

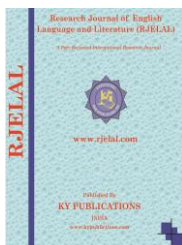


REVERSING AS A POST-COLONIAL TECHNIQUE: A CRITICAL STUDY OF TAYEB'S *SEASON OF MIGRATION TO THE NORTH*

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ABSTRACT

During the nineteenth century after the independence from colonizers, the colonized writers started counter attacking the colonial works. Post-colonial writers wrote back to the colonial writers by telling their own stories, from their own perspectives by showing how colonialism was a violent, terrible thing. Post-colonial writers like Chinua Achebe, Salman Rushdie, E.M. Foster, Arundhati Roy and their works focus on counter attacking the colonist creative works through narration. In the year 1966, an Arabian Post-colonial novelist Tayeb Salih published his third novel, *Season of Migration to the North*, which counter attacks Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* by reversing its theme, narration, Plot and characters. This paper critically studies how 'Reversing' works as a Post-colonial technique, and how it is used in Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* to counter attack the Conrad Colonial ideology in *Heart of Darkness*.

Keywords: Colonialism, Post-colonialism, Counter narrative, reversing, Kurtz, Muheimid.

Introduction

Post-colonial is a period after colonization. The term Post-colonial refers to all countries and their cultures that were affected by the colonial course of action from the period of colonization to the present day. This prefix, "Post" has been borrowed from the twentieth-century literary movement, post-modernism, and post-structuralism happened in different countries after the 1950s. Post-colonialism is a phase of time after colonialism and Post-colonial literature is naturally typified by its opposition to the Eurocentric literature that was produced during colonization. The elucidation of the word Post-colonial recommends both after colonialism and imperialism and in opposition to colonialism and imperialism. Some critics have argued that any literary works that articulate a rival

to colonialism, even if it is produced during a colonial period, may be defined as post-colonial, due to its 'oppositional nature'.

Post-colonial literature habitually highlights on race relations, possessions of racism and usually accuses colonial societies. This is the scope of modern European imperialism. The extraordinarily organized character, including the cultural licensing of racial domination, has now and then prompted the impression of colonization as a cutting edge marvel. In fact, many critics propose that "Modern colonialism was not a discrete occurrence and that an examination of pre-modern colonial activities will allow for a greater and more complex understanding of modern structures of power and domination, serving to illuminate the operation of older histories

in the context of both modern colonialism and contemporary race and global political relations."

Post-colonial literature records the racism, an account of genocide, including slavery, apartheid. Critical responses to these texts are often seen as a central way to articulate and negotiate communication between writers who define themselves as post-colonial. Nature of Post-colonial literature includes a vast selection of writers and subjects that include; different geographical, historical, social, religious, economic concerns and against the colonial false depiction of reality. Post-colonial writers themselves argued that their countries are still very much colonial countries, both in terms of their values and behaviors and their ideology cleanly reflected in the works.

The study and development of Post-colonial literature initiated the critical analysis of Eurocentric ideology and other colonies works. Post-colonial works study the nature of colonial writers, colonial writers wanted to explore and create literary expressions about their own position, histories, and experiences as people who had lived under colonialism or imperialism. Their writings rewritten and reasserted the worldviews and made them portray themselves as superior among all. The Post-colonial writers break their ideological and rewritten the history of colonized countries in their works. Maxwell categorized Post-colonial writers into two. First, the writer brings his own language to English in an alien environment and a fresh set of experiences, such as Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. Post-colonial writers used English as a source and medium to their own social and cultural inheritance, such as India, West Africa; yet the categories have a fundamental affinity.

During Post-colonialism, many colonized writers started writing about their pains and suppression by the colonizers. They started expressing their importance of tradition and culture and counter-attack on colonial texts. Birth of Post-colonial literature had a great impact on the English language. Colonized writers started writings in their own native languages because of globalization and modernization. So the works of literature of countries like Africa, Australia, India, Canada, South

Pacific all are post-colonial literature. They took literature as a tool and medium to protest.

A study of post-colonial literature begins with the historical contexts of colonialism. Specifically the writers, those coming out of Africa, the Middle East, and the Indian Subcontinent; with those characters who are struggling with their identities in the wake of colonization or the establishment of colonies in another nation. Texts like *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*, and Foster's *A Passage to India* are the famous post-colonial works which respond to the intellectual discourses of European colonization. These texts address the problems and consequences of the decolonization of a country, especially the cultural and political independence of colonized.

