

Cultural criticism and representations of identity in the novel *Season of Migration to the North* by Tayeb Salih

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to look at the novel *Season of Migration to the North* by Tayeb Salih by applying the Cultural Criticism- looking at the novel as a creative text, but beyond the aesthetic storytelling, the cultural and ideological frameworks underlying the modern Arabic discourse. This study is premised on the assumption that the novel is an open cultural dialogue which is a conflict of identity between the East and the West, the conflict between self and other in the context of the postcolonial society.

Theoretical framework covers important terms language like cultural criticism and identity, and the applied part explains the novel in terms of four primary dimensions, namely; identity and selfhood, spatial symbolism, image of women and environmental structure in an attempt to identify how these dimensions lead to the creation of cultural meaning throughout the text.

The results illustrate that Tayeb Salih manages to turn his story into the polyphonic space that integrates the aesthetic and intellectual resorting to stating the crisis of the Arab man trapped between the belonging and the alienation. In this way, *Season of Migration to the North* is an important paradigm of Arabic literature that could pose questions to itself and its cultural roots, putting them through the prism of the reality of the modern world.

Keywords: Cultural Criticism, Identity, Space, Woman, Environment, Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*.

Introduction

The contemporary Arabic literature is a the reflection of the intellectual and social changes that were taking place as a part of the cultural encounter of the East and West. The works which best exemplify this tension are those by Tayeb Salih which have become the Canon of contemporary Arabic fiction full of cultural and civilizational consequences such as *Season of migration to the North*.

In this discussion, the research paper will seek to interpret the novel within the framework of Cultural Criticism, which is a methodology that reveals the latent plots of power, ideology and identity that is inherent in the literary discourse.

It is a reasoning in the research that Tayeb Salih does not just present a tale of an East-West confrontation; he is more reconstructing the question of what an Arab and human identity is in the background of colonial and postcolonial experience and presenting that anxiety of the self that engages in confrontation with the other.

To this end, the research follows the principle of analytical

cultural approach that locations the novel to the background of its historical and social contexts and discloses its elements of symbolic and intellectual character.

The study can be divided into two major sections:

Theoretical framework, the exploration of the concepts of cultural criticism, identity, and self and other and the applied study which involves the analysis of the novel on four major axes:

- 1\ Identity and Selfhood
- 2\ Symbolism of Space
- 3\ Representation of Women
- 4\ Environmental Structure

The importance of this work is that it is trying to connect literature with culture and thought, and demonstrates the ability of Arabic fiction to question its reality and tradition, to go beyond aestheticism to a domain of cultural awareness and criticism.

Therefore, *Season of Migration to the North* may be regarded as an example of literature reading as a knowledge and civilization self-reflection.

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Previous Studies

A number of scholarly works have discussed the Season of Migration to the North by Tayeb Salih in various aspects, especially through the prism of the postcolonial theory. Nevertheless, the majority of these works dwelled more on the colonial encounter and its political aspects whereas the current research takes a wider and more combined approach in the prism of Arab Cultural Criticism. An important article was conducted on the postcolonial identities of the main characters in the season of migration toward the north, *The Main Characters Postcolonial Identities*, (LILIC Journal, 2023) in which the authors explored the mental and social aspects of identity formation in Mustafa Saed and the narrator. The discussion focused on the obscurity of postcolonial selfhood. On the contrary, the current study broadens the discussion to focus on the cultural, social and environmental codes in the text, as literature can be viewed as a discourse of power and ideology.

In another comparative study, *Cultural Hybridity in Postcolonial Fiction: A Comparative Study of Season of Migration to the North and Brick Lane* (Taiz University Journal of Arts, 2022), authors took the notion of cultural hybridity by Homi Bhabha and used it to compare the Arab and the Western identity. However, the present study concentrates solely on the novel by Salih and uses the concepts of the Arab cultural criticism to study identity in relation to space, womanhood and environment, but not in the external comparison.

The article of *Identity Struggle between the Orient and the Occident in Tayeb Salih's Season of Migration to the North: A Postcolonial Rendering* (IJARBSS, 2021) reviewed the novel primarily as the East-West conflict manifested in political and other forms of domination. The current work does not follow this direction and researches the concealed cultural constructs of narrative, the way discourse is an expression of power patterns and identity as well as resistance.

Likewise, *Cultural Conflicts and Self-Realization in Tayeb Salih Season of Migration to the North* (Arab World English Journal, 2019) focused on psychological analysis of postcolonial perspective of the novel with the focus being on the internal struggle and the feeling of alienation by the protagonist. In comparison, aesthetic and cultural analysis in the present work helps to prove that the crisis of identity is manifested in the symbols and linguistic modes instead of being confined to the psychological conflict.

