UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

INDIGENOUS IDENTITY AND METROPOLITAN DOMINATION IN SELECTED NOVELS BY NAJUIB MAHFOUZ AND DAVID MALOUF

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Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

May 2008

TO

My family: wife and children--Emad, Abeer, Afaf and Amr, and my brothers

To

My friends: Mutee Al Sarory and Yasser Al-Asbahi

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of the Doctor of Philosophy

INDIGENOUS IDENTITY AND METROPOLITAN DOMINATION IN SELECTED NOVELS BY NAJUIB MAHFOUZ AND DAVID MALOUF

By

RASHAD MOHAMMED AI-AREQI

May 2008

Chairperson: Dr. Wan Roselezam Wan Yahya
Faculty: Modern Languages and Communication

This study explores the impact of British metropolitan power on reshaping the indigenous identity through analysing selected literary works by Mahfouz and Malouf. Despite the great efforts of the postcolonial countries to decolonise their lands from the British military occupation and their success in driving the colonisers outside of their borders, they did not succeed to separate themselves from the culture of the British power that extended to encompass the aspects of indigenous identity represented by cultural, social, political and religious creeds. Through the postcolonial and psychoanalytic theories and by analysing and comparing the main themes and characterisations of selected works by Mahfouz and Malouf, the researcher highlights the impact of the British metropolitan power on reshaping the indigenous identity represented by hybridity and hegemony, dislocation and unhomeliness, exile and alienation, nationalism and resistance. Both novelists, Mahfouz and Malouf, have their own understanding related to the impact of the British metropolitan power on the indigenous people due to the differences in the structure of their communities. Thus, this

study proves that the British metropolitan power triumphs its victory over Egypt while it

fails to achieve its objectives in Australia as depicted in the selected works.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi syarat untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafa.

Identiti Asal dan Dominasi Metropolitan dalam Novel- novel Yang Ditulis oleh Najuib Mahfouz dan David Malouf

Oleh

RASHAD MOHAMMED AI-AREQI

May 2008

Pengerusi: Dr. Wan Roselezam Wan Yahya
Fakulti: Bahasa Moden Dan Komunikasi

Kajian ini meniliti kesan kuasa metropolitan British dalam pembentukan semula identity asal dengan menganalisis beberapa hasil karya terpilih, Mahfuz dan Malouf. Walaupun dengan usaha gigih Negara-negara pascakolonial (selepas dijajah dapat) menjajah tanah mereka dari penjajah British dan juga berjaya menghalau sipenjajah diluar sempadan, tetapi mereka mungkin tidak akan berjaya mengasingkan diri mereka daripada kesan-kesan negatif dominasi metropolitan British yang merangkumi aspek-aspek identiti asal seperti tradisi, sosial, politik dan keugamaan. Melalui teori-teori pascakolonial dan psikoanalitik dan dangan menganalisis dan membandingkan tema-tema utama dan perwatakan beberapa hasil penulisan Mahfouz dan Malouf, penyelidik akan mendalami impak kuasa metropolitan British dalam pembentukan semula identiti asal yang terdiri daripada *hybridity* dan *hegemony*, *dislocation* dan ketiadaan tempat tinggal, exile dan alienasi, nasionalisma dan penentangan. Kedua-dua peaulis, Mahfouz dan Malouf ada visi tersendiri berkaitan dengan impak kuasa metropolitan British terhadap orang asli akibat daripada perbedzaan dalam struktur komuniti mereka. Oleh itu, kajian ini

membuktikan bahawa kuasa metropolitan British berjaya di Mesir tetapi gagal di Australia seperti yang digambarkan dalam beberapa hasil penulisan yang dipilih.

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I certify that an Examination Committee has met on 21st of May, 2008 to conduct the final examination of Rashad Mohammed Moqbel Al-Areqi on his Doctor of Philosophy thesis entitled "Indigenous Identity and Metropolitan Domination in Selected Novels by Najuib Mahfouz and David Malouf" in accordance with University Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and University Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Regulations 1981. The Committee recommends that the candidate be awarded the relevant degree. Members of the Examination Committee are as follows:

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Date: 14 August 2008

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of University Putra Malyasia and has been accepted as fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as fallows:

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at UPM or other institutions.

