

# Contextualizing Identity Dynamics in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Paradise*: A Study in the Light of Raymond Williams's Concept of Dominant, Residual, and Emergent

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## **Abstract**

This article examines cultural identity dynamics revolving around the indigenous African tribes constructed within the power matrix of colonialism and nativity in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Paradise*. It scrutinizes and evaluates the cultural markers of identity through Raymond Williams's prism of cultural tendencies, dominant, residual, and emergent, which are at work in any cultural phenomenon. I also deconstruct the colonial problematics of South African lives, particularly Tanzanian cultural identity, weighing the magnitude collectively formed by the colonial yoke and pre-colonial ill-practices within the region. The appropriation of selfhood of local African tribes by taking over cultural, economic, and political institutions, and by portraying them as savage, primitive and uncivilized, figures in each realm; dominant, residual, and emergent. Further, the metaphor of slavery is ascribed to the identity conferred upon the tribal people under the pretext of civilization and modernization.

**Keywords:** colonial, dominant, emergent, identity, ideological, residual and tribes.

## **Introduction**

Abdulrazak Gurnah, born in Zanzibar, Tanzania, was awarded the prestigious Nobel Prize for literature in 2021 for his uncompromising and compassionate portrayal of the impact of colonialism, and the fate of the refugee, in the gulf between cultures and continents. In *Memory of Departure* (1987), *Admiring Silence* (1996), *Paradise* (1994), *By the Sea* (2001), *Desertion* (2005), and *Afterlives* (2020), Gurnah locates inter-cultural and inter-religious problematics within the South-African diasporas, blending them with colonial locales to assess the scale of the suffering by local African tribespeople. Gurnah's *Paradise* merits attention for its unique depiction of pre-colonial Tanzania, demonstrating how the local administration was headed by the tribal headmen and merchants which gave rise to slavery. The practice of slavery is justified on the pre-text of ideologies driven by religion and the profit principle. Slavery encouraged incarceration of natives, as Europeans took advantage of internal strife among the native leaders.

*Paradise* is a narrative of colonization which runs parallel on a dual principal of internal and external violence. This violence is not only physical but economic, political, and psychological, bearing the marks of the evils of slavery with its constructed roots in the *Koran*,<sup>1</sup> implying the cultural ideological construct. Thus, the study speculates on the internal dynamics of colonization of the natives by their own people, and later colonization by outsiders, without difficulty in establishing a colonial government, as the foundation for it already existed. The study sheds light on the failed project of capitalism attempted by the local chiefs and merchants in the

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<sup>1</sup> Abdulrazak Gurnah, *Paradise* (New York: The New Press, 1994), p. 85.

guise of promoting the practice of slavery, which stamps the local native people as ‘other’ without agency. The only recognition the Indigenous tribes find existing in their own land is of “wild people” and “Gog and Magog.”<sup>2</sup> Even the civilizing mission of the Germans fails as the naked exploitative mechanics of imperialism and colonialism come to the surface.

J. U. Jacobs draws a parallel between Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* and Gurnah’s *Paradise*, remarking that “the last of the great East African trading caravans retraces one of the major trading routes from the coast into the interior around the Great Lakes, which in the nineteenth century had become one of the axes of the slave trade.”<sup>3</sup> Another study by Fawzia Mustafia associates Gurnah’s narrative not only with *Heart of Darkness* but also with Qur’anic and Biblical material, finding the narrative to be a saga of “disenfranchisement, slavery, liberation, and triumphant reconciliation long predating the modern history of slavery, indenture, abolition, and emancipation.”<sup>4</sup> Susheila Nasta examines the literary value of *Paradise* as a popular or canonical text to be nominated for literary prizes like the Man Booker exploring “the inter-relationship between the popular culture and high culture”<sup>5</sup> on the basis of historical contextualization of the production and reception of this text. Emad Mirmotahari interrogates the narrative through depictions of precolonial African civilization, prior to contact with Europeans, comparing the depiction of Africa and its tribes in *Paradise* with those found in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958); Mirmotahari argues that “Islam is the guiding religion of not only Indians, Persians, and Arabs but also of black Africans.”<sup>6</sup>

