

**Psychic Occupation: Western Narrative Style
in *Beer in the Snooker Club* and *Season of Migration to the North***

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Abstract: *This paper compares how two Arab Novels, Waguih Ghali's Beer in the Snooker Club (1964) written in English, and Tayeb Salih's Season of Migration to the North (1969) written in Arabic (trans. by Denys Johnson-Davies), depict Colonialism's influence on Arab cultural identity through narrators who are Anglophiles. While the Arabic narrative and Western voice interact cohesively, the protagonists of Salih's and Ghali's novels experience inter-cultural and internal conflicts which result in self-hatred, physical and identity displacement, political dissidence, and acts of questionable morality. Because both identify with an occupying culture they struggle to find stability, satisfaction or redemption in the excesses and "freedoms" of the West, and in the customs of their native cultures.*

Introduction

Beer in the Snooker Club, called by Wassef (1997:19) of the *Cairo Times*, "The Best Book in Egypt," and "the beginning of the Arabic novel in English" (19), was published in 1964 to little acclaim. Aside from reviews written the same year in *The New York Times Book Review*, *The New Yorker*, *The London Review of Books*, and *The New Statesman*, Ghali's novel remains obscured from critical attention perhaps because Ghali composed the novel in English, while living as an exile in Europe. The nature of Ghali's exile, as well, of his identity is unclear. (There is a rumor the novel was composed under a pseudonym.) Wassef (ibid: 19) identifies Ghali as "having his passport revoked for being a Communist" (19). In contrast, American writer Nathaniel West (1964:203) in his review for the *New Yorker*, describes Ghali's exile as "self-imposed." Presently, the most reliable information available on Ghali's life is *After a Funeral* (Athill, 1986), a memoir of Athill's relationship with an Egyptian writer she calls "Didi," coincidentally also the name of a character in Ghali's novel.

The novel addresses the themes of post-colonial culture, governmental reform, and socio-economic class during the time of Suez crisis and the Egyptian revolution. The narrator, Ram, is a young, educated, Egyptian Copt, a member of the elite class who is conflicted between his entitlement and his feelings of nationalism. This is suggested by a scene early in the novel at Groppi's, a club in downtown Cairo frequented by foreigners and the Egyptian aristocracy.

Groppi's was...packed with people, all well dressed and magnanimous with their orders. I was annoyed these people hadn't been dealt a heavy blow by the revolution. Why did they continue speaking in French? They all moan of not having enough money now, but they still live in the style they were accustomed to (28).

Ironically, Ram's criticisms of post-colonial Egypt, and his advocacy of nationalism are products of European socialists and intellectuals, most specifically from England. After attending university and joining the Communist party in London and returning to Cairo, Ram (under the supervision of Dr. Hamza, an Egyptian communist who has been jailed in the past) secretly becomes involved in exposing human rights violations committed by the new government.

In *Season of Migration to the North*, Salih's protagonist narrates the life story of Mustafa Saa'eed, a Sudanese man from a previous generation, who, like the narrator, studied abroad in England. The narrator spent "three years delving into the life of an obscure English poet" (9), before returning to his tribal village of Wad Hamis on the Nile river after seven years with a doctorate in English literature. Initially he sees "the world as unchanged as ever" (2). He is surprised and intrigued upon finding a stranger, Mustafa Saa'eed, his wife Hosna bint Mahmoud, and their two sons in the village. He questions his grandfather, Hajj Ahmed, a village elder, who reveals that Sa'eed "had never done anything which could cause offence" and "regularly attended the mosque for Friday prayers" (7). Soon after, in the narrator's first interaction with Mustafa Saa'eed, he observes an "excessive politeness" (7) atypical of other villagers. This arouses the narrator's curiosity, which intensifies over the course of several months. He gradually learns Sa'eed is a member of the Agricultural Project Committee headed by Mahjoub, the narrator's close childhood friend. At a committee meeting he notices that Sa'eed's opinions are greatly respected by the tribe. From this he concludes, "There was not the slightest doubt that the man was of a different clay" (12). Still unaware of the background of this mysterious

stranger, the speaker is stunned soon thereafter at a drinking session with Mahjoub. Mustafa Sa'eed becomes intoxicated at Mahjoub's insistence and recites English poetry "in a clear voice and with an impeccable English accent" (14). This incident ignites the narrator's obsession with Sa'eed. Allen (1995:162) notes, he disregards his own narrative to pursue the story of Saa'eed's past, setting up the dual narrative in the novel.

