epistemologically, and epistemological



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superiority buttresses ontological superiority.

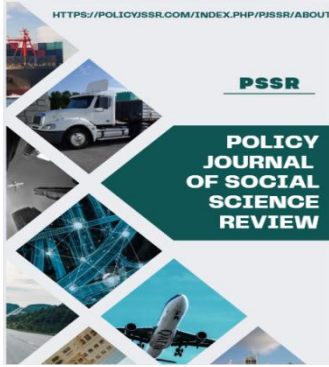
The coloniality of knowledge controls the ways of knowing, reinforces Euro-centered ontologies/epistemologies, and legitimates the “hubris of the zero point”.¹ According to Walter D. Mignolo, “coloniality of knowledge is precisely the affirmation of the zero point and the success in silencing or relating other epistemologies to a barbarian margins” (162). Gurnah illustrates the implementation of the coloniality of knowledge in Zanzibar, Hawa “begged her mother to make her dresses in the styles she saw in the magazines...she listened to British pop music on the radio whenever she could” (86), unfolding the epistemic marginalization of local, indigenous, or non-Western knowledge systems by the natives themselves. The coloniality of knowledge dismisses the native epistemologies, categorizing local, traditional, and non-Western social orders and systems of knowledge as primitive/barbarian/uncivilized/conservative. The paper asserts that coloniality of knowledge is the mere imposition of a pervasive zero point, which finds its root in the sixteenth century, continues to shape the status quo, and privileges

modern/colonial epistemologies/languages as superior and non-European as inferior.

In the sixteenth century, during the Renaissance and Enlightenment periods, “six languages”² were privileged, and people speaking languages other than those were considered biologically or naturally inferior. Mignolo and Walsh build on the argument that the coloniality of knowledge “disqualifies the vocabulary (and logic) of other knowing praxis and knowledge and belief systems” (113), strengthening Eurocentric knowledge/languages. Gurnah follows the trajectory of aforementioned decolonial theorists; Hawa “spoke English language as if it was her only language” (89), divulging the ways in which coloniality of knowledge delegitimizes the local languages, and inspiring the indigenous to speak one of the privileged languages to dismantle the label of inferiority, barbarity, and primitiveness. The coloniality of knowledge obstructs the co-existence of diverse cultures, languages, philosophies, and ways of knowing and living, normalizing the fictionality of Eurocentric epistemologies as neutral, modern, and universal. The paper argues that the coloniality of knowledge trammels the plurinationality, multiculturalism, and epistemic diversity, dismissing the non-Western praxis of

¹ Readers’ friendly, the concept of the ‘hubris of the zero point’ is articulated by Castro-Gómez, and it entails the Western myth of universality of knowledge/philosophy/language, denouncing non-Western epistemologies/cultures/philosophies/language(s).

² For readers’ enlightenment, six modern/superior languages are: Spanish, English, French, German, Portuguese, and Italian.



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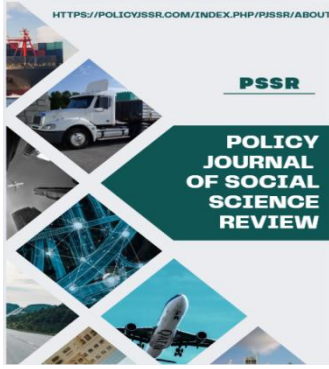
knowing/any form of knowledge outside the West-European matrix of living, and local cultures/philosophies/languages. The “ego-politics of knowledge”³ institutionalizes the coloniality of knowledge to impose the universality of the Eurocentric epistemologies or modern/colonial knowledge structures. Universities and Museums are the fundamental establishments administered by the “actors in-grained in and subjected to Western beliefs and effects of the totality of knowledge” (Mignolo and Walsh 199). Ndlou-Gatsheni propounds that “we so far do not have African [, and non-Western] universities. We have universities in Africa [, and non-West]” (11), unmasking the hidden agenda of universities, which abide by the Western epistemic ideologies. In *Theft*, Karim, who is influenced by Western epistemologies during his university year, “gave Badar a detective novel...[Karim] returned from the university with a First-Class degree to a town...where such an achievement was enormous” (Gurnah 79-97), endorses this very idea of consolidation of the coloniality of knowledge by the scholars of the non-Western universities, who act as puppets, embodying totality/ego-politics of knowledge. People holding

control of power, authority, and economy, are eligible to control the access to knowledge or epistemology, constructing interconnectedness between coloniality of power and knowledge.