Overall, the majority of past research has relied on the

Western theory of postcolonialism, which has focused on the political and historical aspects of the text. The novelty of this study is based on the fact that it has employed Arab Cultural Criticism (formerly as formulated by Abdullah Al-Ghadhami), which views literature as a cultural discourse that exposes the ideological and social representations of Arab consciousness. In this manner, a more context-based and indigenous understanding of identity, space and cultural hybridity in the work of Salih can become possible.

Cultural Criticism – Concept and Origins

Cultural criticism is one of the greatest intellectual revolutions that in the twentieth century took place in humanities. It goes beyond traditional literary criticism with its emphasis on aesthetic, style, and genre to see texts as cultural discourses in terms of how a particular society has a shared consciousness, ideologies and structures of power.

In this view, a text cannot exist as a neutral form of linguistics but it is a cultural product that reflects distribution patterns of power, identity, and representation.

1. The Rise of Cultural Criticism in Western Thought

Cultural criticism was a conception that developed in the Western philosophy (especially under the impact of the Frankfurt School) after the World War II. There was the idea of thinkers like Herbert Marcuse and Theodor Adorno that culture is indeed a means of domination and a route of so-called false consciousness.

This thought was later extended by Raymond Williams in *Culture and Society* (1958) who referred to culture as a battlefield of classes of people (Williams, 1958, p. 43). In the same way, Michel Foucault also presented the idea of discourse as a system of relations between knowledge and power (Foucault, 1972, p. 49).

The Cultural Studies in Britain (especially at the Birmingham Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies) expanded into the mass media, day-to-day activities, and political language out of literary books as the target of cultural critique.

Stuart Hall also associated cultural criticism with issues of identity, representation and politics, when he considered that the idea of identity would not be a fixed entity but always an on-going process of becoming in discourse (Hall, 1996, p. 4).

2. Cultural Criticism in the Arab Context

Cultural criticism emerged in Arab world with

the late twentieth century with Abdullah Al-Ghadhami groundbreaking study *Al-Naqd al-Thaqafi: Qira'ah fi al-Ansaaq al-Thaqafiyah al-'Arabiyyah* (2000).

Cultural criticism as defined by Al-Ghadhami refers to the art of enlightening the concealed cultural constructs within the literary and social discourse especially those which strengthens patriarchal, class, or political domination (Al-Ghadhami, 2000, p. 52).

Instead, according to him, Arabic literature, even with its aesthetical richness, has tended to repeat the code of authority within it, and that it is precisely aesthetic criticism which can free Arab culture of its confined ideological forms.

This has been extended by other Arab critics like Mohamed Berrada, Said Yaqtin and Abdelfattah Kilito who have related cultural criticism to identity studies and focused on the interdependence between literature, power, and knowledge.

3. Between Literary Criticism and Cultural Criticism

The methodological approach to cultural criticism and its objective are dissimilar to those of the traditional literary criticism.

Whereas literary criticism considers the text as a linguistic and aesthetic composition, a cultural criticism considers it as a cultural document that indicates power structures in the society.

Nevertheless, cultural criticism does not reject aesthetics, it incorporates it into a larger net of cultural meaning and speculates how style, rhetoric, and language operate either to reinforce power or to challenge it.

In this regard, cultural criticism can be seen as a loose and accommodative way of criticizing literature to identify the location of identity production and ideological compromise. It is subsequently the most appropriate method of examining the *Season of Migration to the North* by Tayeb Salih which is a novel that deals with complex interaction of culture, identity and the discourse of colonialism (Salih, 1969, p. 5).

Cultural Criticism and Identity in Modern Arabic Literature

The association of cultural criticism and identity is one of the most important points of view that can help to explain research of the contemporary Arabic literature. Texts are ceasing to be read as aesthetic forms that were closed and are now viewed as cultural discourses that articulate changes of the Arab society in the strains

of colonialism, modernity, globalization, and cultural difference.

In terms of cultural-critical approach, identity is an open system, and it is being reformed with the utilization of language, history, power, and collective consciousness.

1. Arabic Literature and the Representation of Identity

The twentieth century modern Arabic literature was radically changed in terms of self- and world-conception. After the modernity and European colonialism shock, there are some basic questions Arab writers started to pursue; Who are we? What is our relationship with the Other?

Identity was the main point of literary discourse both in poetry and fiction, representing the conflict between authenticity and modernity, belonging and alienation, East and West.