This article focuses primarily on *Paradise* in terms of deconstructing it as an identity discourse through Raymond Williams’s prism of cultural tendencies of “dominant, residual, and emergent,”<sup>7</sup> which are at work in any cultural phenomenon. Here, contextual analysis is intended in the light of representation of identity formation within the realms of dominant, residual, and emergent structures of culture by using Williams’ insights. *Paradise* appears as a socio-political sign which carries, reinforces, and also subverts certain ideologies through which meanings are generated, especially the generation of identity discourse with regard to the identity of local African tribes. In Marxist theory, the proposition of the determining base and the determined superstructure is key to understanding social relations and social constructs. Karl Marx asserts:

In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Gurnah, *Paradise*, p. 42.

<sup>3</sup> J. U. Jacobs, “Trading Places in Abdulrazak’s *Paradise*,” *English Studies in Africa*, vol. 52, no. 2 (2009), pp. 77-88.

<sup>4</sup> Fawzia Mustafa, “Gurnah and Naipaul: Intersections of *Paradise* and *A Bend in the River*,” *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 61, no. 2 (2015), pp. 232-263.

<sup>5</sup> Susheila Nasta, “Abdulrazak Gurnah’s *Paradise*,” in *The Popular and The Canonical: Debating Twentieth-century Literature 1940-2000*, ed. David Johnson (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), pp. 294-343.

<sup>6</sup> Emad Mirmotahari, *Islam in the Eastern African Novel* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 27-50.

<sup>7</sup> Raymond Williams, “Dominant, Residual, and Emergent,” *Marxism and Literature*, vol. 1 (1977), pp. 121-127.

<sup>8</sup> Karl Marx, “Preface,” in Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy* (Columbus: McGraw Hill, 1963), pp. 362-364.

Thus, in Marxist tradition, social structures and relations of any culture at a particular time are explained in terms of class conflicts and class struggle which are based on economic structures. Class membership is defined by the status one has in the means of production. One who owns means of production becomes dominant by purchasing the labor power of those who lack ownership of means of production. The economic base legitimizes the existence of dominated oppressed class and this agency works through the system of representation called ideology.

Williams agrees with the importance of the economic base and superstructure but argues there is not a straightforward link between these two; “whatever purposes cultural practice may serve, its means of production are always unarguably material.”<sup>9</sup> However, Williams also argues that there are more determinants than base, superstructure, and ideology, which cause the dominant tendencies to rise in a particular social structure, namely internal dynamic relations:

We have certainly still to speak of the ‘dominant’ and the ‘effective,’ and in these senses of the hegemonic ... we have also to speak, and indeed with further differentiation of each, of the ‘residual’ and the ‘emergent’, which in any real process, and at any moment in the process, are significant both in themselves and in what they reveal of the characteristics of the ‘dominant.’<sup>10</sup>

As Williams defines these key terms, he emphasizes their association with each other instead of as individual entities. He defines “dominant” as feudal culture or bourgeois culture or a transition from one to the other. The “residual” he defines in dissociation to the ‘archaic’ which “wholly recognized as an element of the past”, residual is “effectively formed in the past, but it is still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present.”<sup>11</sup> Commenting on its innate relationship with the “dominant,” he asserts that “certain experiences, meanings, and values which cannot be expressed or substantially verified in term of the dominant culture, are nevertheless, lived and practiced on the basis of the residue.”<sup>12</sup> Defining “emergent,” Williams asserts “new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationship are continually being created.”<sup>13</sup> Williams stresses on the inter-connectedness and an inseparable relationship between three of these saying that the “definitions of the emergent, as of the residual, can be made only in relation to a full sense of the dominant,”<sup>14</sup> furthermore, advocating, “a social order changes, in terms of its own developing needs, these relations are variables.”<sup>15</sup> I focus on the discourse of identity, by using these variables to unpack the complex dynamics of identity for the Indigenous people in *Paradise*.