The coloniality of power in the form of persistent power structure(s) engenders coloniality of knowledge. The control of power superintends the sanction of knowledge, intensifying the superior/inferior binary. “You are inferior ontologically and therefore epistemically; you are inferior epistemically and therefore ontologically” (Mignolo 139). The functionalities of both the coloniality of power and the coloniality of knowledge dovetail. Gurnah illustrates that the ontological inferiority prompts epistemic inferiority, “Badar was sent to work for the Mistress...he was still dressed in his school clothes, a blue shirt and a khaki shorts” (30-35), exposing the facile superiority of the Mistress, Raya, which coloniality of power/economy blesses her with. The totality of Western knowledge erodes the conventional ways of knowing and existing, marginalizing the non-Eurocentric

epistemologies/philosophies/cultures in the contemporary world. In the twenty-first century, the coloniality of knowledge and the coloniality of power disempower the formally colonized countries, and disrupt the epistemologies that existed before colonialism, authorizing the lived experiences of the experiences of individuals in the decolonial epoch. The interlocking mechanism between the

³ For readers’ sake, the concept of ‘ego-politics of knowledge’ is attributed to Rene Descartes. The term refers to the self-centering of the modern/colonial/imperial axis of knowledge(s), while undermining the non-European epistemologies and structures of knowledge.



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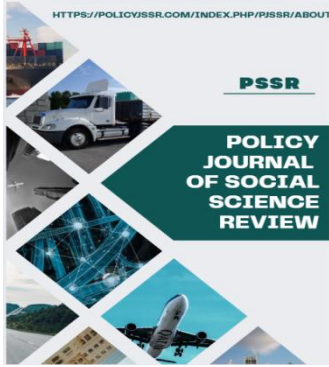
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coloniality of knowledge and the coloniality of power escalates the perpetual annihilation of being, (re) incorporating the coloniality of being.

Walter D. Mignolo introduced the idea of (de-) coloniality of being, which later was elaborated by a Puerto Rican philosopher and one of the pioneers of decolonial studies, Nelson Maldonado-Torres. According to Torres, the “coloniality of being refers to a process whereby the forgetfulness of ethics as a transcendental moment that founds subjectivity turns into the production of a world in which exceptions to ethical relationships become the norm” (259). The coloniality of being entails the terrible-effects of modernity/coloniality in the daily socio-political/economic experiences of the colonized, in that way the “coloniality of being would make primary reference to the lived experience of colonization and its impact on language” (Torres 242). Gunah aligns with Torres’ ideology, “he [Badar,] had not known if he was a servant or a possession, but he had known that there was something degrading about his circumstances” (134), demonstrating the indelible calamities endured by the non-Westerns, who are deprived of control of power, authority/economy, and knowledge. The coloniality of being privileges the Europeans as completely rational, superior, civilized, and full human beings, The coloniality of being bring everlasting exploitation of colonial subjects, marginalization of ex-colonized bodies, and cruelties of the colonialism

to the forefront through the experiential knowledge and the personal experiences.

The perpetual domination of epistemological colonial differences triggers the ontological colonial differences. The coloniality of knowledge is akin to the colonial/modern epistemological differences, while the colonial/modern ontological differences correspond to the (de-) coloniality of being. Mignolo postulates that “coloniality of power and of knowledge engendered the coloniality of being” (Torres 242), spotlighting the interconnected performances of the epistemologies and ontologies. Abdulrazak Gurnah remarks that “he [Uncle Othman,] is always fierce with you [Badar]...[Uncle Othman wants to] get rid of him at once” (118-30), foregrounding the ways in which coloniality of knowledge and of power harm Badar’s ontological experiences. The (de-) coloniality of being underpins the colonial/modern extreme practices of (in)humanity, ill-treating the people for the unfamiliarity with the Western epistemologies, and for the paucity of the control over power/economy/authority. Decolonially speaking, coloniality of knowledge victimizes the colonized individuals and communities on a global scale long after the direct end of colonialism. The coloniality of being is the blatant consequence of the coloniality of knowledge, which itself is advanced by the coloniality of power. The paper asserts that the colonial ontological differences and the colonial