This was a result of deep social and political shifts of the contemporary Arab world. Literature stopped glorifying tribal heroism or historical glory and was instead a reflection of the cultural panic and the quest of selfhood.

In this case, cultural criticism shows that the identity is not something given but is a narrative process of becoming continuous (Hall, 1996, p.4).

2. Cultural Criticism as an Approach to Reading Identity

Cultural criticism helps us to take Arabic literature as a discourse and power relationship, considering the piece of writing as a space of argumentation of cultural codes.

It is not looking for any aesthetic beauty as such but it investigates the implicit cultural systems and patterns of symbols that reproduce systems of domination or resistance. In this regard, the concept of studying literary identity is to study hierarchy of cultural formation, as literature does not just reflect reality, but it also collaborates in creating it (Foucault, 1972, p. 49).

This method has paid off especially with regards to contemporary Arabic novels which constitute laboratories of the Arab self entering into contact with the Western Other - e.g. *Season of Migration to the North* by Tayeb Salih, *Cities of Salt* by Abdelrahman Munif and *The Thief and the Dogs* by Naguib Mahfouz.

It can be seen in these works that identity is not something hereditary but a symbolic arena of conflict between the inner and the outer, between what the society wants the self to be like and what the self wants to be like.

3. Cultural Criticism and the Awareness of Difference

The identity depicted by Stuart Hall in postcolonial societies is never singular or closed; but a product of difference and representation (Hall, 1990, p. 226).

Abdullah Al-Ghadhami in the Arab case shares the same perspectives by establishing the Arab culture as a mode of patriarchal system of power that needs to be broken down to reveal the cultural representation of gender, class and power (Al-Ghadhami, 2000, p. 55).

In the same fashion, Edward Said developed this by his concept of Orientalism and demonstrates the ways in which the West has historically employed literary and knowledge in creating the image of the Eastern Other (Said, 1978, p. 3).

Collectively, these points of view have given the Arab criticism the means to achieve the study of the identity discourse as a process of life rather than an abstract intellectual discussion that is embodied in language, narrative, body, place and memory.

It is in this perspective that the contemporary Arabic literature - including the novel of Tayeb Salih in particular - is fertile in terms of exploration of cultural identity that integrates aesthetics form with that of social and political awareness.

The Concept of Identity

The notion of identity takes up a pivotal role in the postcolonial and cultural studies since it demonstrates the awareness of the self of both the individual and the group as to it in history, language, and power. Identity is not something set or needful, but is discursive, dynamic and relational and is constructed in terms of cultural contact with and experience (Hall, 1996, p. 4).

Stuart Hall believes that it is not who one is that ends up being discovered but that an identity is produced as a result of cultural representation. He says that cultural identity is not a fact, but something of both becoming and being (Hall, 1990, p. 225) - i.e. identity is always being recreated in terms of being narrated, remembered and negotiated as a culture.

Homi K. Bhabha forms a unique point of view on the hybridity of identity by introducing the concept of so-called Third Space as the in-between space where new meanings, cultural positions are created. Hybridity, as Bhabha argues, provokes the binary of colonizer/colonized and allows redefining of the selfhood to take place outside of the inflexible cultural categories (Bhabha, 1994, pp. 36-39).

Edward Said enters the identity discourse with a political twist in his critique of Orientalism demonstrating how the West created the orient as woman, emotional, and exotic - the opposite of the rational and superior west. In this context, identity is never constructed in the absence of power and the representation where it is the self who constructs identity by the representation of the other (Said, 1978, p. 3).

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon pursues the mental aspect of the colonial identity by showing how the colonized subject carries the gaze of his colonizer thus alienating and dividing him internally (Fanon, 1967, pp. 110-112). Fanon calls upon the process of decolonizing the mind or breaking the colonial discourse and reclaiming the agency.

Abdullah Al-Ghadhami puts forward another argument in the same direction holding that identity is a cultural construct based on unconscious codes of tradition and reckons that Arab identity has tended to reproduce patriarchal and rhetorical dominance inherited through classical discourse a system, which largely needs to be critically evaluated in order to achieve intellectual emancipation (Al-Ghadhami, 2000, pp. 45-48).

Accordingly, cultural criticism and postcolonial theory identity should properly be seen as a dynamic and disputed process, created through the interplay between the self and other, the local and the global, the past and the present. It is in this context that one can interpret that Tayeb Salih in *Season of Migration to the North* has offered an artistic and a cultural manifestation of identity - the drama of the Arab self between being and otherness, between resistance and redefinition.

