

**THE DESIRE CALLED UTOPIA:  
ŞADDĀM ḤUSSAIN SOCIALLY  
SYMBOLIC ACTS IN *UḤRUĠ*  
*MINHĀ YĀ MAL'ŪN***

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**Abstract**

*Uḥruġ minha ya Mal'ūn*, a novel written by Şaddām Ḥussain, is regarded as a work contains the resistance response or the critique toward colonization and domination of ideology, and certain cultural production. This research tries to reveal whether this novel is aimed to voice the struggles and the critiques toward the occupiers. This research applies the theory of political unconscious by Fredric Jameson. There are three interpretation horizons in this political unconscious. They are narrow political horizon, broader social horizon, and historical horizon. Based on the result of these horizons, it can be concluded that in the surface level, this novel manifests critique toward the foreigners, while in the deep level, there is latent critique toward Iraq. In short, this novel does not only have a stronger struggle toward politic existent mode (the foreigners), but also a weaker struggle toward politic existent mode (Iraqi).

Keywords: the political unconscious, horizon interpretation, Fredric Jameson, Şaddām Ḥussain

**INTRODUCTION**

In her book, *Resistance Literature*, Barbara Harlow inspects various writers and scholars to set up “the integral relationship between armed resistance and resistant literature” (Harlow, 1987b: 10, and Azank, 2012: 7-8). According to her, armed struggles are clear forms of resistance to oppressive power structures, Harlow draws attention to the significance of cultural forms of resistance, which she regards as “no less valuable than armed resistance itself” (1987b: 11). In defining resistant literature, Harlow asserts:

*Resistant literature calls attention to itself, and to literature in general, as a political and politicized activity. The literature of resistance sees itself furthermore as immediately and directly involved in a struggle against ascendant or dominant forms of ideological and cultural production (1987b: 28-29).*

Harlow stresses that this analytical approach positions politics at the centre rather than the periphery and maintains that this genre of literature can not be separated from its historical reality. Moreover, Harlow states “the role of poetry in the liberation struggle itself has... been a crucial one, both as a force for mobilizing a collective response to occupation and domination, and as a repository for popular memory and consciousness” (1987b: 34).

This later stand point holds particular significance in relation to the poets discussed here, as their poetry not only takes a part at the issue of memory but also becomes a space for the recovery, expansion, and perpetuation of collective memory. He underlines the political significance of resistant literature in participating and promoting the historical development of various kinds of resistance contextual liberation. In short Harlow reaffirms the significance of literature and the role of writers in eliciting and memorialization political movement as a crucial aspect of the significance of resistant literature.

In modern Arabic literature, resistant literature is formulated— which later developed by Harlow—by poet and critic Palestinian poet and critic, Ġassān Kanafānī in his work, “literature of the Resistance in Occupied Palestine: 1948-1966”. Kanafānī’s critical essay was, significantly, written in 1966, before the June War of 1967 whose culmination in the defeat of Egyptian and Jordania armies by Israeli force resulted in the Israeli occupation of the West Bank of the Jordan River and Gaza Strip and the opening of the border between these territories, now referred to as the “Occupied Territories,” and Israel. As such, it proposes an important distinction between literature which has been written “under occupation” or *taḥt al-ih̄tilāl* and “exile” or *manfā* literature. Harlow states ( 1987b: 4) that distinction presupposes people’s collective relationship to a common land, a common identity, or a common cause on the basis of which it becomes possible to articulate the difference between the two modes of historical and political existence,

between that is, “occupation” and “exile” or occupied.

Ġassān Kanafānī asserts, in referring to Palestinian literature as “resistant literature,” is writing within specific historical context, a context which may be most immediately situated within the contemporary National Liberation struggles and resistant movement against Western imperialist domination of Africa, Central and South America, and Middle and Far East. Thus, the resistant literature is a literature whose primary purpose is voiced opposition voices to the evil committed by the domination of the imperialistic powers. Literature resistant definitively contains harsh criticism of the exploitative foreign.

Ṣaddām Ḥussain’s *Uḥruġ Minhā yā Mal’ūn (UM)* is one of many Arabic resistant literature.. According Rodiah (2010), *UM* is a novel which is full of criticism and resistance to foreign nations. Rodiah stated that the novel is a representation of Middle East and Western identity. In her research, Rodiah seeks that the novel is describing critique to the cultural

domination with an explicit picture of the Middle East cultural identity building resistance against of the Western.

As a literature of resistance, it is assumed that there are struggle modes from the occupied toward the occupiers. Therefore, this research tries to reveal whether this novel is aimed to voice the struggles and the critiques toward the occupiers. Besides, the possibility of other critiques in this novel will be portrayed. This research applies the theory of political unconscious by Fredric Jameson to reveal “the political unconscious” of this novel and also the “strategy of containment”—which is construed as a symbolic resolution to the unresolved social contradiction—within the novel.

## RESEARCH METHOD

For examining narrative formal pattern of the text, this research used first “narrow political horizon”. First, restructuring *UM*’s narrative to reveal myth archetype pattern of the text. Then, “symptomatic reading is used to construes (rewrites) the formal patterns of the work as the

symbolic enactment of the social within the formal and the aesthetic specificity of the text. By means of this enactment, the aesthetic act itself becomes ideological through the invention of "imaginary or formal 'solutions' to unresolvable social contradictions. The Real (extra- or con- textual reality) is a sub-text rewritten by the text; it operates like Althusser's (or Spinoza's) Absent Cause-history that is non-textual, non-representational, that is approached indirectly through textualization (text as symbolic act).

