

The hybrid self, culture and world of the postcolonial novel “Season of Migration to the North”

Hamzeh Ali Najadat¹, Mohd Nazri Latiff Azmi² and Shereen Hamdan³

¹(Faculty of Languages & Communication/ Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Malaysia)

²(Faculty of Languages & Communication / Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin Malaysia)

³(Faculty of Languages & Communication / Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin Malaysia)

Abstract: One of the most significant features of postcolonial fiction is the method it is connected to hybridity. In the light of that matter, the essentialism of hybridity, central struggle, and imitation of the western development, an individual can find that many postcolonial researchers had given a significant attention to this theme as well as interpreted its ambivalence in the colonial and postcolonial periods. At the end of the day, we realize that the protagonist Mustafa Sa'eed and the Narrator hunger to deliver a thoughtful note to those individuals who live in the Oriental world, particularly the youth crowds, who are mesmerized by the Occidental world and attempt to mimic them in every single step. Above and beyond, the Easterners copycat the westerners even without rational of the penalties of what they are doing.

Keywords - Ambivalent, Hybridity, Occident, Orient, Postcolonial

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I. INTRODUCTION

One of the most important characteristics of postcolonial literature is the way it is connected to hybridity. According to this case, the necessity of hybridity, inner conflict, and imitation of the western development, one can find that a lot of postcolonial scholars had given considerable care to this point as well as interpreted its image in the colonial and postcolonial periods. Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* is one of the novels used to represent the hybridity which the theorist Homi Bhabha uses the term in his book *The Location of Culture*. This novel shows how the identity of the Orient becomes hybrid when they reside in the west for a while and leads them to live in a third space, i.e., in culture between the two cultures one lived in before. *Season of Migration* is a story of a Sudanese who lived his childhood in Sudan; then he moved to London to complete his higher education. So, in the end, he becomes a hybrid. He lives in culture between the Oriental and the Occidental culture. Tayeb Salih clarifies the question of hybridity through the main characters in the novel. However, through these main characters, Tayeb Salih demonstrates on how the Occident influences, in one way or another, the Orientals on their individual hybridity on one side, and on the cultural hybridity as a community as a whole on the other side.

II. THE CULTURAL NARRATIVE

The described association between East and West within “Season of Migration” is further explicit by the discoveries of Mustafa Sa'eed's life which Salih correlates in the Arab world with the growing duration in the history of European imperialism. In 1898 Mustafa was born in this year the army of Abdullah Altashi was defeated by General Herbert Kitchener in the Battle of Omdurman in order to conquer Sudan. Mustafa Sa'eed started his racially concentrated sexual campaign toward Britain in 1922, at the same year, the “League of Nations” formally admitted the British and French commands to govern the sea in the same year (Hassan, 2003, p. 92).

This kind of linking between Mustafa's life with the colonization age of the British proposed that Salih is writing to investigate how the formation and understanding of the colonial identity were influenced by the cultural history and the international politics. By deciding to amplify these intense associations through the depiction of the colonial interracial, Salih drove the reader to realize and question the extent to which the colonial categorizations of race can ever be completely challenged.

The Narrator and Mustafa Sa'eed decline and deny the colonial culture and fight to reverse the oriental scene of describing them as immoral and savage as doubling characters. Both characters are the outcomes of the western culture who attempt to remain and last between their old and new history, the modernity in the Arab society and the traditionalism on the edge of the latest social and cultural discourse. Still, Mustafa Sa'eed

appeared to be extra socially active in the English society, while the Narrator did not accept to be part of this community. The Narrator states that "[he] had lived with them superficially neither hating nor loving them, [he] treasures within [him] the image of this little village, seeing it wherever [he] went with the eye of [his] imagination" (Salih, p. 51).