Considering the discussion on cultural criticism and identity in this paper, it is evident that literary discourse provides a very good basis of discussing the ideological and symbolic conflicts that influence the collective consciousness. Cultural questions are most effectively kept in a dynamic space in fiction, especially where the elements of aesthetics being interrogated do not coincide directly with the elements of culture being questioned. In this regard, the *Season of Migration to the North* by Tayeb Salih is a perfect work to follow considering the realization of cultural criticism especially in analysis of issues related to the hybrid identity, the self and the other and the influence of the colonial discourse on Arab awareness (Hall, 1990, p. 225; Bhabha, 1994, p. 38).

The novel pushes the limits of classical narration to become a cultural text, which reflects the conflicts between

East and West, tradition and modernity, self and other. The culture reading of the novel reflects symbolic processes that constitute and challenge the identity, and how it brings out the contradictions inherent in the postcolonial being (Al-Ghadhami, 2000, p. 46; Said, 1978, p. 3).

This study will, therefore, have an analytical portion dealing with the expressions of identity within the novel, following the cultural discourses within the writings by Tayeb Salih touching upon Arab and Sudanese identity and how it is manifested in relation to the Western other. The theoretical framework of Hall, Bhabha, Said and Fanon, as well as the Arab cultural criticism developed by Abdullah Al-Ghadhami will further be used to analyze how the novel holds the dilemmas of belonging, hybridity, and cultural power negotiable.

1. Identity and Hybridity

The major theme in *Season of Migration to the North* is the struggle of the protagonist to establish himself in the middle of the conflict between a pair of civilizations the Arab-Islamic world and the Western colonial heritage. It is the meeting of the narrator with Mustafa Sa, the mystic who represents the clash of East and West that dramatizes what Homi Bhabha refers to as being a hybrid - a zone of ambivalence and negotiation between the West and East (Bhabha, 1994, pp. 36-39).

One of the most important passages is where Mustafa Sa'eed talks about his stay in England:

"I came to them as a conqueror... I left behind me, a trail of destruction" (Salih, 1969, p. 33).

This statement overturns the colonial ordeal of oppression: the colonized man becomes the emblematic conqueror. However, this inversion does not free him either; on the contrary, it shows the psychological and moral dislocation that comes as a consequence of inculcating the power of the colonizer and the powerlessness of the colonized. The colonized man turns out to be what he is alleged to be, as Frantz Fanon postulates, as an individual is caught in between the hatred and himself and the desire to be recognized (Fanon, 1967, p. 112).

The hybrid identity that Mustafa possesses is not a synthesis but dislocation. His intellectual fluency in Western language and intellect empowers him skin deep and alienates him with his own culture. In his connection with English women, he uses the Oriental stereotypes as a point of power - exotic, sexy Arab, and in such a manner, revealing the principle that the Western discourse eroticizes the East (Said, 1978, p. 3). Nevertheless, his revenge of

seduction is only strengthening the colonialism paradigm which he is trying to break.

The narrator, the survivor of Mustafa is the second level of identity formation - a reflective hybridity that acknowledges the impossibility of going back to pure origin. As he says: "I am from here. Yet I am not of here. I am from there. Yet I am not of there." (Salih, 1969, p. 49).

This contradiction or paradox is the very meaning of what Hall (1990, p. 225) refers to as the identity of becoming, an identity of becoming, which is based on the rupture and renewal. The ambivalence of the narrator implies the postcolonial consciousness that does not glamorize the past and does not wholly adopt the colonial modernity - ambivalence in search of meaning in-b.

2. The Self and the other

The dialectic of self and the other is one of the main axes of *Season of Migration to the North*. The narrative construction of the novel is based on the clash of Sudanese narrator coming back to Europe and the world of the west that is presented by Mustafa Sa'eed until that moment. Using this duality, Tayeb Salih explores the multifaceted relationship between East and West and Arab identity crisis due to the colonial discourse (Said, 1978, p. 3).

Throughout the opening the narrator puts himself as a certain viewer that wants to learn the tragedy of Mustafa Sa'eed. Nevertheless, this observation turns a gradual process into the interior reflection, with Saadawi turning into the mirror with the help of which the narrator sees his own disjointed own self. The narrator admits:

He and I were one and the same person, I thought. (Salih, 1969, p. 52).

This psychological fusion of the two characters is rather the case which Stuart Hall called identity in process the idea of the self being able to identify itself solely through the gaze of the other, and the other being a constituent of one own symbolic construction (Hall, 1996, p. 4).