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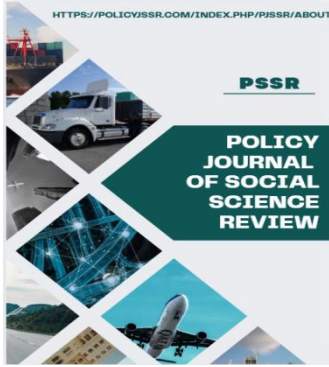
epistemological differences formulate an inseparable bond, sustaining the mutual inclusivity of the coloniality of knowledge and of being.

The (de) coloniality of power, the coloniality of knowledge, and the (de-) of being coalesce in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Theft* to elucidate the impact of the longstanding colonial structure(s) of power on the praxis of knowing, ontology of ex-colonized, and their being(s) in the decolonial aeon. The coloniality of power strengthens the socio-economic ladder, which manipulates the epistemological approach of the erstwhile colonized in *Theft*. Karim, Hawa, and Fauzia are the victims of the fictional modernity/coloniality and the Western epistemologies/philosophies/languages.

Badar is plagued by an intergenerational identity crisis due to the coloniality of power, which reshapes his axis of knowledge and other forms of knowing. Hawa becomes obsessed with the Euro-Western epistemologies—she speaks English with pride, and perceives the Western/colonial way of dressing as modern or civilized—Westernizing her being. The coloniality of knowledge develops an imperishable bond with the coloniality of power to sustain a perpetual domination of Western epistemologies, ontologies, and cultures. The communal practices of the coloniality of power and of knowledge underpinned the stratified social system, amplifying the economic/epistemic marginalization. Raya suffers from the coloniality of power/economy, Fauzia is

plagued by the interlocking mechanism of the colonial ontological and epistemological differences, which disrupt her being and lived experiences, while the being of Badar is afflicted by the socio-economic and epistemic marginalization. The (de-) coloniality of being equips Badar, Fauzia, and even Raya with the strategic silence to disentangle themselves from the labyrinth of the coloniality of knowledge/power and socio-economic/epistemic marginalization.

In the analysis “Quest for Identity and Inner Turmoil in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Theft* and *Gravel Heart*, Tittu and Rathi comparatively scrutinize *Gravel Heart* and *Theft* to accentuate the ways in which familial morbidity, cultural modernization, and displacement/migration reinforce the identity crisis. The critics propound that when natives' “cultural identity and new cultural influences collide, identity crisis can occur” (Tittu and Rathi 200), demonstrating the contagious impact of the (ex)colonial/modern cultures on the erstwhile colonized people. The study showcases that Karim has endured the affliction since his childhood as his parents parted their ways. The traumatic culmination of Raya and Bakari Abbas marriage cripples Karim's moral identity—he indulges in extramarital affair with a British tourist, Geraldine/Jerry Bruno. Badar suffers from the intergenerational stigma, illuminating the stratified social system in Zanzibar. Rittu and Rathi foregrounds



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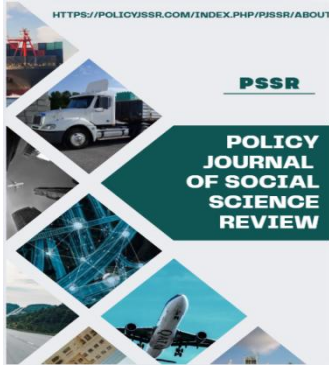
the afflictions of the protagonist, Salim in *Gravel Heart*, emphasizing the amplification of the identity crisis, emerging from familial rupture, abusive treatment by his uncle, and imposed migration, which thrust Salim in the warren of inner turmoil. The authors intricately evince the themes of identity crisis in the face of familial destruction, Western cultural aspirations, and modernization. The paper argues that the social hierarchies are the repercussions of the coloniality of power, while the coloniality of knowledge cultivates the cultural conflicts, thieving the indigenous culture/epistemologies, intensifying the coloniality of being, disrupting the ontologies of non-Western people in *Theft*.