### Capitalism and Colonialism

The first major construct that is evident in the narrative is a perpetual contest of power between the dominant structures of capitalism entangled with colonialism. This power struggle defines the identities of all characters in the novel. On one side there are native merchants and tribal chiefs and on the other side there are colonizers. The power struggle between them manifests itself in

<sup>9</sup> Raymond Williams, *Culture* (Glasgow: Fontana, 1981), p. 87.

<sup>10</sup> Williams, ‘Dominant, Residual, and Emergent’, pp. 121-122.

<sup>11</sup> Williams, ‘Dominant, Residual, and Emergent’, pp. 122.

<sup>12</sup> Williams, ‘Dominant, Residual, and Emergent’, pp. 122.

<sup>13</sup> Williams, ‘Dominant, Residual, and Emergent’, pp. 123.

<sup>14</sup> Williams, ‘Dominant, Residual, and Emergent’, pp. 124.

<sup>15</sup> Williams, ‘Dominant, Residual, and Emergent’, pp. 125.

acquiring a significant economic gain or wealth over each other. Both the merchant chiefs and colonizers wish to carry out trade with “those savage people”<sup>16</sup> who look like “something made out of sin.”<sup>17</sup> There is a naked profit business run by the merchants “in the country of the savages. They steal anything including your manhood.”<sup>18</sup> The entire geographical description of the town indicates that the dominant forces are able to make their business because “it is dry everywhere”<sup>19</sup> and Indigenous people have no choice but to yield. Hamid explains, “It was a dangerous country, but trade was possible: rubber, ivory, and even a little gold, God willing.”<sup>20</sup> Maimuna, a local Indigene also explains, “we can’t compete with these merchants, these lords ... We are only poor shopkeepers,”<sup>21</sup> and thus all this contributes to the debt-slavery power matrix. Additionally, the dominant section has its own ideologies when considering the natives of Tanzania and specifically, these ideologies have much more “to do with the religion.”<sup>22</sup>

For executing the dominant material factor, the ideological tool of slavery plays a key role which appears as a ‘residue’ driven from religion referring to the *Koran*. In Marxist tradition, ideology is an instrument of power because it helps prop up the dominant classes by naturalizing an exploitative relationship. With social structures such as education, religion, law, and culture the oppressed classes believe that the order of inequality in society is natural and pre-ordained. In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Friedrich Engels assert “the ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas.”<sup>23</sup> In *Paradise*, the idea of slavery acts as that ‘residue’ which is altered and manipulated for the expansion of the dominant material benefits. As Williams has remarked, the dominant needs to include “certain experiences, meanings, and values which cannot be expressed or substantially verified in term of the dominant culture, are nevertheless, lived and practiced on the basis of the residue.”<sup>24</sup> Conceived by the merchants and the affluent tribal chiefs, slavery is construed as a socially accepted phenomenon in order to neutralize it as a compensation for debts taken by local tribal people. The slaves are children who have not seen and understood the world and their existence in it. Slavery at an early age gives their predators time and space to manufacture a convenient identity for them, termed psychological colonization. The major characters in the book are a community of the slave diaspora within their own country.

*Paradise* depicts slavery-ridden pre-colonial Tanzania and the perception of natives and native tribes towards West and rest of the world beyond it. It features a boy named Yusuf, who is sold as a slave by his father to a businessman from the south, whom he owes huge sum of money that he had borrowed to set up his start up business. As a compensation for the failed hotel business, Yusuf is taken as a slave for life to work for Aziz, who is a local chief merchant. The narrative treats slavery in pre-colonial phase as prevalent in the region, and also in the colonial era by Germans, when Tanzania becomes an epicenter of slave trade. Abdulaziz Y. Lodhi remarks that the paternalism, under which domestic slavery thrived, gave rise to a “slave culture” later, built in the framework of a feudal system which was uprooted in 1964. Yusuf gets to meet Khalil, yet another slave who works for Aziz with his sister, who has been enslaved with him and later

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<sup>16</sup> Gurnah, *Paradise*, p. 52.