Therefore, by positioning the Western other, Tayeb Salih creates the impression of an outsider in the Arab psyche, not only an outsider but also an internalized voice in the Arab psyche. The collision with the west is not a geographical conflict but a cultural and a spiritual one, which happens inside the mind of the individual. In this regard, the novel shuns a mere clash-of-civilizations treatment to become itself a two-level critique - of Western domination of the Arab postcolonial and of the Arab self that allowed continuously that domination to be sustained (Fanon, 1967, p. 110).

On the symbolic level, the European women in the novel turn out to be metaphorical images of the Western Other. They represent the alluring sensuality of modern material civilisation and reveal its instinctive violence at the same time. On the last face-off before her suicide, Isabella Seymour says to Mustafa Sa'eed:

You have killed me by bits, Mustafa. (Salih, 1969, p. 78). This moment is also what exposes the irony of self-destruction in the colonial experience: in the same way the West used the East, Mustafa tries to use the West metaphorically too, but they both end up in the spiral of violence. According to Edward Said, colonial discourse has been based on the construction of difference, which constitutes the Other that defines only to justify dominance (Said, 1978, p. 3).

The narrator, in the final scene, comes to a new realization with regard to his connection with the Other. Rather than attempting to take revenge and fail to resist assimilation, he opts to a kind of existential reconciliation which is represented by his

wail at the edge of the river:

“Help! Help!” (Salih, 1969, p. 169).

This scream is not only a cry of physical salvation, but the emergence of a new identity, the identity which tries to achieve the balance between the self and the other, between the internal being and the external world. True identity is not in any of the poles but one should be in the Third Space where meanings are re-established as the differences come into contact (Bhabha, 1994, p. 39).

3. Colonial Power and Cultural Resistance

Season of Migration to North by Tayeb Salih is a very powerful dramatizing of the dialectic of colonial powers and resistance of cultures in the post colonial setting. The novel transcends criticism of colonialism as an alien power, it transcends into the psychological and intellectual mechanisms of how colonial dominance rekindles the consciousness of being dominated (Fanon, 1967, p. 112).

Salih uses the character of Mustafa Sa'eed to show how his self has internalized colonial power even when he is resisting colonial power. When Mustafa declares:

I read their books, taught them their sciences, and talked their language, but still I was a stranger amongst them. (Salih, 1969, p. 71).

He is the representative of the existential predicament of the Arab intellectual of the postcolonial period, who employs the instruments of the West to resist it, but is held

captive of its epistemological construct (Said, 1978, p. 3). The cultural resistance characteristic of the novel is made at two levels: discourse and consciousness. At the consciousness level, the narrator aims at putting in place the balance between the East and the West by means of contemplation and cognition and goes beyond confrontation to reinterpretation and critical consciousness. Salih plays with the language of colonialism that objectified the East and led it to a subject of Western knowledge (Bhabha, 1994, p. 39).

The story itself is already an act of cultural defiance, shifting the narrative emphasis of the West to that of a highly Sudanese and Arab approach. River, village, family and collective memory are symbols used to represent pure cultural identity against the intrusive Other. According to Abdullah Al-Ghadhami, cultural resistance is not just about physical struggle but rather a severe disintegration of the existing cultural codes and recreation of the self (Al-Ghadhami, 2000, p. 47).

In the final scene, as the narrator screams:

“Help! Help!” (Salih, 1969, p. 169).

The climax of the novel is symbolic. The scream symbolizes the opposition to inner oppression or liberation by force but by being conscious. The river is not only physical threat, but it is a historical and cultural stream that overwhelms people who do not realize its power. In such a way, the last word turns into a proclamation of postcolonial birth - into a self that will no more be a slave of colonialism as well as of its chains of discursive discourse.

4. The Symbolism of Place and Identity

Place in Season of Migration to the North is not a mere physical location; it is a participatory means of identity construction as well as a source of conflict between the East and the West as well as between memory and alienation, permanence and change. Tayeb Salih creates such an extensive spatial map that reflects the metamorphoses of his characters of psychological and cultural nature.

1. The Village – A Symbol of Roots and Memory

The Sudanese village is the main location of belonging and the source of genuine identity. At the very beginning of the novel, the narrator says:

I came home to my people, gentlemen, with long absence... (Salih, 1969, p.3).

This is not only a physical return but is much more of a symbolic one - a return to the self. The village is used

as a metaphor of a root that keeps the identity intact and ensures continuation but also symbolizes an enclosed environment where no one proves to be out of the ordinary and social norm. So, the concept of identity can be defined as a conflict between security and stasis (Hall, 1990, p. 225; Al-Ghadhami, 2000, p. 47).