Analysis

In *Theft*, Abdulrazak Gurnah scrutinizes the contagious impact of the coloniality of power on the lives of colonized in the decolonial aneon. Trapped in the coloniality of power, Rafik “joined the comrades...he was sent to Cuba for military training under the nose of British colonial authorities...[he] only knew how to terrify people...desire was to humiliate or to intimidate [the citizens]” (Gurnah 1-2), implying the colonial control of power in the formally colonized Zanzibar community. Rafik’s coercive exercise of power affects Raya’s being and experiences as “Raya’s marriage happened in a panic...[with] Bakari Abbas...a man of business” (Gurnah 1-3). Raya is afflicted by Rafik’s tawdry behavior towards her, as “Rafik

came back from Cuba, resplendent in his uniform...started casting his eyes at Raya and talking with her in the street while he wore a playful smile” (Gurnah 2). The coloniality of power/economy prompts the colonial ontological differences, Rafik social prestige of being a comrades legitimizes his abuse of power, making him ontologically superior, and Raya inferior. The paper argues that the coloniality of power strengthens the ontological superiority/inferiority and socio-economic hierarchies, fortifying the normalization of extreme inequalities in the Zanzibar community in *Theft*.

Gurnah divulges the intergenerational imposition of the colonial power— “it was all part of the joy of [colonial] power to chasten, to terrify or to expel at will...they [colonizers,] kill our sons and then look to dishonor our daughters, Hafidh said” (2)—evincing the violence induced by the persistent structures of power. The control of the economy provides Bakari Abbas with the licenses of the coloniality of power, “he was a building contractor...Raya’s parents arranged her life with him...he was relentless in his demand of her body” (Gurnah 3). The control power engendered by the control of the economy afflicts Raya. She implies the strategic silence to dismantle the trammels of the coloniality of power, when her son, Karim, was a child of three, “after silent planning and stubborn cunning...[she] moved back to Unguja, leaving her husband” (Gurnah 5), and later on marries Haji Othman. She cripples the ontological superiority of her



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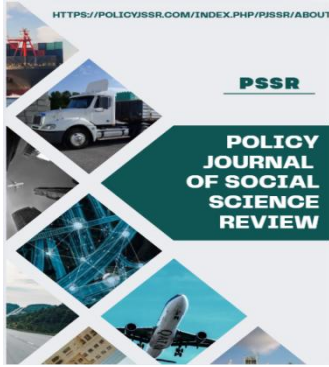
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husband as a male and the controller of finances/economy. Raya reclaims her ontological equality to dislodge the (de) colonial assumption that those with control of power/economy are eligible to control the being(s). The de-coloniality of being weaponizes Raya with the strategic silence to obliterate the shackles of the coloniality of power/wealth, as she liberates herself from the societal restraints, which solidify the system of social ranking.

In *Theft*, the coloniality of power in the form of socio-economic hierarchies fortifies the epistemic marginalization of the lower-class colonized subjects, precipitating the coloniality of knowledge. Badar lacks the control of economy/wealth that acts as an impediment to his access to the Western praxis of knowledge, while Karim's control of economy/wealth facilitates him with the Eurocentric epistemologies. When Badar was "sent to work for the Mistress...he was still in his uniform" (Gurnah 30-35). Gurnah illustrates the hereditary right to knowledge: "Karim went to the same school that Ali had gone to...he was doing extremely well at school, was acknowledged by the teachers" (Gurnah 11-17). The economic superiority advances the ontological supremacy in the society, which advises the epistemological privilege. Karim possesses the power in the form of wealth, colonial/modern knowledge, and the Western ways of living life. Badar is inferior ontologically, which makes him epistemologically inferior/subordinate,

while Karim's ontological superiority advocates his epistemological domination/superiority. The hierarchical relationship between Karim and Badar echoes the sentiment that an individual's ontology decides his/her epistemology: what one is shapes what one knows. The colonial ontological differences between Karim and Badar consolidate the stratified social system, in which those who are deprived of authority/power/economy suffer exploitation, inhumanity, and brutality of the hierarchical regimes.