Since Geesey (1997) hints "the resulting offspring from the colonial union of Great Britain and Arabo-African nation of the Sudan ... a less than happy intermingling of East and West" (p. 129). So Mustafa Sa'eed as an academic, he is well conscious of the prank of "hybridity." So, he symbolizes the character of the oneness of the Sudanese who fought against the British until the end of the battle of Omdurman. He tried so hard to keep his identity as a Sudanese who represents the Arab unlike the Narrator who decided to live in between the Orient and the Occident as a hybrid and an ambivalent character, he said "I begin from where Mustafa Sa'eed had left off. He at least made a choice, while I have chosen nothing" (p. 118) [emphasis is mine]. The Narrator and Mustafa Sa'eed in the novel represent the hybrid character as Homi Bhabha (2012) clarifies the hybridity:

Is significant that the productive capacities of this Third Space have a colonial or post-colonial provenance. For a willingness to descend into that alien territory – where I have led you – may reveal that the theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualising an international culture, based not on the exoticism or multi-culturalism of the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity". (p. 209)

In addition to the above, settling within his Eastern Self and the Western Other, the Narrator meets the point in-between of the Modernism and the Traditionalism. After a while of his returning to the village, the Narrator realizes that the right features of his community have changed in some way to modernity and begin to flux. By way of the close friend of the Narrator Mahjoub, confirms that "some things have changed ... yet, even so, everything's as it was" (Salih, p. 92). The story of Hosna Bint Mahmoud's marriage with Wad Rayyes is an example that the things in the village are still the same customs and traditions, also as Mahjoub told the Narrator:

A week or ten days after you went away her father said he had given Wad Rayyes a promise – and they married her off to him. Her father swore at her and beat her; he told her she'd marry him whether she liked it or not. (p. 108)

However, this incident denotes to the beginning of the transformation to modernity and altering the villagers' identity. Despite the fact that the Narrator is so frustrated for a short period of time, he survives as a 'neutral' concerning those transmutations. Additionally, the Narrator blames Mustafa Sa'eed for the transformations that happened in the village and accuses him that he brought with him the changes in the village from the west even though he does not exist anymore after his mysterious disappearance, but his influence is still standing, and even he affects himself too. In Mustafa's secret room, the Narrator found himself as a reflection to Mustafa Sa'eed and "[he] found [him]self standing face to face with [him]self. This is not Mustafa Sa'eed – it's a picture of [him] frowning at [his] face in the mirror" (p. 119).

III. THE THIRD SPACE OF THE CULTURE

One of the most important characteristics of postcolonial literature is the way it is connected to hybridity. According to this case, the necessity of identity, inner conflict, and imitation development, one can find that a lot of postcolonial scholars had given considerable care to this point as well as interpreted its image in the colonial and postcolonial periods. Edward Said and Homi Bhabha have shown that the colonial, ethnic and social area, where the strong and the weak nations encounter is reflecting the real meaning of hybridity which, is already explained in the text analysis through Mustafa Sa'eed, who according to Zeidanin (2016) is "a culturally hybrid character who equally identifies with the occidental culture of England and the oriental culture of Sudan" (p. 75) just exactly as the branches of the hybrid trees of lemon and orange "lemon tree produce lemons, other oranges" (Salih, p. 25), as well as the Unnamed Narrator's actions of the novel along with the background of the writer.

It is important to say that Tayeb Salih is a symbol of hybridity in addition to his two major characters, the Narrator and Mustafa Sa'eed, in "Season of Migration." Being the son of Muslim families on the one hand and being educated through western schools on the contrary which made them men with a double contrast identity in conjunction with culture: the Arabic Islamic culture and the European culture. Tayeb Salih went to the UK in 1952 and stayed there after that which helped him increasing his creativity in thinking and writing as well as his feeling of isolation.

He got married, Julia, she was from Scotland. Also, he spent most of his lifetime in England even he died there in the lap of the colonizers although he was living between here and there. However, he prefers to die there, and these events may be a proof of his hybridity in life and a reflection of his characters in his narrative (Elad, 2007). His lifestyle can be considered as a denial of the concept of cultural sincerity and the determined identity, to live with double languages, and to have two different ways of thinking in one mind seems that it is so difficult to have one identity in such person. These conditions magnetize the writer with proud to choose

Salih to be the selected writer of the current study because the writer himself is an example of what actually happen in this century between East and West.

Nowadays, many persons had been lost in globalization, which turned them to hybrids and made them detach from their roots and badly lost their own identity, just exactly as Ann Hammond described Mustafa Sa'eed as "a dark twilight like a false dawn" (Salih, p. 36). Also as always "[he is] South that yearns for the North and the ice" (pp. 36, 124), so he lives in-between world, a third world between the east and the west and south and north and that is "clear and unequivocal" (p. 25). This maybe be going around what the researcher wants to deliver to society, hoping that one who may read this research in the future, he or she will be forced to think "who am I?", "whom am belonging to?" or "What's the difference between right and wrong concerning the current actions in the Muslim World?" Such questions are serving the study aims. Also, they are trying to let people think deeply about their selves in the hope that one must think about his/her identity. As if the researcher is asking them to go back to their roots and to stick with them proudly, the request which may change their lives and mind as well as save the coming generations' identity.