2. Khartoum – A Symbol of Transition and Transformation

Khartoum as a capital is an intermediate zone between the village and the world outside - a place of transition between locality and modernity. It is here in Khartoum where the consciousness of the narrator starts getting enlightened on cultural plurality and difference. The city, therefore, undertakes the theme of cultural hybridity, in which Western modernity is colliding with Sudanese culture, which depicts postcolonial identity dilemma (Bhabha, 1994, p. 36).

3. London – A Symbol of Alienation and Domination

London can be considered the most symbolically loaded place in the novel. It is the symbol of the West as a seat of power and knowledge but also a place of extreme alienation. Mustafa Sa'eed tells about how he was there: Of them I was a stranger as a sea of illusion divided us. (Salih, 1969, p. 71). The city of London turns into a sack of cultural prison where the hero fails to control his native identity and adopted identity. The city is an allegory of colonialism, a structure that generates knowledge with a view of dominating the Other (Said, 1978, p. 3).

4. The Nile – A Symbol of Time and Renewal

One of the greatest symbols in the novel is the Nile River, which is a symbol of cyclical time and continuity and rebirth. It observes the life and the death of village. Later on, in the last scene, the narrator cries: "Help! Help!" (Salih, 1969, p. 169). The river is turned to a cleansing ground, that is, a renewal of awareness and identification through struggle and confrontation (Fanon, 1967, p. 111; Bhabha, 1994, p. 38).

5. The Secret Room – A Symbol of Repressed Memory

One of the most peculiar symbols in the novel is the secret room in the house of Mustafa Saadawi. It is the repressed memory of the colonial life - a place where Mustafa conceals his books, documents, and photographs dating back to the time he used to live in the West. Upon

learning of it, the narrator thinks:

It was like I had gone into the head of a dead man. (Salih, 1969, p. 108).

This room is not merely a physical place, but a figurative museum of fragmented identity, an interior museum, in which the East and the West have been in conflict. It shows the unconscious culture negotiation of postcolonial identity as stipulated by Stuart Hall (Hall, 1996, p. 4).

By means of these spatial layers, Tayeb Salih shows that the identity is not something abstract and does exist as a space experience and it is built as part of engaging with a variety of cultural and emotional geographies. Place, therefore, becomes a parallel account - an account that narrates the story of the self and its historical traumas, that cultural resistance, which initiates by re-establishing the sense of place as memory and meaning.

5. The Representation of Women and the Construction of Identity

Women are symbolically placed at the center of the scene in Season of Migration to the North. Not only are they characters in the story, but also reflections of both cultural and social reality in postcolonial Sudan. By using the characterizations of Hosna bint Mahmoud and Bint Majzoub, Tayeb Salih introduces two opposite, but still complementary portraits of femininity, one with submissiveness and the other with transgressiveness and agency.

1. Hosna bint Mahmoud: The Victim of Patriarchal Authority

The failure of womanhood in the patriarchal society is represented in Hosna bint Mahmoud. Unable to get married to Mustafa Sa'ed due to their age difference, her marriage is based on a coalition of local male domination and passed-on colonial domination structures. When Mustafa died, Hosna does not want to remarry the old man, Wad Rayyes, she kills him first and commits suicide to an ultimate rebelling against oppression (Salih, 1969, p. 161). The story of Hosna rekindles debate on the issue of female identity in a system that establishes the body as the battlefield of custom, religion and power. Woman as the creation of the classical Arab discourse, as Abdullah Al-Ghadhami points out, is the lesser Other whose presence justifies male rule (Al-Ghadhami, 2000, p. 52). Even with her brutal resistance, Hosna breaks down this order, reclaims her body and agency, even in self-destruction, emerging as an iconic symbol of unrealized freedom.

2. Bint Majzoub: The Defiant Voice

On the contrary, Bint Majzoub is the model of femininity that is so radically different - self-confident, expressive, and free of social conventions. The narrator outlines her as:

She was not afraid of uttering things, which a man would be humiliated to say. (Salih, 1969, p. 44).

Her speech, in its unassociated nature, and her appearance in male parties makes Bint Majzoub the language and social rebel. As pointed out by Homi Bhabha, the margins may be turned into resistance zones, and more importantly, the defiance can be a challenge to authority performed ironically, which is called as mimicry, whose power can be disrupted internally (Bhabha, 1994, p. 86). Bint Majzoub carries this mimetic deviance: being over-the-top male talk, she defines the weakness of the male speech and holds it against its own moral standpoint.