Post-colonial writing mainly functions as a counter-narrative or counterattack to the colonial writings; they used 'counter-narrative' as a technique to address their position. The prefix 'Counter' becomes a predominant technique in the work of Post-colonial writers and they come out with the counter theme, counter character, and counter-attack of in all possible forms in colonial writings. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* comes out to rewrite their past and to create a sense of identity among the African people. His works were read as alternate histories which challenge colonial narratives and give voice to those stories which have been ignored or suppressed by European historians and colonist writers. In the chapter on 'National Consciousness' in *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon speaks of the importance of rescuing history from the colonizer's custody in the face of European denials of any worthwhile native culture or history. Fanon argues that the process of colonization involved not only physical occupation and imposition of the land but also gave psychological and cultural damage that colonized suffers. In the works of post-colonial writers, one seems an attempt to resist and reinterpret the ideological underpinnings of imperialist writings; an effort in which not just the historical subject of colonial discourse but the discourse itself might be reversed. One such work is a Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration*

to the North. Salih's novel is significant, not only for its appropriation of the topic but also for its efforts to resist, reinterpret and revise from the perspective of the 'colonized other'. Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is a journey into the unknown and the quest for self-identity.

This paper divides into four subdivisions; reversing of theme, reversing of the plot, reversing of narration and reversing of character for critical study, how the 'reverse' works as a Post-colonial technique in a Post-colonial writer Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*.

Outline of Tayeb's *Season of Migration to the North*: Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* was published in Beirut in the year 1966, where most of the African and Arab countries achieved Independence from European colonial rule. Tayeb Salih was born in Sudan in 1929 in Ed-Debba, a village on the bank of the Nile. Tayeb Salih has written only a handful of works, but each has been received well and widely translated. His first two books, *Dawmat Wad Hamid: Sab'Qisas (Doom Tree of Wad Hamid: Seven Stories and Ursaz-Zayn (The Wedding of Zein))* marked his place in Post-colonial literary work. His third book brought huge success and widely criticized literary work of the late twentieth century, *Mawsim al-Hijrah Ila ash-Shamal (Season of Migration to the North)*. First serialized in the Lebanese magazine 'Hiwar' in 1966 and it was published in the book form in 1967. This was translated into many languages and brought him loads of name and fame.

Season of Migration to the North begins with the return of an unnamed Sudanese man in his village on the banks of the Nile, after seven years spent in studying poetry in Great Britain. Intrigued by the presence of a city man in an ancestral town, the narrator wants to know more about him, but Sa'eed not willing to talk about him. But unfortunately one night after a few drinks, Sa'eed begins to recite poetry in fluent English. Then the story begins with a story within the story and it is narrated in the first person. Sa'eed was born in Khartoum; he lost his father at a young age. From his childhood, he was very close to mother and his interest in the education took him to enroll in a local grade school run by English Missionaries without the

knowledge of his mother. By seeing his natural talents and interest, his headmaster recommended him to continue high school in Cairo. He went alone to Cairo, but once finished High school, he left Cairo and went to London, where he studied economics and well educated. He befriended many white women of different backgrounds and levels of education and used their stereotypical expectations of him. They see in him 'tropical climes, cruel sun, purple horizons' to seduce them and finally, he meets Jean Morris. Unlike other women, Morris does not give into Sa'eed so easily. He perused her until she agrees to marry him, but their union ended in tragedy. After serving his sentence, he returned to Sudan and moved to the village of Wad Hamid and married a woman from that village. He became a father of two children and led a quiet life. The story surrounded Mustafa Sa'eed only grows when he disappears, leaving behind a will in which he named the narrator as his true person, begging him to spare the two children. In the second section of the novel's narrator again moved to Khartoum, where he comparably shows post-colonial hierarchy when narrator's return to the village. When he turns back to the village he found that Mustafa's widow Hosna Bint Mahmoud is being pressured to marry an elderly womanizer. In the end, her unwillingness and his inability lead to another tragedy.

According to Frederic Jameson, "Anyone who writes from the colony (colonized writer) always writes about the nation." Any literary work emerging from colonized writer always comes with the central theme of 'nation'. Tayeb Salih also comes out with the same ideology his literary work, *Season of Migration to the North* moves with the central theme of the nation. This novel circles around with the identity of two nations, Africa and Europe. Tayeb Salih used Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* as his main source for this novel. He reversed Joseph Conrad's theme, plot, narration, character, and landscape. When Joseph Conrad depicts Africa as a confused, dark and horrible place, Tayeb Salih comes with the depiction of London as a confused, cold and obscene place. He keenly followed Joseph Conrad's beliefs and ideology.