Narrative Styles/Influences

Of the many narrative styles used in Western literature, several are prominent in the novels of Ghali and Salih. Ghali, especially, relies on colloquial dialogue and omniscient first person narration. His novel evokes the sparse, minimalist prose of American Expatriate Modernists such as Gertrude Stein and Hemingway. The latter Ghali references in *Beer* when Ram says, "Let's go and dance," I suggested. "Let's drink some more and have more fights and reach a real climax as the Hemingway people in Spain do. Come on, Edna, let's *live*!" (98). Ghali's style has "the flavour of turn-of-the-century Russian comedy...such as Turgenev and Chekhov" claims one reviewer (Bryden, 1964: 301). Diana Athill also identifies Chekhov, French realist Celine, Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* (who was of a later generation of American expatriate writers; his novel was banned in the United States upon publication) and Nabokov (who composed his work in English, and whose novel *Lolita* was also banned in the U.S.), as writers who had a strong impact on Ghali (1986: 29-30).

Beer in the Snooker Club is organized into five numbered parts, beginning post-revolution with the narrator's Aunt signing away *feddans* of land in accordance to the 1952 Agrarian land reform implemented by the Revolutionary Command Council (CCR). Section two describes Ram's attempt to leave Cairo for London six years earlier. Sections three to five focus on the protagonist's return to Cairo after the Free Officers Revolution and the formation of the new government under President Gamal 'Abd Al-Nasser. Although internal flashbacks are interspersed throughout the novel, only part two relies on the device to stage the setting.

Published in 1969, Salih's writing style has been commented on as notably Western. Eiman El Nour (1997: 155) identifies the 1960's as a period when "many students who had gone to England and other European countries to study returned home," bringing new ideas and writing techniques to Sudanese literature. El Nour also refers to

Mohammad Ahmed Mahjub's book, *Towards the Future* (1970), in which the author encouraged Sudanese writers to "include elements of colloquial Sudanese Arabic, where necessary, to give their works an authentic imprint" (qtd. in El Nour: 153). This use of the colloquial can be seen in the colorful language of the residents in Wad Hamis.

Season of Migration to the North is organized by the framed narrative, a traditional method of storytelling employed in oral cultures. It is also used by Conrad in *Heart of Darkness*, in much of Faulkner, and in Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*. *Season* begins post-plot, "It was, gentlemen, after a long absence- seven years to be exact, during which time I was studying in Europe- that I returned to my people" (1). Salih, like Gahli, constructs a non-linear time frame to organize the narrative, but elevates the narrative responsibility beyond the first-person protagonist, a feature prominent in literary Modernism. Sa'eed's story is told by the primary narrator, along with the views of several characters, including Sa'eed himself. This gives readers a multi-faceted view of the character of Mustafa Sa'eed. As mentioned, Sa'eed plays the role of narrator for part of the novel, and it is Bint Majzoub who reveals to the narrator, and thus the reader, the grisly details of the deaths of Wad Rayyes and Hosna bint Mahmoud. Likewise, the reader and narrator simultaneously piece together fragments of Mustafa Sa'eed life through various characters the narrator encounters. While travelling by train between Khartoum and El-Obeid, a retired civil servant describes Sa'eed as "the most brilliant student" at Gordon College (55) and a young Sudanese lecturer at the University in Khartoum reveals that "Sa'eed was the first Sudanese to marry an Englishwoman" (55) and that Sa'eed "played such an important role in the plottings of the English in the Sudan during the late thirties" describing him as "one of their most faithful supporters" (56). An Englishman working in the Ministry of Finance discredits Sa'eed as a reliable economist because of his association with the Fabian School (58), an English intellectual movement with Socialist leanings, who "believed that social reform could be achieved by a new political approach of gradual and patient argument; their slogan was 'the inevitability of gradualism'" ("Fabianism and Reform", 2000). Salih also uses intertextuality in the novel, having the narrator read Sa'eed's letters, letters from his English lovers, the writings he preserved in his locked study in Wad Hamis, writing from Mrs. Robinson, his British benefactor, and the letter from Sa'eed to the narrator, appointing him guardian of his two sons. Although intertextuality is a relatively modern term, his use of texts in place of a

narrator can be viewed as a form of the English epistolary novel. Used in Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740), and *Clarissa* (1747-48), the structure is regarded as producing the "first English novel of character" (Abrams, 1993: 131). Though not a narrative "conveyed entirely by an exchange of letters" as Abrams defines it (ibid: 131), intertextuality plays an important role in the *Season* by revealing candid information to both the narrator and reader.