3. Women and Collective Identity

The woman in the novel is not alone but rather represents the whole nation of Sudan in its transition period of cultural shift. The framework of oppression and liberation that is the hallmark of the postcolonial society is the distance between the victimization of Hosna and the rebellion of Bint Majzoub. According to Frantz Fanon, it is impossible to decolonize without liberating women where the body of female forms the initial zone of imperial and patriarchal subjugation (Fanon, 1967, p. 119).

In that way, the women of the novel become a metaphor of Sudanese identity as such, being suppressed and rebellious, confined by tradition and being longing to be free. In their narrativities, Tayeb Salih shows that the way to be truly emancipated is linguistic and cultural cognizance, and that emancipation lies in the response to the inward and outside obstacles of control (Hall, 1996, p. 4; Said, 1978, p. 3).

6. The Environment in Season of Migration to the North and Its Role in Shaping Consciousness and Identity

The natural and social setting of Season of Migration to the North takes the middle-ground in the formation of meaning. It does not represent a passive backdrop to what happens but is a dynamic agent of culture, which structures the consciousness of the characters and mediate their interaction between identity, time, and space. Tayeb Salih considers the Sudanese landscape, the Nile, the desert, the crops, the seasonal changes not just as a living organism, but as a breathing organism, with its own rhythm, and this very closeness to the land.

1. The Nile: Fertility and Death

Nile is both a physical and symbolic direction of the novel. It is their origin of fertility and life among the villagers but it also represents death and renewal. The narrator observes:

The river rises and over Disciple fields; then falling leaves silt behind and life. (Salih, 1969, p. 22).

Such duality of selflessness and devastation brings the river an elliptical symbol of continuity of cosmos - a dream where nature is a continuation of the human soul, rather than a material terrain.

2. The Agricultural Setting and Collective Consciousness

The rural setting of the Sudan is vividly represented in the novel as life of the rural people is based on the cycle of seasons of the Nile and the rains. Farmers exist by the way the nature works and their time is planting and harvest. This relationship of human and the land creates a sense of collectivity that is based on collaboration and on communal living (Hall, 1990, p. 229).

But this natural harmony starts crumbling as the Western modernity intrudes and breaks the ecological and social harmony- a delicate metaphor to the colonial disruption between the man and the environment society of the natives (Said, 1978, p. 4).

3. Environment as a Reflection of Psychological Transformation

In the story, the setting reflects onto the inner lives of the characters. Desert and barrenness frequently reflect the feeling of alienation that the narrator experiences, and the floods and rejuvenation of the land are the symbol of rebirth and self-discovery. This combination of the natural and emotional environment depicts what is recognized by contemporary critics as the psychological setting where the landscape is a continuation of human mind (Fanon, 1967, p. 123).

4. Environment and Cultural Identity

The imagery on the environment also articulates how Salih is aware of the two identities of Sudan the Arab and the African one. Land itself is not a vacuum; it transforms into the place where the history of cultures are stored, and in Africa, the Islamic symbols can be seen in harmony with the African traditions. Thereby, nature serves as the transmitter of historical memory, as it connects the past and the present, the heritage and the change.

Erotic and full of symbols language, Tayeb Salih proves that

there is no way to separate identity and the environment. To lose the feeling of belonging to the land is to lose a connection to the land and to gain the connection again is to recover cultural as well as existential completeness.

Dialectic East and West Season of Migration to the North. Tayeb Salih has created one of the most deep Arabic novels to play out the dialectic of the East and the West - not as a confrontation of civilizations but a battle of the self.

The novel goes deep in the split consciousness created by the colonial experience where the main character Mustafa Sa'eed is a figure of the Arab self between the identity of the East and the alienation of the West.

In this regard, Salih re-enacted the East-West relation as a conflict within the postcolonial subject, but not as a conflict between the nations.

The Dialectic of East and West in Season of Migration to the North

Mustafa Sa'eed is the embodiment of the colonized thinker endowed with the Western knowledge, but not at home with it.

He goes to London to seek the idea of intellectual excellence when he becomes a victim of what Said refers to as the cultural hegemony of the West, which is the dominance to project the Other in a framework of domination (Said, 1978, p. 3). Mustafa tries to play a symbolic reversal of colonial conquest by his relationships with the English women and wants to revenge and assimilate.

But his efforts of domination by seduction all come to ruin him leaving it clear that he is still in the same colonial reasoning that he is trying to overturn.

In such a way, he turns out to be the representation of what Frantz Fanon called the divided self - black in his body, white in mind (Fanon, 1967, p. 112).