The story progresses slowly to achieve the moment that the story gets its necessary parts: setting, characterization, climax and resolution. The Russian theorist Bakhtin who defines the novel genre as "intentionally dialogized hybrid" (Zarifopol-Johnston, 1995, p. 33), which connects Season of Migration's story directly with hybridity, and this definition is similar to what Salih stated regarding the cultural communication, the conflict between colonial and anti-colonial societies and center borders rules.

However, the chief concern in this analysis part is dealing with the way hybridity works in the plot and its connection with the social identity as represented in the situation of characters; Mustafa Sa'eed, the Narrator, and Hosna Bint Mahmoud. As the following lines by Bhabha (2012) clarify:

The sign of the productivity of the colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the pure and original identity of authority. (p. 112)

Hybridity plays a prominent role in the structure of the most important characters of the story such as the Narrator and Mustafa Sa'eed, and it plays an essential theme in the novel as it is going to be described through the two protagonists. Mustafa Sa'eed was given another name which is "the black Englishman"(Salih, p. 54) he takes this property before as a student in the Sudanese Gordon school where he showed what a genius mind he has. His brain is expressed as "a sharp knife cutting with cold effectiveness" (p. 22).

There are many things Mustafa Sa'eed respects regarding the colonial school's teaching system, one of them that students there are forced to learn the English language like what the priest, who speaks with, declares that he "speaks with astonishing fluency" (p. 24). In Particular, he is very restricted to the roles and so accurate to his duties more than the other students. Also, he is so smart on the one hand and responsible on the contrary which allows him to be one of the most respectful students in the school, and all the teachers do admire him very much and appreciate his energetic personality. Additionally, Mrs. Robinson was his supervisor in Egypt and a wife of his schoolmaster, irritates him about his sincerity announcing "Mr. Sa'eed, you're a person quite devoid of a sense of fun...Can't you ever forget your intellect?" (p. 25). Those scenes illustrate the mimicry of the westerners of the seriousness in work in addition to the favorsim of the mind over the emotions.

In the trial scene again, Mustafa Sa'eed told the Narrator that he is superior and above all others in the court and behaves as the colonizers "while [he] had a sort of feeling of superiority towards them ... and [he], over and above everything else, [he is] a colonizer, [he is] the intruder whose fate must be decided" (p. 87). Those reflexive words uttered from Mustafa shows that are polluted culturally from the colonizers and he has destructive consequences of the colonial project.

Another revisited scene of the novel when the Narrator comes back to his homeland and talk to his readers as a part of the audience "gentlemen, after a long absence, [he] returned to [his] people" (p. 14), shows that he has a feeling of fear of the pollution and infection of the cultural hybridity and affects his identity as Geesey (1997) clarified in her article "Cultural Hybridity and Contamination" that "he [the Narrator] attempts to reassure himself that his years of living in England have not shaken his singular and well-rooted sense of identity" (p. 130).

Unfortunately, Mustafa Sa'eed's great attitude toward education was seen as a part of copycatting the west or the colonizer, as if he was imitating them in being good and smart by the false image that has been stick to the westerners. This can reflect the postcolonial mind people who were living there at that time. The way Eastern people look to western culture till now reflects the hybridity they were lost in, the identity they used to erase and here again the researcher is giving some hints to the readers trying to wake them up as a hope that one-day Eastern people may honor their identity again.

Mustafa Sa'eed's behavior toward his mom in one hand and Mrs. Robinson, on the other hand, can reflect his colonized spirit, misplaced identity as well as his admiration to the west. One can be shocked seeing the way Sa'eed representing his mom, describing her as a vague woman with many masks and describing Mrs. Robinson as a great woman with a great European smell. He explains that even though he can feel a physical

attraction to her, but she knows how to win his heart as a perfect mother for him. He knows the meaning of a genuine motherhood through his relation with this European woman. The concept of identity appears clearly in this situation, the rejection of the "self, inferior" and the longing for the "other, superior," and being lost in the hybrid world.