Reversing of the theme: Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* has a great impact on Tayeb Salih's *Season*

of *Migration to the North*, in theme. Good and evil, race, identity, power, femininity and madness were the main theme of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Tayeb Salih's reversed the Conrad's theme in his literary work. In *Heart of Darkness* a European sailor Marlow's journey and experiences in Africa, Conrad used Imperialistic perspective in classifying the theme throughout the novella. Tayeb Salih reversed the theme of *Heart of Darkness* and came out with the theme of an African travel and experiences in London. Nor like Conrad's Imperialistic perspective, Tayeb showed both the merits and demerits in Africa and as well as Europe, which is considered to be the characteristics of the Post-colonial writer. Communications in the theme between the two narratives are no less prominent. Both novels are mainly disturbed with the popular theme of the colonial system. In the study of colonial history, Mustafa begins with the Romans. In *Heart of Darkness* Marlow recalls the reference to the Roman invasions of the British, early in the narrative. Both of them are almost the same, protest against the cunning idea behind colonial exploitation in Africa.

Reversing of narration: Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* deals with colonial authoritative post-colonial narration. Narrator Marlow works as the voice of the author Joseph Conrad and illustrates the imperialism after colonization. He demonstrated his orientation domination by deceiving Africa and native people. He made this narration in the first person narrative and character Marlow works as a camera to describe with the pictorial equivalent of the visual sensations. This is reversed by Tayeb Salih in *Season of Migration to the North*, where he took the occidental narration by deceiving Europe with first-person narration. In *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad used a parallel narrative technique to narrate the Imperialistic story of Marlow and Kurtz in Africa. Tayeb Salih in his work *Season of Migration to the North*, he followed same parallel narration to reverse the character struggles and sufferings of Muheimid and Mustafa Sa'eed in London. Conrad followed modern narrative technique; story within the story. In the parallel narration, Conrad narrated the story of Kurtz through Marlow in Africa. Salih

followed Conrad's technique to describe a Mustafa Sa'eed story through Muheimid in London.

Reversing of the plot: The main plot of Joseph Conrad's was East attacking west and Tayeb Salih reversed Conrad's plot as West is attacking East in his work *Season of Migration to the North*. Journey plays a vital role in both the novel. Conrad's Marlow journey to Africa and Salih's Mustafa journey to London were perused with dark desire for the remote and no matter of motif. Salih reversed whatever Conrad described in his work *Heart of Darkness*. The journey of Mustafa Sa'eed reversed Kurtz's journey. It is a journey from Africa to Europe, from the Equator to Thames where Marlow sat like a Buddha on the boat and telling the story of Kurtz and his own journey "I am south that yearns for the North and the ice"(160), says Mustafa.

On an occurrence, he aggregated his whole journey by, "I was the invader who had come from the south, and this was the icy battlefield from which I would not make a safe return" (160). Similarly, Kurtz attacked the *Heart of Darkness*, which made him helpless to capture the wilderness of Africa. On Marlow's journey, the fascination of the waterway is used. The river Congo is the route that Kurtz has taken to his inner station. "Resembling an immense snake uncoiled, with its head in the sea, its body at rest curving afar over a vast country, and its tail lost in the depths of the land"(4). Salih reversed by refereeing the 'Nile as the snake god'. In the description of River plays a critical role in these two novels. In Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* Kurtz's life was depending on the river and in the Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* Mustafa met his death in the river. The description of the river was reversed from life-giving to life taking.

Kurtz goes to Congo under the sign of European civilization and arrives well equipped with the ideal of the civilizing mission, which, by the way of comparison, in *Season of Migration to the North* Mustafa's Oxford professor alludes him. This is further moved by the Kurtz's report on the inhibition of savage behavior with the famous postscript, "Exterminate all the Brutes" (41), where the civilized becomes a colonizer. Marlow was employed by the same company in Brussels, which employed Kurtz.

Marlow took this position because he was brought under the pure colonial mentality; A white patch for a boy to dream gloriously over. It had become a place of darkness. But there was in it one river especially, a mighty big river, that you could see on the map, resembling an immense snake uncoiled, with its head in the sea, its body at rest curving afar over a vast country, and its tail lost in the depth of the land. And as I looked at the map of it in a shop window, it fascinated me as a snake would a bird(36).