Second horizon of interpretation is used to assess ideologeme within the novel. The individual utterance [parole] or text is grasped as a symbolic move in an essentially polemic and strategic ideological confrontation between the classes. The critic sets out to reconstruct the "absent" opposing voice of class discourse (langue), which manifests itself through ideologemes assuming the form of "a conceptual or belief system, an abstract value, an opinion or prejudice" or of a proto-narrative. The smallest intelligible unit of the

essentially antagonistic collective discourses of social class is examined using *ressentiment* method in addition to reveal the mask of ethic and ethical binary opposition between good and evil of various fundamental form of ideological thought.

The historical horizon, Jameson's third horizon of interpretation is used to examine the ideology of the form. Through this horizon of interpretation strategies or modes of aesthetic which is used by *UM* novel is examined along side with particular selection of genre which is the novel used. Aesthetically strategies and novel's genre selecting is restructured or rewritten as a field force that registers the dynamic of a system of sign production.

## DISCUSSION

The first horizon of interpretation, narrow political horizon, reveals that *UM* contains a symbolic resolution of the social-political contradictions that underlies the emergence of the novel. The resolution is an act of social-symbolic form of wish-fulfillment that the domination of foreign powers in the

Arab world, especially Iraq can be overthrown.

Through analysis of the archetypes pattern of mythical romance, social allegory within the novel is revealed. As a novel with the archetypes pattern of mythical romance, *UM* emphasises contradiction between good and evil. Identified hero is a representation of the Arab community who voiced resistance against Leviathan monster which is a representation of the invader United States. There are some similarities that exist between a novel structure and socio-political context in space and time when the novel emerged. *UM* in the narrative is about conflict between Muḍṭarrah and Muḥṭārah tribe. The narrative is similar to a conflict between Iraq-Iran or Iraq-Kuwait. In addition, there is also a narrative similar to the twin towers of the WTC.

Thus, *UM*'s archetypes pattern of mythical romance is a symbolic act against the social contradictions that occur around the novel appeared, which is transformed into a Wish-fulfillment. Wish-fulfillment is repressed and appears as an absent

cause whose existence lies in latency of archetypes pattern of narrative novel which is set in ancient Iraq Mesopotamian era. That is, the Wish-fulfillment is the result from rewriting of his context or extratext. In other words, the *UM*'s archetype romance pattern contains a narrative about the struggle between good and evil, the struggle from the hero against the Leviathan monster, hero-in-which is represented by prominent figures Naḥwah and Ḥasqīl as evil-try to restore harmony as usual. It is a political allegory in recent Iraq circumstance. Thus, *UM*'s archetypes pattern of mythical romance is a symptom of a wish-fulfillment of subtext as a symbolic resolution to the social contradictions that takes place when the novel appeared.

Analytical results from the third horizon of interpretation suggests that cultural forms which is selected and used by Saddam Hussain to creating *UM* novel has links with the material base in which the novel emerged. The elements of the text relate to the novel forms of ideology. The production is affected by the cultural revolution that is specific to it,

occurs a material restructuring of literary history and culture in the form of the new text.

The use of cultural forms which consists of aesthetic iceberg, nostalgia and romance genre is part of a Ṣaddām Ḥussain's utopia project intended to counter the threat from foreigners, especially the United States, as well as resistance to the Iraqi people themselves who have political interests that opposite with himself. Through the iceberg mode aesthetic, Ṣaddām Ḥussain launched his criticism against various political groups in Iraq which have opposite political interests with him. Criticism of certain Iraqi people that was conveyed in a way that is subtle, gave the political power of Ṣaddām Ḥussain when it was not as strong as a few years earlier. Ṣaddām Ḥussain criticized Iraqis people who tend to follow personal or group desires and ignore the unity of Iraqi national which is more needed in order to counter the threat and intervention from foreign nations, whose trying to undermine take control to Iraq natural resources.

Nostalgic mode aesthetic operated by Ṣaddām produce the social space that unites the Iraqi people which is divided by his sentripetal force—especially by ethnic and religion—to unite and share a sense of alienation from the past together with a harmonious and scintillating. Through nostalgia, Ṣaddām tried to imagine revitalization possibilities by spreading communal moments of nostalgia in his work.

The romance genre is used to elaborate values and resistance against foreign intervention which is manifested in the surface level of the novel. Archetypes pattern of mythical romance is chosen. As cultural forms, these archetypal patterns emphasize the contradiction between good and evil where good will always prevail over evil, and good will manage to bring harmony back as usual. The contradiction between good and evil in the romance archetypes pattern can be used to package morals and pseudoidea of criticism and resistance against foreign nations.

## CONCLUSION

From the analysis through all three Jameson's horizon of interpretations revealed that the novel's criticism and resistance against foreign is manifested on the surface level, whereas the novel's criticism and resistance against the Iraqi people who have particular political strength lie in the depth of the text latency. Thus, *UM* does not only resist to a mode of existence that has a stronger politically, namely foreigners, but also to the mode of existence which is relatively a weaker political, namely certain Iraqi nation. In other words, unlike with what Harlow states that resistance literature that calls attention to itself, and to literature in general, as a political and politicized activity. The literature of resistance furthermore sees itself as immediately and directly involved in a struggle against ascendant or dominant forms of ideological and cultural production (1987b: 28-29), *UM* as resistant literature contains not only the resistance and criticism from occupied nation against foreign nations (the occupiers), but also

contains resistance or criticism to the occupied nation itself.

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