The imitation of the west even though in the way of composing the artistic works can show how many Eastern intellectuals are being taken by the colonizer's lifestyle. Even the way the writer is expressing such emotions was not mentioned before in the Arabic novel. It is important to say that the researcher is not totally against taking from the west in some useful fields of life, but without being disconnected to our specific identity, without showing respect to the "other" more than the "self" and without selling our customs and ethics.

A professor at Oxford, obviously states in the court during the trial that "Mr. Sa'eed, gentlemen of the jury, is a noble person whose mind was able to absorb the Western civilization" (p. 33). Furthermore, which reflects the respectful position Mustafa Sa'eed has successfully gained in the community of the west because of the remarkable gift he has in learning the English language fluently as well as the English lifestyle. His desire does not stop here, so he makes himself a part of this community by getting married to a British woman. This union of information reveals what Homi Bhabha (2012) calls "the mimetic or narcissistic demands of the colonial power" (p. 159). On the other hand, he stays in their eyes as an "Other", not a native Englishman, inferior not a superior, and an uncivilized not a civilized, as his English wife Jean Morris describes him as "[he is] a savage bull that does not weary of the chase" (Salih, p. 38).

Even though he tries his best to satisfy the English Society that he is one of them, but at the end, he is still a person in a lower position and they still in the upper one. As always his wife Jean Morris disgusts and hates him because of his identity and constantly tells him that "[he is] ugly" (p. 36), and on another occasion "[she has] never seen an uglier face than [his]" (p. 36). This may give the readers a very clear message to preserve their identity and to be proud of not to chase illusions of the west. Additionally, the Orientals must think again and again after giving such example from the writer that one is nothing without his/her own identity. The gloomy of hybridity must be far away from them, so they can do respect themselves again in the hope that in future they may have new influential generations and grasp their oriental roots.

Notably, two conflicting emotions make Mustafa's psyche struggling a lot, his feelings of misogyny on the one hand, and his feelings as a foreign, isolated person on the second hand. This can be shown in two different places as mentioned in the story; one is located in England and the other one in his hometown in Sudan. Furthermore, there are also symbols, which sustain this meaning of inner conflict for the identity of Mustafa's character, affirm that Mustafa is a hybrid and imitate the western culture. One of them is the chambers. His chamber in London was equipped and decorated with oriental furniture while the secret room in Wad Hamid with western stuff and style. These two separated locations can be referred to the relation, between the colonizer and the colonized, which reflects the gap between the self and the other as shown by the writer. This goes with what Allen (1995) denotes that "a major device that the author uses to convey the misunderstanding between east and west at the broadest cultural level is that of place, and specifically, two rooms" (p. 160). Subsequently, and according to Alwadhaf (2008) that every single word in the novels has a meaning and purpose because the author of any narrative thinks then writes as Bakhtin clarifies in "his theoretical assumptions about the novelistic discourse contends that nothing in the novel's discourse is said innocently since all words and forms are populated with intentions (Bakhtin 293)" (p. 229).

Mustafa's room in England reflects his culture as well as his confused mind as if there is a battle taking place in his unconsciousness and this combat is connecting the "self" and the "other," "East" and "West" in other words. He is pondering whether he can belong to his roots anymore, or he should be this new "Englishman" who is living with a mask which covers his truth as a human. Actually, this image is representing the majority of the Eastern people who are residing in the postcolonial period till now those who are diasporic, having a binary state of mind and feeling frustrated to deny their selves more and more and being forced to admire the "other" who caused such denial.

IV. CONCLUSION

At the end of the day, we realize that the protagonist Mustafa Sa'eed and the Narrator hunger to deliver a thoughtful note to those individuals who live in the Oriental world, particularly the youth crowds, who are mesmerized by the Occidental world and attempt to mimic them in every single step. Above and beyond, the Easterners copycat the westerners even without rational of the penalties of what they are doing. In addition to the western civilization, the European are just like us, they have good and bad in their community just exactly as ours "Over there is like here, neither better nor worse" (49). However, for those who see things in one eye and cannot see things clear in two eyes will stay unstable and have an oscillating and unstable identity. Actually, the image of Mustafa that he represents the majority of the Eastern people who are residing in the postcolonial period till now those who are diasporic, having a binary state of mind and feeling frustrated to deny their selves

more and more and being forced to admire the "other" who caused such denial. They live in a third self, third culture, and a third world.

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