Critical Approaches

In *The Arabic Novel* Allen (1995: 159) characterizes *Season* as a *Bildungsroman*, the German term for a "novel of upbringing." Abrams (1993: 132) defines the focus of the *Bildungsroman* as "the development of the protagonist's mind and character," adding that notable experiences and spiritual crisis result in maturity, enhanced awareness of self and of one's role in the world. Because of the explicit references to historical events and figures, both novels can be considered works of Social Realism. Ghali's and Salih's protagonists are concerned with social and economic conditions of The Sudan and Egypt during the 1950's when both gained their independence from British rule. Salih's narrator describes conditions such as education, health care, and agriculture under the newly established National Democratic Socialist Party (NDSP). At one point in *Season*, after the narrator has returned from his post at the Ministry of Education in Khartoum, he is met by his father and a group of villagers. As they pass an unfinished building, the narrator's uncle, Abdul Mannan says, "A hospital. They've been at it a whole year and can't finish it. It's a hopeless government" (64). Later in the novel, Mahjoub, his respected friend and village leader in the NDSP questions the narrator about a conference he attended in Khartoum. "What was the conference about this time?" he asked with evident interest" (117). The narrator explained that "The Ministry of Education...organized a conference to which it invited delegates from twenty African countries to discuss ways of unifying educational methods throughout the whole continent" (117-18). Disgusted with the neglect of focus upon local conditions, Mahjoub lashes out at the narrator:

Let them build schools first,' said Mahjoub, 'and then discuss unifying education. How do these people's minds work? They waste time in conferences and poppycock and here are our children having to travel several miles to school. Aren't we human beings? Don't we pay taxes?

Haven't we any rights in this country? Everything's in Khartoum. The whole of the country's budget is spent in Khartoum. One single hospital in Merawi, and it takes three days to get there. The women die in child-birth - there's not a single qualified mid-wife in this place. And you, what are you doing in Khartoum? What's the use of having one of us in the government when you're not doing anything? (118)

The narrator, tired from his journey and distraught by the news of the deaths of Wad Rayyes and Hosna bint Mahmoud, withholds details of the conference, such as "Independence Hall" built for the conference, "costing more than a million pounds...designed in London, its corridors of white marble brought from Italy" (119). He confides to the reader:

How can I say to Mahjoub that the Minister who said in his verbose address, received in a storm of clapping: 'No contradiction must occur between what he learns at school and between the reality of the life of the people. Everyone who is educated today wants to sit at a comfortable desk under a fan and live in an air-conditioned house surrounded by a garden, coming and going in an American car as wide as the street. If we do not tear out this disease by the roots we shall have with us a bourgeoisie that is in no way connected with the reality of our life, which is more dangerous to the future of Africa than imperialism itself. (119-20)

...
 "Down with the Pashas, up with the fellahin"- scrawled note from Winston Churchill to Anthony Eden (qtd. in Gordon, 1992: 266)

Beer in the Snooker Club is set amidst the uncertainty of post- Farouk Egypt, thus Historicity dominates the novel's themes and the characters' concerns. Both Ram and Font are activists against British occupation in their country. Font is shot in the leg at Suez (51). The wealth of Ram's family is affected by the Agrarian Land Reform Act, a main tenet of the Free Officers fledgling social program. Gordon reveals that diminishing property ownership was an attempt at "undercutting the political power of landed aristocracy by stripping away its economic base" (1996: 63). Gordon summarizes the main goal of *al harakah al mubarakah* ("the blessed movement"): to root out corruption in the bureaucracy, to narrow the gap between rich and poor, and to destroy the power of the *pasha* class (1996: 59). Ram and Font favor the initial achievements of the Revolution, but their views are inconsistent throughout the narrative. Prior to leaving for England Ram is hopeful about political change, as seen when Ram and Font attempt to procure exit visas.

You'd think we were criminals or something' Font told me, 'imagine needing a visa to *leave* the country. It's disgusting. And then, after three months of useless toil, a man obtains it in half an hour. To think I go and risk my life in Suez every now and then for a country where string have to be pulled (57).

Ram responds, "'Give them time Font. They've only been a very short time in power'" (57). Ram's optimism is temporary, however, as later he cynically asks, "And who is going to climb those stairs and give us a call if a revolution- a real one -takes place? No one" (121).