Reversing of Character/Narrator: Tayeb Salih consciously has chosen the characters. Every character has a painful past and concealed future. The author deliberately built the story around the characters; Mustafa Sa'eed and Muheimid. Tayeb characters have a special characteristic feature because these two characters are reversed from Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*; Marlow and Kurtz. Tayeb Salih's characters invert the process of colonization. Mustafa Sa'eed used as a tool in the inverting process in a *Season of Migration to the North*. When Mustafa Sa'eed expressing his feelings to London women, "I'll liberate Africa with my penis" (120), as well as Mustafa's social position as a lecturer in London. Mustafa gains power over Europeans also by his sexual conquests as a result of his murderous and cunningly plays on Western women such as Sheila Greenwood, Isabella Seymour, and Ann Hammond. Their submission to his volition shows that Mustafa colonized them both physically and psychologically. Tayeb Salih reversed the colonization by reversing the character of Kurtz from *Heart of Darkness*.

The narrator Muheimid and Mustafa Sa'eed are doubling characters that reject the colonial culture and struggle to subvert the point of view of calling them 'evil' and 'savage'. Tayeb Salih never stopped with reversing the character from Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, he builds the character with proper education and alienation feeling from modern society. Both the characters of *Season of Migration to the North* are the products of the Western culture, who struggles to survive between old and new, North and South, West and East, black and white and traditionalism and modernity. However, Mustafa Sa'eed is more active and

involved in English society socially and intellectually, whereas, in *Heart of Darkness*, Kurtz becomes very close with the tribes. Muheimid does not feel that he is part of this society and he expressed". I had lived them superficially, neither loving nor hating them. I used to treasure within me the image of this little village, seeing it wherever I went to the eye of my imagination" (49)."

Relationships between the two narratives are equally visible in the novels; Conrad's Marlow and Tayeb's Muheimid are inclined to the art of narration. Marlow is thoughtful and has a strong desire to reflect on the past. Muheimid always has a strong attraction for storytelling, when he gets the chance he grabs as if it is the only ambition he entertains by narrating stories about his past. The similarities between narrator and character are obvious as well as important. "...Thus Mustafa has, against my will, become a part of my world, a thought in my brain, a phantom that does not want to take itself off" (34).

Tayeb Salih shared his colonial perspective through the character; Sa'eed and his experience in England, similar to Kurtz's in Africa is marked by self-hatred despair and a desire for destruction. After seven years in jail for murdering his English wife Jean Morris and also been responsible for the suicide of three other women, whom he had seduced and abandoned. Sa'eed moved away to a village near Khartoum in Sudan and where he committed suicide and made Muheimid as the guardian of his sons and wife. Marlow remarks that he has no choice in remembering Kurtz, "He won't be forgotten. Whatever he was, he was not common" (41). Marlow feels that the pilgrims buried Kurtz with him. Almost the same with Mustafa's death, the narrative gets its ferocious grip on the narrators, they long for emancipation from the domination for their hero's memory after death. "There remained only his memory and his Intended and I wanted to give that up to the past, in a way to surrender personally all that remained of him with me to that oblivion which is the last word of our common fate" (74). In an attempt to get Mustafa out of his mind and life, Muheimid expresses his desire to make a bonfire of Mustafa's room after his death.

Before the death of Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness* makes Marlow his trustful person. "This initiated wraith from the black of nowhere honored me with its amazing confidence before it vanished altogether" (50). Kurtz trusted Marlow and his fiancée in Brussels. In *Season of Migration to the North*, Tayeb Salih reversed with the character Mustafa, who trusted Muheimid and shared all his secrets and books which were locked in the rectangular room. Muheimid remained haunted by Mustafa's shadow after death, as he says "What do I expect? Do I expect to find him seated on a chair alone in the darkness? Or do I expect to find him strung up by the neck on a rope dangling from the ceiling?" (65). In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow also experienced the same horror, The vision seemed to enter the house with me- the stretcher, the phantom-bearers, the wild crowd of the forest, the glitter of the reach between the murky bends, the beat of the drum, regular and muffled like the beating of the heart- the heart of a conquering darkness. (75).

Conclusion

A critical Examination of Salih in *Season of Migration to the North* shows it as a textual novel with the politics and semantics of vengeful sexuality in post-colonial context. Initially, the writing of the novel was begun in 1960, that is, four years after the independence of Sudan from British colonialism. *Season of Migration to the North* becomes the most successful novel because of Salih's post-colonial counter-attack on *Heart of Darkness* by reversing the theme, narration, plot, and characters. He portrayed both cultures in a stable way of writing in his native language to portray their pain and suffering. By reversing plot, theme, character, and narration he produced the most prominent novel in the late 19th century and critics labeled him as one of the greatest Post-colonial writers in the world.

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