<sup>17</sup> Gurnah, *Paradise*, p. 59.

<sup>18</sup> Gurnah, *Paradise*, p. 59.

<sup>19</sup> Gurnah, *Paradise*, p. 65.

<sup>20</sup> Gurnah, *Paradise*, p. 73.

<sup>21</sup> Gurnah, *Paradise*, p. 66.

<sup>22</sup> Gurnah, *Paradise*, p. 60.

<sup>23</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology: Part One* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1982), p. 39.

<sup>24</sup> Williams, “Dominant, Residual, and Emergent,” pp. 122.

become Aziz's mistress. In this journey, from child, to slave child, and later apprehending the possibility of more alienation by the foreign colonizers, Yusuf learns about life from different angles. Through Khalil, Yusuf learns the ways of town life and the wretchedness it conceals.

In the narrative, the dominant structure of capitalism uses the residual tool of slavery to generate profit. Aziz takes trade caravans to the mountains and beyond, for trade with the local people, in exchange for valuable products. Each time he takes a team of porters and armed guards to venture into the mountain to acquire monopoly and profits. Aziz's borrowers are in various places. He confiscates their children in case of failed repayment to make those children his slaves. Yusuf, the protagonist, is also taken along during his last but grand caravan to the farthest places beyond the sea. Wherever they go, they see that the Europeans have arrived before them. Hence, trade with the people has become difficult due to their apprehension about entertaining foreigners. The caravan returns with a huge loss and Aziz is buried under debt to his creditors. Besides, the future prospects of trade and such expeditions are bleak. The lives of slaves are depicted to be left in utter uncertainty as their families and parents have either died or have been displaced. Thus, in Tanzania, the ideology of slavery is so normalized that "even slaves defend slavery."<sup>25</sup>

Slavery is also justified as a religious idea that has its roots in the past but is carried forward by dominant forces. Hamid relies on his religious ideology to justify slavery prevalent among savages. To him, it is for good that Yusuf has been taken slave as he was "living like a fiend among savages" before.<sup>26</sup> He takes on the mission to civilize Yusuf by imparting to him Islamic education. All the slaves in the narrative are without agency, without language, without clothes, and are wild exotic people who need to be civilized by taming them. But the phenomenon can be analyzed as a construct to extract and exploit the inhabitants to run business in strange lands. Felicitas Becker discusses the ways in which historical processes, including the impact of the slave trade, have influenced patterns of movement and settlement within Tanzania.<sup>27</sup> Abdul Sheriff discusses the intricate connections between the slave trade, the spice trade, and the ivory trade, highlighting how these industries were interlinked and formed the basis of Zanzibar's commercial empire. He examines the ways in which the slave trade impacted the local economy, society, and political power structures, shaping the dynamics of the region during this period.<sup>28</sup>

Further, the ideological tool of slavery is carried forward by the emerging colonizers to justify their imperialistic civilizing mission. Gurnah portrays the emergent dominant force capturing "cattle-herding people who painted their bodies and hair with ochre. That was why the agricultural station was built there ... persuade the nomadic warriors to give up their love of blood and turn into dairy farmers ... the impatience of the official who came with the authority of his government to change this corner of the world."<sup>29</sup> Yusuf notices that the Europeans had also taken control of the farms, as "European farmers came into the town in their trucks and oxcarts, for supplies and to conduct their mysterious business. They had no eyes for anyone, and strode about

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<sup>25</sup> Abdulaziz Y. Lodhi, *The Institution of Slavery in Zanzibar and Pemba* (Uppsala: Uppsala University Press, 1973), p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> Gurnah, *Paradise*, p. 88.