British occupation and its aftermath, an experience shared by Ghali and Salih, and a theme occupying the novels, marks a focus for Post-Colonialist critics, who concentrate on writings from colonized or formerly colonized cultures (Bressler, 2003: 199). A unifying subject of critics such as Aijaz Ahmad, Homi K. Bhabha, Frederik Jameson, and Edward Said, is the effect of one culture's domination over another. Bhabha's work, *The Location of Culture* (1994) addresses "unhomeliness," a concept defined elsewhere in Post-Colonial theory as "double consciousness" (qtd. in Bressler, 2003: 203). Bhabha believes that the colonized individual possesses two distinct views of the world: that of the colonizer and that of his or her self. Neither culture feels like home and this displacement or lack of roots, argues Bhabha, results in the individual's feeling of abandonment by both cultures, causing the colonized to become a psychological refugee (qtd. in Bressler, 2003: 203). The idea of a "psychic occupation" imprinted consciously or unconsciously, is suggested by the historical, literary, and cultural references shared by Ghali and Salih. Freud's *Totem and Taboo* is one of the books kept in Sa'eed's library (*Season* 132); likewise, Ram refers to Freud's theories on sexual desire (*Beer* 34) and later, while at the Pyramids of Giza, he muses in a passage that may be an obscure reference to Freud's *Moses and Monotheism*, "Had they been built much earlier and had their history been unknown, some Moses or other might well have used them as a sign to some Abraham" (42). A short list of shared references includes: The Fabian Society, Lord Kitchener, Anthony Eden (the conservative British Foreign Secretary after 1951), British economists Keynes and Tawney, Speaker's Corner in London, Dickens, Kafka, Lenin, H.G. Wells, Orwell, George Bernard Shaw and other figures connected with the political left and socialism. In *Season* Mustafa Saa'eed attends Gordon College in Khartoum, an institution El Nour (2003: 151) identifies as integral in the formation of Sudanese intellectualism and literati.

Ghali depicts Ram and Font as foreigners within their native country, having "never learnt Arabic properly" (19). After returning from London, Ram admits, "I still read *The New Statesman* and *The Guardian* and mine is perhaps the only copy of *Tribune* which comes to Egypt" (15). When Ram visits Font at the Snooker Club he finds him "brushing the tables with the *Literary Supplement*" (16), before self-consciously admitting guilt about his infatuation with English culture: "'The real problem with us,' he said, 'is that we're so English it is nauseating. We have no culture of our own'" (18). Salih illustrates Sa'eed's psychic occupation through his library in his den at Wad Hamis. After revealing many of the authors and titles to the reader, including *The Economics of Colonialism*, *Colonialism and Monopoly*, and *The Cross and Gunpowder*- all authored by Saa'eed- the narrator concludes,

Not a single Arabic book. A graveyard. A mausoleum. An insane idea. A prison (137).

Saa'eed's collection includes *The Quran*, but it is in English (137).
Despair is a solid structure; and who is to demolish it? - Gamal 'Abd Al-Nasser

Which Culture?

Ram's character tilts between two perspectives, as he describes, "I returned to my old self and was nothing else but Ram who was born in Cairo and who liked to read and to drink" (101). This "old self" is Ram the Egyptian, an advocate of independence, wanting prosperity for all Egyptians. In London, his "old self" romanticizes the *Fellaheen* to his English acquaintances: "I told them the fellah lived exactly the same way he did ten thousand years ago...even to the houses he built and the way he whirled the water from the Nile to his land" (104). Egyptian Ram also emerges in an imaginary speech, condemning English colonialism:

It was a beautiful speech full of witticisms and quotations, telling them all about the cruelty and misery the English have inflicted upon the millions; and my passion rose so much that I pushed my pint away untouched, and all their faces were watching, intent and ashamed. And, after a fiery condemnation of their acts, I said: the English are a race apart. No Englishman is low enough to have scruples, no Englishman is high enough to be free from tyranny. But every Englishman is born with a certain power. When he wants a thing, he

never tells himself he wants it. He waits until there comes to his mind, no one knows how, a burning conviction that it is his moral and religious duty to conquer those who possess the thing he wants...and then he grabs it. He is never at a loss for an effective moral attitude to take. When he wants a new market for his adulterated goods, he sends a missionary to teach the natives the gospel of peace. The natives kill the missionary, the Englishman flies to arms in defence of Christianity, fights for it, conquers for it, and takes the market as a reward for heaven. (76)

Ram, equal parts nationalist and Anglophile, has no illusions about English honor.

In spite of having "been implanted with the expectation of 'fair play' from the English" (57) in his youth, as a result of private schooling, later the Suez war showed him "the slyness and cruelty of England's foreign policy" (58). The myth of English "fair play" was not lost on Nasser during the Tripartite Collusion. Egyptian commentator and journalist Mohammed Haykal wrote that "Nasser just could not bring himself to believe that Eden would jeopardize Britain's own standing in the Arab world by making war alongside Israel on an Arab nation" (qtd. in Hopwood, 1982: 53). Nasser's "misplaced ideas of an Englishman's sense of honor" (ibid) and Ram's early beliefs of "fair play" demonstrate that the influence of cultural imperialism, like a deep wound, does not heal quickly.