Abdulrazak Gurnah evinces the ways the coloniality of power buttresses, controls, and administers the coloniality of knowledge in *Theft*. Karim acknowledges that "there are powerful countries in the world screwing us all the time" (Gurnah 67), unfolding the facile myth of the totality of knowing and knowledge. Gurnah exposes the delusiveness of the colonized, who themselves generate the coloniality of knowledge. When Badar realizes that Karim is watching him reading a newspaper, "he folded the newspaper and put it down on the ground" (Gurnah 70). Gurnah showcases that reading the newspaper for a destitute, Badar, is the act of stealing, when Karim saw Badar reading the newspaper, Badar feared as if "he had been caught in improper possession of someone else's property" (70). In *Theft*, Karim is the mere depiction of the colonizers who authorized the movements, traditions, and axis of knowing of the colonized, whereas Badar portrays the ostracism of



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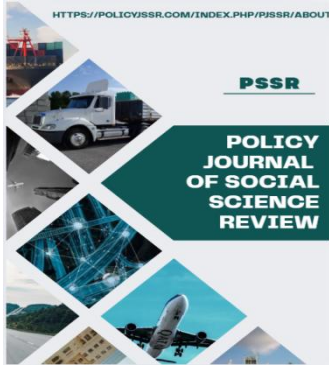
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the colonized from the mainstream knowledge. The relationship of Karim and Badar mirrors the interconnected practices of the coloniality of knowledge and of power. Gurnah illustrates that the coloniality of power (re) triggers the coloniality of knowledge, manipulates Badar's perception of knowing/language/philosophy in the disguise of the modern axis of knowledge. In *Theft*, the coercive exercise of the coloniality of power precipitates the thievery of the non-Western epistemologies in the dissimulation of development/modernity/civilization.

The "British took over the [Omani] Sultan's affairs in order to advance the progress and civilization" (Gurnah 137), institutionalizing the fictionality of the West-European civilizational superiority. The "houses became hotels for tourists...to evoke same perished [colonial] era...cafes for visitors opened, serving burgers and chips rather than goat stew and mandazi and sweet milky tea" (Gurnah 138). Mignolo and Walsh align with Gurnah's ideology as they posit that "Western expansion was not only economic and political but fundamentally epistemic" (137). The Britishers denounce the Zanzibar epistemologies, reiving their rituals/traditions/cultural meals/historical monuments. In this way, the (ex)colonizers unabashedly continue to plunder, and dismiss the non-Western communities. Gurnah showcases that the Britishers would maintain the myth of the ego-politics of knowledge/knowing,

declaring their ways of existing and cultures and traditions/philosophies/languages are the only authentic/civilized forms of knowing/living even in the decolonial aeon. The paper claims that the coloniality of power consolidates the coloniality of knowledge, ego-politics of knowledge, and the hubris of the zero point, escalating the perpetual larceny of the non-Western cultures/languages/matrices of knowing. Abdulrazak Gurnah illustrates the ways in which colonial ontologies/epistemologies ceaselessly plunder the non-Western epistemologies/ontologies in *Theft*. Karim re-formulates Badar's praxis of knowledge—he "gave Badar a detective novel. This is good for you, he said" (Gurnah 79)—controlling Badar's epistemological approach. When Haji was young, he always remained "dressed in shorts and boots like one of those English government people used to have" (Gurnah 119), spotlighting the longstanding and permanence of the Western epistemologies, which later on, became a social prestige for the colonized. Bwana Haji's ontological superiority Westernizes Badar's epistemological self, Haji had Badar "choose a shirt and trousers" (Gurnah 90), stressing that "once the city bug gets you, you can't live like that [a villager/barbarian] anymore" (Gurnah 94). The scarcity of the control of economy/power justifies Badar's ontological inferiority. Karim and Haji assert the relentless domination of the