<sup>26</sup> Gurnah, *Paradise*, p. 95.

<sup>27</sup> Felicitas Becker, "The bureaucratic performance of development in colonial and post-colonial Tanzania," *Canadian Journal of Development Studies / Revue canadienne d'études du développement*, vol. 35, no. 1 (2014), pp. 61-76.

<sup>28</sup> Abdul Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory in Zanzibar: Integration of an East African Commercial Empire into the World Economy, 1770-1873* (Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 1987).

<sup>29</sup> Gurnah, *Paradise*, pp. 81-82.

with a look of loathing.”<sup>30</sup> Above Aziz and tribal chiefs is another dominant structure, the Europeans, who now destroy and re-configure the identities of natives and slaves by restructuring the dynamics of identity and power. There is a privilege of absolutism as described in the novel:

The European had the power over the chiefs of the savage tribes, whom he none the less admired for their cruelty and implacability. To him they were noble people, hardy and graceful, even beautiful. It was said that the European possessed the ring with which he could summon the spirits of the land to his service. None of his domain prowled prides of lions which had an unquestionable craving for human flesh, yet they never approached the European unless they were called.<sup>31</sup>

Moreover, the dominant force of imperialism is explained by Hamid, as he points out how the Germans have already “driven off even the fiercest peoples and taken their land. They chased them away as if they were children ... buried their leaders alive ... They want the whole world.”<sup>32</sup>

Thus, Gurnah’s novel maps a geographically located phase of slavery which has then been used by the European forces to their advantage. This reminds readers of Chinua Achebe’s description of the loopholes within Igbo society in Nigeria in his debut novel *Things Fall Apart*.<sup>33</sup> The evil of slavery in pre-colonial Tanzania represents ‘residual’ value and belief to be altered by the dominant capitalist and imperialist structures. While in the pre-colonial era slavery is relished as cultural luxury by the ‘dominant’ class as a ‘residual’ tendency, it is perpetuated by the ‘emergent’ colonizers for their advantage. Gurnah’s novel is a rare amalgam of native African cultural evils and its subjugation by foreigners bringing unanticipated ramifications. It resonates with Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay’s *Anandamath*, a novel which laments the pre-colonial state of India which needed English rule to become a whole nation united by *Sanatan Dharma*. Bankim Chandra also tries to justify the civilized rule of the English prevailing in India, as for him there is no golden past to go back to after independence.<sup>34</sup>

Besides the stretched and altered residual idea of slavery, the dominant consent is manufactured by the ‘emergent’ fear instilled by xenophobia. It threatens the third world with its draconian technological, scientific and ethnic superiority. Mohammed Abdalla in conversation with Aziz remarks, “Europeans would come in any day . . . they can eat metal . . . [and] look like skinless reptiles.”<sup>35</sup> Locals give in, even before resisting. African colonization takes place in spite of natives’ prior knowledge of its ill-intentions and repercussions. The ideology is manufactured at several levels by bringing into place a system that frightens people. Gurnah notes, “the first thing that they build is a lock-up, then a church, then a market-shed so they can keep the trade under their eyes and then tax it . . . even before they build a house for themselves to live in.”<sup>36</sup>

The conversation among Hussein, Hamid, and Kalasingha manifests these fears and apprehensions vividly, as they translate the uncontested subjugation by the Europeans as the marked end of their cultural heritage and personal freedom. Hussein, expressing his fears and concerns over the wake of colonialism, “Everything is in turmoil. These Europeans are very determined, and as they fight over the prosperity of the earth, they will crush all of us. You’d be

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<sup>30</sup> Gurnah, *Paradise*, p. 69

<sup>31</sup> Gurnah, *Paradise*, pp. 62-63.

<sup>32</sup> Gurnah, *Paradise*, p. 87.

<sup>33</sup> Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (London: Penguin, 1994 [1958]).

<sup>34</sup> Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, *Anandamath* (Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 2000 [1882]).