RASHAD MOHAMMED AL-AREQI

Date: 15 July 2008

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study traces the indigenous identity and its transformations through two novelists in two countries: one represents the Middle Eastern countries, Egypt, and the second represents Australia. The study explores the impact of British metropolitan power on the indigenous identity through selected literary works by Najuib Mahfouz, the pioneering leader of the development of the postcolonial Arabic novel, in particular, and the modern Arabic novel, in general, and David Malouf who is regarded one of the greatest novelists in Australia, whose works are dedicated to the issues of indigenous people. It focuses on the transformations of the indigenous identity in those postcolonial countries and the factors that lead to a lack of indigenous identity as depicted through the selected works by Mahfouz and Malouf.

The metropolis appears to be the dominating power of colonisation to retain the postcolonial countries under its control. Its definition emerges from Greek history as a parent state of a colony or it is "a term used binaristically in colonial discourse to refer to the 'centre' in relation to the colonial periphery… [It] means belonging to or constituting the mother country…." (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin *Post-Colonial Studies* 138).

Edward Said discusses the meaning of imperialism in *Culture and Imperialism*. He highlights the relationship between imperialism and colonialism: "imperialism means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory. Colonialism which almost consequence of imperialism, is implanting of settlement on distant territories" (8).

Loomba points out the difference between imperialism and colonialism. She discusses that:

> Imperialism, colonialism and the differences between them depending on their historical mutations. One useful way of distinguishing between them might be to not separate them in temporal but in spatial terms and to think of imperialism or neo-imperialism as the phenomenon that originates in the metropolis, the process which leads to domination and control… Thus the imperial country is the "metropole" from which power flows, and the colony or neo-colony is the place which it penetrates and controls.
>
> (*Colonialism/postcolonialism* 6)

Said points out that the origin of imperialism in the eighteenth century, "although at times he identifies the seventeenth and even sixteenth centuries as its point of inception… For Jameson, imperialism is a strictly nineteenth-century phenomenon" (Chrisman *Postcolonial Contraventions* 54). From another perspective, Robert Young argues that:

> Imperialism is characterised by the exercise of power either through direct conquest or (latterly) through political and economic influence that effectively amounts to a similar form of domination: both involve the practice of power through facilitating institutions and ideologies.
>
> (*Postcolonialism* 27)

The metropolitan power in this study refers to the British Empire that extended its domination over many countries such as Egypt and Australia in the past. It was not only the military domination that directed its interests on those countries, but also it appeared as a thorough domination over the different facets of indigenous lives. Furthermore, it seems that it attempted to reshape the indigenous people to comply with the demands of British rule.

The lack of identity is one of the significant issues that have been discussed in postcolonial literary writings such as Malouf's *Remembering Babylon* and Mahfouz's *Midaq Alley*. Many postcolonial countries remained under the British Empire for a period of time. Postcolonial countries struggled to preserve their indigenous identity and their rights to live in the guise of their cultural, religious and political creeds. They have succeeded in breaking the chains of military dominance. However, they still suffer from the inescapable impingement of metropolitan hegemony.

In 1960's works, some postcolonial critics, such as Jacoby, were puzzled about the period of postcolonialism because a large number of postcolonial countries obtained their political autonomy in different historical stages. For Russell Jacoby, the term "postcolonial" has become "the latest catchall term to dazzle the academic mind" (30). Yet Ashcroft, et al. regard the postcolonial countries that have been influenced by European power, particularly the British, as postcolonial countries and the authors of those countries are postcolonial authors: "We use the term "postcolonial", however, to cover all culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonisation to present day" (*The Empire* 2).