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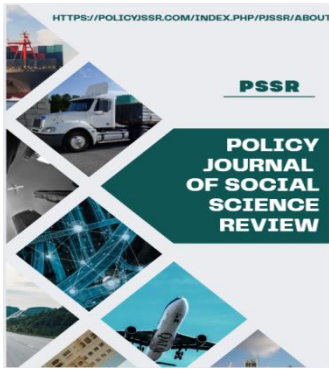
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Western epistemologies, ego-politics of knowledge, and the hubris of the zero point, maintain the Western myth of a single way of knowing, and the neutralization and the nationalization of the Euro-centric epistemologies. Gurnah illuminates the ways in which the coloniality of power advocates the ontological hierarchies to bolster the epistemic larceny/marginalization, sustaining the ego-politics of knowledge.

In *Theft*, coloniality of knowledge perpetually consolidates the larceny of the colonized epistemologies/languages/cultures in Zanzibar. During their visit to Dar es Salaam, Fauzia and Hawa went into the “bookshops, and the British Council Reading Room...they bought two magazines to take home with them” (Gurnah 86), emphasizing the obsession of the colonized with the colonizers’ epistemologies even after the end of the colonialism. Hawa is seduced by the Western culture/language(s), “sometimes she spoke English all day...maybe it was the magazines in the British Council Reading Room...it was the films on TV, or the serials from the United States” (Gurnah 87-88), which engulfed her true/authentic/non-Western self. Hawa’s pathological attachment with one the six modern languages, Western traditions, and knowledge, solidifies Mignolo’s argument that since languages are “something of what human beings are, coloniality of power and of knowledge engendered the coloniality of being” (Torres 242). Hawa considers it a social

prestige to manifest Euro-Western matrices of knowledge/cultures/languages in daily life. The coloniality of knowledge (re)formulates and civilizes/modernizes Hawa’s self, inveigling her into the warren of the coloniality of being. The paper propounds that the coloniality of knowledge in the camouflage of the modernity/civilization reinforces the Western epistemologies/languages.

Theft discloses the pernicious ways, which coloniality/modernity implies to seduce colonized. Hawa “begged her mother to make her dresses in the styles she saw in the magazines, and she listened to British pop music on the radio whenever she could” (Gurnah 86). Hawa disrupts her non-Western identity, local language, cultural dresses, and traditional music, bolstering the hubris of the zero point. Provoked by the myth of modernity, Hawa “spoke English as if it was her only language” (Gurnah 89), justifying the myth of single way of knowing, existing, speaking, and declaring the non-European ways of knowing/axis of knowledge/cultures as primitive, uncivilized, and outdated. According to Mignolo and Walsh, Hawa delineates one of the “disappearing entities anxious to become ‘civilized’ mestizos” (25). Gurnah unwraps the deceptiveness of the coloniality of knowledge and of power, demonstrating the ways these colonialities formulate an argument that an individual’s epistemology commands his/her ontology: what one knows decides what one is. The paper argues



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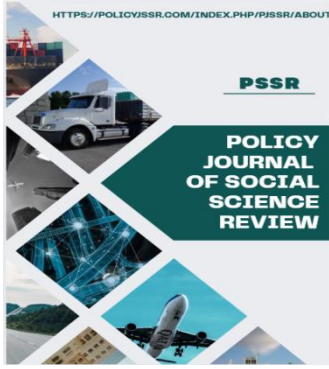
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that the coloniality of power and of knowledge drafts an overlapping epistemological/ontological relationship, which (re) constructs the coloniality of being, disintegrating the non-Western being(s)/matrices of knowledge, and all other forms of knowing and existing.