1. Mustafa Sa'eed and the Representation of the Colonized Intellectua

The nameless narrator, opposite Mustafa, symbolizes the efforts of the new generation to reconcile East and West without showing signs of imitation and denial.

He acknowledges the understanding that identity is not the denial of the Other, but a dialogue with the Other.

By his consciousness and contemplation, the narrator has stood to represent what Homi Bhabha describes as the Third Space - a cultural space in which differences are negotiating and establishing new meanings but without erasure (Bhabha, 1994, p. 38).

The last scene in the novel is when the narrator ends up crying:

“Help! Help!” (Salih, 1969, p. 169)

This experience to the reader is more of a metaphor of rebirth, a realisation that none is more self aware than when we are at liberty of the strict duality between East and West and when we create a new self based on both, but bound by neither.

2. The Narrator and Double Consciousness

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3. East and West as Cultural Symbols

Salih goes beyond the real-life geographical antagonism between East and West and turns the two into a set of cultural stereotypes typifying different value and thought systems:

The East is the land of spirituality, memory and attachedness.

The West is associated with reason, progress and power.

But in the novel, there is no moral judgmenting. Salih does not romanticize the East, nor demonize the West, the film just reveals the vulnerability of both sides to the lack of human connection between them.

This way, he goes forward with the creation of a view of cross-cultural dialogue that relies on self-criticism as opposed to ideological denial.

Therefore, Season of Migration to the North does not belong to Central Sudanese but makes a universal inquiry: What will be the way to meet each other and not to

subordinate/ disintegrate cultures?

Analyzing Season of Migration to the North on the cultural criticism background, one can notice that Tayeb Salih created a literary piece, which goes beyond the artistic narration and enters the intellectual and identity-related discourse.

His novel combines aesthetic beauty with social and cultural systems to show that the text serves as a multifaceted cultural discourse that revisits the concepts of self, otherness and belonging in a postcolonial environment.

Some of the main points that have been identified in this research are as follows:

The novel depicts identity that is not fixed, but constantly transforms by experiencing a crosscultural interaction.

The narrator and other characters like Mustafa Sa'eed and Hosna bint Mahmoud are symbolic characters that reflect the divided Arab identity between authentic Arab and modernity.

Place, setting, and women as narration tools contribute to the conflict of culture between East and West.

But in the end, the novel shows that modern Arabic literature is not just about the beauty of literature but a tool of self-definition, and deconstruction of ideologies as it is being criticized culturally.

Tayeb Salih manages to introduce a unique paradigm of contemporary Arabic fiction, the one that explains the crisis, as well as the endurance of the Arab identity in the world, which is defined by the colonial memory and cultural fusion.

Conclusion

This paper has aimed to analyze the novel Season of Migration to the North by Tayeb Salih, using culture criticism as the perspective in which the book can be interpreted as an intellectual plane in which that of aesthetics boundary can be crossed, and a greater insight on the cultural and ideological formations embedded in the literary work can be seen.

The assumption behind the research was that the novel written by Salih is not just a work of art literature, but a reflection of cultural and identity changes in the Arab world, especially those that took place in the realms of postcolonial experience.

The theoretical framework has shown that the cultural criticism both in its Western origins and Arab developments is aimed at breaking down interrelations between power, knowledge and discourse and cognizing identity as the process of its construction in the cultural context as

opposed to specific essence.

The analysis in the applied part showed that Season of Migration to the North may be considered as the multiple-layered discourse, which combines the personal and the collective, the national and the universal.

It describes the contradiction of the contemporary Arab character between tradition and modernity, citizenship and estrangement.

The primary conclusions of the study may be the following:
1 Tayeb Salih uses literature as a tool of cultural criticism, revealing the crisis of Sudanese and Arab identity in their struggle against the Western Other.

2 Culture The way that Arabic literature can be interpreted through the prism of cultural criticism is its intellectual and ideological defense, instead of being viewed as an aesthetic work.

3 The aspects of the novel, such as characters, space, language and symbols, play the crucial role in the re-diegetic of the self in a fluctuated world.

4 The war of East and West that is being fought in the novel is not literally a battle over space but is more of a dialogue that seeks to bring about a balance and newness between the philosophies and cultures.

Season of Migration to the North, accordingly, is a unique paradigm of contemporary Arabic fiction, which managed to unite the eyes of the world and vision with the eyes of the location.

It turns narrative art into the exercise of speculation about the identity, culture and civilization questions.

In such a way, the relevance of the cultural criticism is explained by the fact that it helps to open up the horizon of self-reflecting brought by the interconnected mirrors of the language, culture, and history.

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