The identity of nations is known to be shaped in terms of social milieu and cultural traits. Construction of identity is influenced by a wide variety of cultural and political variations that become a source of cultural renewal in a rapidly changing world. Henry Schwarz points out that:

> in many formerly colonised countries such attempts to return to pre-
> colonial traditions of cultural understanding have been charged with
> "nativism", a native recovery and celebration supposedly pure, non

European practices untainted by foreign dominance. (*A Companion to postcolonial Studies* 3)

The indigenous identities of individuals and nations are shaped by political, social, cultural, and religious constants that lead the community to be itself in diverse situations. If there is a kind of violation to the social and cultural components, the indigenous people resort to their religion and culture to resist such transformations. However, many postcolonial countries may not realise the danger of metropolitan power to reshape the indigenous identity through hegemony and hybridity. Therefore, they may become an easy target for imperial policies.

The British metropolitan power realises this actuality. It tends to reshape the indigenous identity of poor nations to control them through promulgating the metropolitan culture and language. Said points out this issue in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). He discusses that "the important point… is how the national British cultures maintained hegemony over peripheries. How within them was consent gained and continuously consolidated for the distant rule of native peoples and territories" (*Culture and Imperialism* 59). British metropolitan power endeavours to change the indigenous identity of the postcolonial people in general and to serve its colonial targets in the third world and Arab world, in particular. Najuib Mahfouz depicts a world of violence "where logic is absent and indigenous people are robbed of their identity" in his novel *Under the Umbrella* (Badawi *Modern Arabic Literature and the West* 41). Fanon points out the fact that colonisation manifests itself unsatisfied by only controlling the colonised under military domination, but the metropolitan power comes to the colonised past "and distorts, disfigures and destroys" (*The Wretched* 170).

Studies have shown that most countries that were under the British Empire resisted the colonial power, which continued to distort the cultures and beliefs of the postcolonial nations such as India, which articulated resistance in several forms under Mahatma Gandhi. Among those countries were Egypt and Australia. They struggled to preserve their indigenous identities until they obtained their autonomy after long struggle.

Identity is the pride of an individual and the life of a nation. For number of countries in the world today, it seems that their indigenous identities have been reshaped by the domination of global imperialism. Postcolonial fiction reflects the means of metropolitan power to reshape the indigenous identity and its cultural and social transformation. The metropolitan powers, particularly the British Empire, which continued to occupy a wide range of countries for a period of time, justify domination and military invasion with the plea of civilising the indigenous people characterised with savagery and primitivism. It seems that the metropolitan power's concern was how to deplete the wealth and the natural potentialities of the colonised without considering their civilisation (Hourani 321). This is evident in Conrad's novella, *Heart of Darkness*. In the novella, Conrad delineates how British Empire, through its expedition to Congo searching for ivory, had immersed itself in the uncivilised lives of the natives without attempting to fulfill their claims in aiding the indigenous people.

Therefore, postcolonial countries resisted the metropolitan power to decolonise their lands from metropolitan domination. However, postcolonial countries such as Egypt and Australia, which are the focus of this study through the selected works by Mahfouz and Malouf, suffered from the impact of the British metropolitan power, which manifests itself in varied aspects of cultural, social, and political life.

The indigenous people might not totally succeed in disassociating themselves from the metropolitan power. The British metropolitan power left their imprint on the indigenous culture and economy and would interfere to affect their political decision in one way or another. They still look at the developing countries, particularly Arab countries, as "others". Nawal El Saadawi in "Why Keep Asking me about My Identity", has revealed the significance of indigenous identity where "Identity is a discourse, it is essential to know who is using it, who decides, who labels me, what all this interest in 'cultural identity' means, where does it lead" (3: 1392).