In *Theft*, the coloniality of knowledge ceaselessly plunder the non-Western/Zanzibarian epistemologies/ways of living/cultures. Gurnah makes a sorrowful revelation that “there was something we knew about living that we no longer know now” (212), stressing that (ex) colonized have “become shameless of [their] own accord...they knew what was of value and now no longer do” (Gurnah 212). *Theft* showcases the clandestine philosophy of the Western myth of the globalization of knowledge, which declares the non-Eurocentric ways of manifesting the life as demoted. Gurnah evinces that the West validates a communal system of knowing/speaking/living in the world to amplify the self-importance of the totality of culture(s)/language(s). The formally colonized entities, communities or countries are entangled in the maze of totality of living/knowing/knowledge. The paper argues that *Theft* demonstrates the theme of larceny of the non-Western cultures/philosophies, while concurrently remonstrates the colonial/modern epistemologies to stymie the epistemic/ontological marginalization of the individuals from the Zanzibar community. In so doing, Gurnah denudates the hidden agenda of the

coloniality/modernity, of the hubris of the zero point, and of the ego-politics of knowledge, emphasizing the urgency of decoloniality.

Theft explores the theme of identity crisis by foregrounding the ramifications of the lineage-locked system of the coloniality of power on the lived experiences of colonized, particularly Badar. The protagonist, Badar struggles with his lost identity, “he had different father’s name than his brothers and his sister...[they] were the children of Mohamed Rashidi” (Gurnah 36), While “his name was Badar Ismail... [in his school] he heard his full name for the first time” (Gurnah 36), accentuating the long duration of fractured identity. After Badar’s father disappeared “there was no one to look after him...Haji would pay a man and his family...to look after him” (Gurnah 129). Bwana Othman authorizes Ismail’s being through the coloniality of power, whereas Badar’s life is under the command of Haji Othman, Bwana’s son, illuminating an age-spanning existence of subjectivities. Badar is an orphaned child whose being is crippled by those manifesting the coloniality of power and controlling the coloniality of knowledge. His identity is controlled, hidden, and even reveal by Uncle Haji, who is an embodiment of the colonial ideological structures of the Western world in the decolonial era. The coloniality of power asserts the relentless domination of the Euro-centric power structures, prevalent in the experiences of Badar, an erstwhile colonized individual from Zanzibar,



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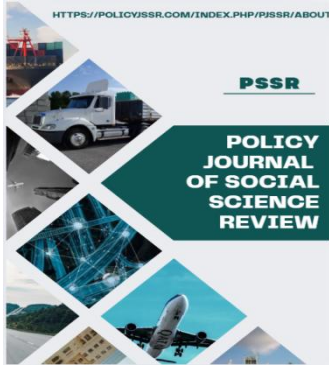
enduring the transgenerational identity crisis.

Theft enunciates the ways in which coloniality of power influences the lived experiences of colonized. Karim justifies his outlawed relationship with Geraldine Bruno, relaxing himself in his thoughts, “he had not done anything wrong. He had gone to a restaurant with the English woman...he was not unaware of what he was stepping into...he lied again to Fauzia...he wanted Jerry again...I’m going with Jerry, he had said” (Gurnah 196-202-203-205-209). Karim indulges in an extramarital affair with Gradline/Jerry Bruno, a volunteer from London. When Karim informs Fauzia about Bruno’s visit, Fauzia shows traditional obeisance; “if you are happy with that, I’m fine.” (Gurnah 205). Karim embodies the conventional patriarchal values, he never “imagined himself a father, despite the talk of making babies” (Gurnah 208). “He picked up Nasra by her head and lifted her up, his hands either side of her temple” (Gurnah 209). It is Karim’s gender that privileges his ontological superiority as he commands the matrimonial relationship and beats his daughter, a child of less than a year. Gurnah unfolds the extension(s) of the coloniality of power in the form of colonial/patriarchal control of gender and subjectivities, which dismantles the being(s) of colonized individuals and communities, consolidating the coloniality of being.