<sup>35</sup> Gurnah, *Paradise*, p. 120.

<sup>36</sup> Gurnah, *Paradise*, p. 72.

a fool to think they're here to do anything that is good. It isn't trade that they are after, but the land itself. And everything in it ... us."<sup>37</sup> Hussein fears that they will ruin them along with their culture and "they want the whole world ... we'll lose everything, including the way we live."<sup>38</sup> These fears become reality soon, as European lust for power and wealth overpowers the people.

### Geography and Location

The geographical location as a dominant element determines the identity of its inhabitants. A 'savage other' is manufactured in order to substantiate identity superiority in a binary play. The south is the only place considered to be civilized, the rest of the world is depicted to be the part of dark ages. Mohammed Abdalla, a close confidant of Aziz who assists him in all his trade journeys, announces to Yusuf that he will see the difference between the world of the civilized and uncivilized through his journey with them into the savage world. He is told that he was being taken along to see for himself how the savages lived and how different they were from their own world. "You'll come and trade with us, and learn the difference between the ways of the civilization and the ways of uncivilized," he says as he asks Yusuf to prepare himself for the journey.<sup>39</sup> Yusuf's savage identity is implied as he is a native of Zanzibar, an uncivilized world.

The mountainous regions in particular suffer the brunt of misrepresentation and identity appropriation. Nevertheless, the geographical understanding of these places to the African populace plays a significant role in the process. The mountains beyond lakes region are taken to be the marked geographical end, so does the places in the north and eastern parts. Hussein in the novel, gives a kaleidoscopic view of the such a geographical construct vis a vis identity binary, "Those mountains on the other side of the lake are the edge of the world we know. Beyond them the air has the color of plague and pestilence, and the creatures who live in it are known only to God. The east and the north are known to us, as far as the land of China in the farthest east and to the ramparts of Gog and Magog in the north."<sup>40</sup>

The identity formation of natives in *Paradise* relies heavily upon the location of individuals vis a vis space, place and landscape. It is the 'residual' that forms the perceptions of identity as seen in the case of Yusuf's mother and his neighbors. Yusuf's father gives himself an air of superiority for he has migrated from the south to the mountains. With his superiority-complex, he maltreats his wife and regards his neighbors as uncivilized to the extent that he does not permit Yusuf play with the children of his age. The major cause why his father ill-treats his mother is because she comes from a tribal lineage and has been sold out to him for two goats and five sacks of beans: "She was the daughter of hill tribesman from the back of Taita who lived in a smoky hut and wore stinking goatskin, and thought five goats and two sacks of beans a good price for any woman."<sup>41</sup>

Further, the metaphorical 'residual' ideology is located in the myths intertwined around the geographical location promoted by the native merchants. In addition to the variable of locations which is being exoticized to justify slavery, the myths and lore are also incorporated in the mechanism of dominance. The most knowledge, understanding, and the comprehension of Gurnah's *Paradise* world (the Tanzanian population in particular and the South African

<sup>37</sup> Gurnah, *Paradise*, p. 86.

<sup>38</sup> Gurnah, *Paradise*, p. 87.

<sup>39</sup> Gurnah, *Paradise*, p. 52.

<sup>40</sup> Gurnah, *Paradise*, p. 83.

<sup>41</sup> Gurnah, *Paradise*, p. 13.

population at large) is depicted to have been influenced and shaped by religious association, Islamic in particular. Kalasinga discussing his stay at South Africa declares, “It is a mad house in South. All kinds of cruel fantasies have come true there. Let me tell you something about those Afrikander bastards, . . . I don’t mean just wild and cruel; I mean round the loop.”<sup>42</sup>

In addition to this, there are references to the ‘emergent’ Germans as they have come from a far-off land. The locals are weaving perceptions around their emerging dominance. These references are also based on myths. They are perceived to be demigods or demons who cannot be destroyed by the fire of the hell. One of the boys in Yusuf’s neighborhood tells boys that his father had seen a German put his hand in blazing fire without getting burnt “as if he were a phantom.”<sup>43</sup> Further, the world of ‘Gog and Magog’ is a mythological construction of savagery beyond the peripheries of what is known and deciphered. The dominant constantly fears the ‘emergent’ in its mythological imagined world of demons as a constant spiritual threat to the human world. This mysticism reaches its zenith as Khalil tells Yusuf that Alexander the Great had to build a huge wall in the extreme south to restrain demons from entering the human world, asserting that he too feared fighting them.