The colonisers lead the postcolonial countries to deny their identities, to adopt identities that represent the metropolitan power more than the indigenous cultures or beliefs:

> [The] illusion of authenticity by removing [Aboriginal] objects from their original contexts [of production and reception] and recontextualizing in another time and space, [Aborigines] are, in effect, removed from the history, ironically at the very point that they supposed to embody it. (Attwood and Arnold viii)

In other words, Attwood and Arnold strongly assert that Aborigines represent the first generation in Australia but metropolitan power worked to eliminate their history to be easily dominated. This creates hybrid identity that brings the two cultures together. It seems that the British metropolitan power struggled to make anew identity which is caught between the indigenous and the metropolitan cultures that made the indigenous people succumb to living under metropolitan domination. The metropolitan power attempts to distort the past of nations as Fanon pointed out in *The Wretched of the Earth* about French metropolitan power.

The identity of the indigenous people in postcolonial countries is shaped in terms of the conditions they find themselves in or which are imposed upon them through cultural and transcultural changes. Through the people, the identity of nations is reshaped by the social, cultural, religious and political milieu that individuals live in. Tyson discusses that "the colonizers believed that their whole culture was more highly advanced, and they ignored or swept aside the religions, customs, and codes of behaviour of the peoples they subjugated" (*Critical Theory* 366).

Furthermore, many individuals and nations, for one reason or another, would lose or deny their identities to live under the roof of other people's identities because they find in these adopted identities their interests in life, or because they probably have been permeated with other cultures that leave them unable to adapt to the actuality of life. They escape to another country or live with an eccentric identity that is not associated with their cultural and religious creeds.

Therefore, it seems that these tides have left the postcolonial people divided into two groups. One of those groups is attempting to encourage and support this kind of adherence to the culture and belief of the Western metropolis as exemplified by Salman Rushdie, who wrote *Satanic Verses* (1988). He appeared in an unenviable situation when he touched the sacred creeds of Muslims and their symbolic beliefs. By doing so, he aroused the feelings of Muslims against him. It appeared not to be a coincidental mistake. Yet it is a deliberate blow to what is sacred in Muslim life. He hurt the feelings of Muslims in varied ways such as using the names of angels "Gabriel and Azraeil" mockingly. He depicted the verses of the Holy Quran as satanic verses. In addition to his defiant sarcasm of the practice of polygamy in Islam, he depicted the wives of the

Muslim's prophet as whores. Then, he attacked the supreme meanings of Muslim faith with his violation of Muslim symbolic figures under the excuse of freedom of speech in a world of democracy. Malak ventured five hypotheses that make Rushdie vulnerable to Muslims attack but he eventually stressed that this literary work needs debate, not destruction (176). Rushdie proclaims using the English language "to conquer English to complete the process of making ourselves free" (*The Imaginary* 17). In other words, Rushdie accepts to live the metropolitan lifestyle as long as he lives in Britain.

This is the effect of hegemonisation and hybridisation that cause the indigenous people to break away from their culture or live with their hybridised identity. Rushdie himself points out that he is an archetype of those who have "been forced by cultural displacement to accept provisional nature of all truths, all certainties" (*The Imaginary* 12).

However, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, as an example of the second group that supports using the indigenous culture, sees that to use the culture and the language of the colonisers is to support and approve the metropolitan power's hybridisation. He pointed out that:

> Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world. How people perceive themselves affects how they look at their culture, at their politics and at their social production of wealth, at their entire relationship to nature and to other human beings. Language is thus inseparable from ourselves as a community of human beings with a specific form and character, a specific history, a specific relationship to the world. (16)

In another aspect, he asserted the perils of accepting the colonisers' language and culture in the inhabitants' daily lives: "[T]he bullet was the means of physical subjugation, and language was the means of spiritual subjection" (7). Ngugi wa Thiongo stands against

colonialism in its varied forms, while his counterpart, Salman Rushdie, stands for the colonisers' culture.

Throughout the second half of twentieth century, a number of Arab countries which were under the British Empire struggled to reach out for their independence particularly political independence and their right to make political decisions.