In *Theft*, Abdulrazak Gurnah explicitly delves into the theme of strategic silence

amidst the chaotic existence in the (de-) colonial/modern epoch. Badar “often moved away quietly when voices were raised...lying silent in the storeroom in the dark” (Gurnah 38), pondering over the brutalities of his caretaker family. When Bwana Haji asks Badar if his mother, that is not his mother, told him anything regarding his father, Badar answers that “his name was Ismail...not thinking it was necessary to repeat the rest of the ugliness” (Gurnah 91), deploying silence as an unarmed resistance against the cruelties afflicted on him. Whenever asked about his life, Badar would only “shook his head silently” (Gurnah 94), hiding the calamities inflicted upon him or his being. Gurnah demonstrates the importance of navigating the tragedies of life brought on Zanzibarian community by the Western tourists, who would keep (re)visiting the previously colonized countries, camouflaging European theft of the non-Western epistemologies/languages/philosophies in the name of modernity. The paper proposes that silence is a forward-looking strategy to cope with the perpetual exploitation of indigenous narratives/epistemologies/cultures/languages/philosophies by modern/Western powers in the decolonial world

Theft elicits the strategic deployment of silence to tackle the modern/colonial robbery of non-Western ontologies. Fauzia “did not want to speak to anyone” (Gurnah 207) about the tawdry affair of her husband, Karim. She again “did not



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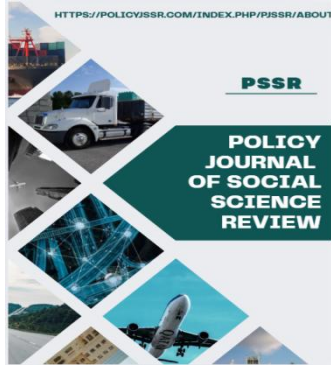
...she did not want to speak to anyone, not yet” (Gurnah 209), (un)masking the domestic violence, while utilizing her silence against the tyranny of Karim, which later on helped her to part from him. In the end, the systematic silence rolled out first by Badar, then by Fauzia, assists them in dismantling the extremely inhuman ideological structures of the West. Badar and Fauzia “made eye contact, they smiled to each other without speaking” (Gurnah 227), then “without saying a word, she took his hand” (Gurnah 227). Fauzia and Badar manifest strategic silence against the British tourist(s), particularly Geraldine/Jerry Bruno, who constantly pillages their lives, specifically that of Fauzia. The paper maintains that Western tourists invalidate the epistemologies of Zanzibarians in the guise of progress, welfare, and modernity. Both Fauzia and Badar avail themselves of decolonial strategic silence to cripple the interconnected mechanisms of the coloniality of power, the coloniality of knowledge, and the coloniality of being.

Conclusion

Theft spotlights the stratified social system, epistemic marginalization, and hierarchical functionalities of the ontological colonial differences, particularly through the lived experiences of Raya, Badar, and Fauzia. The theoretical underpinnings of decoloniality: the coloniality of power and the coloniality of knowledge consolidate the perpetual exploitation of

being(s), sustaining the coloniality of being. The (de-) colonial power structure(s) cripples Raya’s and Fauzia’s being, control Badar’s epistemological approach and ontology, and manipulate Hawa’s/Zanzibarians/philosophies/epistemologies/cultures/tradition(s)/praxis of knowledge and other forms of knowing, (re-)imposing the hubris of the zero point and the ego-politics of knowledge in the non-Western (de-) colonial/modern world. The paucity of the colonial control of socio-economic structure(s), marginalizes

Badar epistemically/ontologically, commanding the coloniality of being. The control of economy and gender demonstrates ontological superiority of Bakari Abbas to Raya, and that of Karim to Fauzia. The control of economy/power legitimizes Karim’s and Bwana Haji’s ontological superiority to Badar, thereby justifying Badar’s epistemological inferiority, which is mutually administered by Karim and Haji, concurrently denouncing and modernizing Badar’s way of knowing, language, and living. Being embodiment of the Western ideologies/ontologies/epistemologies, tourist(s), British Council Reading Room, Western magazines, and university, provoke Hawa to westernize herself, manipulating her native language(s)/tradition(s)/local music/philosophies/conventional way of dressing, foregrounding the epistemic larceny amid (de-)colonial/modern epoch long after the formal end of colonialism. The paper propounds the strategic



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silence to fracture the cyclic relationship between the coloniality of power, of knowledge, and of being and resist against the darker side of coloniality/modernity, propagated in the Zanzibar by the Western tourist(s).

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