During his conquest of the world, he was once travelling to the edges of it when he came to some people who told him that to the north of them lived Gog and Magog, brutes who had no language and ravaged the land of their neighbors all the time. So Dhul Qurnain built a wall which Gog and Magog could neither climb nor dig through. That is the wall which marks the edge of the world. Beyond that lived barbarians and demons.<sup>44</sup>

There are several other myths that are used either to convey the predicament of the native people, or to ridicule the ruthless, uncompassionate colonial culture and its lust for wealth. The analogies are mockingly drawn using the creatures like snakes and locusts, though in a serious tone in order to heighten the gravity of satire. The Europeans are feared to be poisonous to an extent that a splash of their spit could burn anybody’s flesh, and they can stay without sleep, water and food for days. Like magical creatures, they could be killed only by stabbing them under their left armpit; for like warriors, they wear heavy protection all over their body. Some local people fear notions as strange as bringing back a dead European by ritual, as we see in a trader’s mythical assertion that he had seen a European fallen dead while the other one breathed life back in him. He believes that as long as “the European’s body was not ruined or damaged, had not started to rot, another European could breathe life back in him. If he were to see even a dead European, he would not touch it or take away anything from it, in case it rose again and accused him.”<sup>45</sup>

Consequently, this article reveals the involvement of past beliefs and ideas prevalent in pre-colonial Tanzania which contribute in the making of the present dominant structures impacting identity dynamics among the local people. The present identity is the construction of its past altered and manipulated by the dominant to its capitalist ends. Stuart Hall elaborates this historical construct of cultural identity precisely, arguing that the present condition is a matter of “becoming,”<sup>46</sup> which again is a historical process.

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<sup>42</sup> Gurnah, *Paradise*, p. 103.

<sup>43</sup> Gurnah, *Paradise*, p. 7.

<sup>44</sup> Gurnah, *Paradise*, p. 42.

<sup>45</sup> Gurnah, *Paradise*, p. 72.

<sup>46</sup> Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart Ltd., 1990), pp. 222-237.



## Conclusion

To sum up, the idea of tribal identity hinges on several issues in *Paradise*, as it is shaped and structured by various factors and constraints. Tribal identity in *Paradise* is the end product of cultural and civilizational marginalization that is not singular in nature, but rather pluralistic. In fact, the metaphor of slavery is ascribed to the identity conferred upon the tribal people on the pretext of civilization and modernization. This is a structural procedure that not only castigates the people coming from geographically, socially and economically weaker places, but also designates them as 'savage' and 'uncivilized', owing to their multiple victimization and exclusion from human habitats as non-humans. The dominant structures are often located in a perennial conflict or power struggle. On one side, the merchants struggle to negotiate as well as win over the tribal heads for a free and profitable trade. On the other hand, the tribal heads try to curb their trade and seek more and more presents to satiate their lust for wealth. More often than not, they resort to violence to take control over one another, and to benefit from the enterprise. However collectively, their identity configuration takes the same course, whereby their residual legacy of dominance, strengthens their dominant, their stature as controlling powers in the society. Nevertheless, their 'emergent' is their tragedy caused by the rupture of their dominant in the wake of Europeans' arrival. Therefore, the identity configuration in *Paradise*, more or less, is structured on the basis of class consciousness. The class factor in the novel is a major determinant with regards to one's position in the society. Slavery and colonization are closely studied in consonance with each other as the former is a pathway to the later.