Egypt is one of Middle Eastern countries which suffered for a period of time under British dominance. In 1919, there was nationalist resistance led by Sa'd Zaghlul, leader of al Wafd party to break away from the metropolitan power, but Egypt failed to fulfill its ambition of real independence. Independence did not grant Egyptians full political control and it did not liberate Egyptian land from the British troops. Then, Egypt forced the British metropolis to give them a kind of authority to run domestic affairs. Robert Young discusses that "in March 1922 Britain recognised Egypt declaration of independence, which had been formally declared the previous month" (*Postcolonialism* 189). Many nations with their liberation movements that extended to span the globe declared their rejection of political oppression with its multiple formations and they began to reshape their indigenous identity in order to fulfill their national dream that matched their culture and religious creeds. However, "the partial tragedy of resistance, that it must to a certain degree work to recover forms already established or at least influenced or infiltrated by the culture of Empire" (Said *Culture* 210).

Albert Hourani discusses the historical and political changes in *A History of Arab Peoples* (2002) in which he highlights the impact of European empires on the lives of Arab peoples. The political upheaval in the second half of twentieth century left its

imprint on the history of Arab countries. Egypt struggled in diverse wars against the aggressors. The trilogy of aggression of Israel, France and Britain in 1956 was one of those wars in which Egyptians nationalized the Suez Canal. Then, the war of 1967 left a deep impact on the lives of Egyptians in particular and the lives of Arabs in general. Egypt was the symbol of pioneering leadership for Arab countries in different aspects of life and it still holds this position in the present time. Likewise, its pioneering role has been notable in reshaping the glorious Arabic and Islamic history over a period of time.

Furthermore, wars seem to be one of a wide range of factors that function to shift the indigenous identity of the nations. Egypt, despite the wars that were fought throughout the second half of the twentieth century to preserve its national identity and to drive the colonisers out of its borders, could not succeed thoroughly to disassociate itself from the domination of metropolitan power. Metropolitan power has worked to obliterate the values of the colonised and switch their indigenous identity to become hybridised. Tyson points out that "the colonisers believed that only their own Anglo-European culture was civilised, sophisticated, or as postcolonial critics put it, *metropolitan*. Therefore, native peoples were defined as savage, backward, undeveloped" (*Critical Theory* 366). Egypt was the first guardian of the contemporary Arabic novel. Egyptian intellectuals and writers have obtained respect and appreciation from among Arab countries with their literary works. With the works of the first generation of authors that have accelerated *nahda* "renaissance" in the cultural sphere, the voice of the Arabic novel reaches out to other countries.

President Jamal Abdel Nasser was the first one who supported the liberation movements in many of Arab countries. He called for pan-Arab nationalism that was incarnated with

the unification of Egypt with Syria in his era (1958-61), but it was not successful. Upheavals in the lives of Egypt and the Arab countries were the momentum that led Arab novelists to write about Arab issues and the impingement of metropolitan power on the lives of Egyptians and Arabs. They began to write about postcolonial Egypt and its significant issues in many aspects of life. In that period, the pace of nationalism was in a glorious stage and the dream of Abdul Nasser, the president of Egypt in the 1950s and 1960s, to reshape the identity of Arab countries with a national stamp was strong.

Nationalism was the path of indigenous people to reach their freedom and rights. They struggled under the banner of nationalism to decolonise their lands from the foreign powers that deteriorated their traditional way of life. However, their dream in the post revolutionary period has not materialized because the indigenous rulers did not pay attention to indigenous people's demands. Fanon argues that "the national bourgeois steps into the shoes of the former European settlement [to reach their self-interests]" (*The Wretched* 122). The educated middle class attempts to utilise the potentialities of the people for their self-interests ignoring the preceding promises about peace and prosperity. What Fanon fears becomes a reality in some postcolonial countries such as the Arab world, in particular. In Egypt and other Arab countries, the leadership gives a golden opportunity for colonising countries to invest and establish their projects and companies on the postcolonial countries that causes them to benefit from the wealth of postcolonial countries. The metropolitan power returns with new policies to exploit the wealth of postcolonial countries offering their promises of economic assistance to their influential leadership. By doing so, the people of postcolonial countries remain economically subservient to Western domination even if its means are different. Fanon