The cultural schizophrenia Ram must confront—politically he opposes the decadence of the elite and their emulation of European culture, personally he enjoys the privileges allowed—is seen in his membership to the Gezira Club. Ram recalls "that in the early days of the revolution [it] was condemned as a symbol of exploitation and was taken over by a committee or something like that. Well, all the members are still members" (127). By referring to "a committee or something like that," Ram is either expressing his ignorance of the events of the revolution or sarcastically dismissing it as not having affected the elite class. "That committee," as documented by Khaled Mohi El Din in *Memories of a Revolution*, was the Revolutionary Command Council, who decided "to close the Gezira Sporting Club, which had become a meeting point of the anti-revolutionary aristocracy and the source of many rumors" (1995: 220). Ram condemns what the club symbolizes, yet hypocritically enjoys the status of membership. As he admits, "I am insincere yet honest" (189).

Ram's identity conflict derives from both his social status in Cairo, and his adoration and exposure to English culture. Ronald Bryden (1964:

301) characterizes Ram (and Font) as waiting for a permanent indigenous political culture. They want to witness more immediate widespread changes and reforms. They "long for the revolution to reach a stage where they can identify with it- in their terms it has not yet become politics." With regards to the revolution, Ram's "terms" are those of English intellectual and political liberals. As he grows increasingly disenchanted his politics fluctuate. His rich aunt mockingly refers to him as "Nasser's disciple" (47) and demeans him in front of the entire family, asking, "Aren't you going to tell them to take our house and silver?" (47). Ram confides his belief that "everything good was going to be carried out by the revolution" (52), yet near the end of the book, in an example of his lack of psychological stability he says, "It's stupid living under a police state without the benefits of the control" (202). This duality first emerges in London, as Ram recalls,

That moment of putting on my coat was the very beginning- the first time in my life that I had felt myself cleaving into two entities, the one participating and the other watching and judging. But the cleavage was not complete then, the two forces had only started pulling in different directions (68).

Ram's "cleavage," a word choice suggesting a violent division, is also noticed by secondary characters, especially Font, who accompanies him to England. Font confronts Ram several times throughout the narrative, saying, "You've changed Ram" (80), and later asking, "What's happening to you Ram? You're changing so fast I'm beginning not to recognize you" (93). Faced by his conflicted character, Ram begins to feel alienated, confused, and lost. His "Egyptian" identity is "watching and judging" his "foreign" identity, "the one participating." Wassef (1997: 19) points out that

Ram's alienation was made more acute by his awareness of it. He was conscious of the different Egypts that existed among the old landed gentry who had more in common with the Anglophone and Francophone communities in Europe." Initially, Ram glamorizes England as "the world of intellectuals" (55), saying, "'Life' was in Europe" (56),

but the Egyptian Ram feels that, "Europe has killed something good and natural in us, killed it for good...for ever" (60). These contrary views, read over the course of five pages in the novel, illustrate the clashing personas that Ram carries with him back to Egypt.

The narrator's "double consciousness" in *Season* is manifested in several ways: it is in his obsession with Mustafa Sa'eed, a symbol of moral decay spawned by the "freedoms" of Western culture; it is seen in his Doctorate in English poetry; it is in his thoughts and actions contrary to his tribal upbringing and the village customs. Like Ram, the narrator is exposed to two worlds. He has a natural affinity for his native culture, and yet, he is attracted to the culture of the colonizer. This is illustrated in his first interaction alone with Mustafa Sa'eed the day after the narrator heard Sa'eed reciting English poetry. The narrator deliberately addresses Sa'eed in English.

He looked at me in astonishment and said, 'What?' When I repeated the phrase he laughed and said, 'Has your long stay in England made you forget Arabic or do you reckon we've become anglicized?' (15).

It is Sa'eed who impresses upon the narrator that he too, a Western educated native, contains the seed capable of producing and spreading the disease of immorality. Before learning about Sa'eed's past, his sins of deceit, adultery, and murder, the narrator seems naïve or innocuous about the potential for corruption caused by exposure to Western cultural values. Upon returning from his studies abroad he is assaulted with questions from the village people, who are curious about life in Europe.

They were surprised when I told them that Europeans were, with minor differences, exactly like them, marrying and bringing up their children in accordance with principles and traditions, that they had good morals and were in general good people (3).

He also muses, "Over there is like here, neither better nor worse" (49), adding, "But I am from here, just as the date palm standing in our courtyard of our house has grown in *our* house and not in anyone else's" (49). The narrator's analogy to the date palm indicates a permanent sense of place rooted in the unchanged traditions and history of the village. He feels a purity, unlike Mustafa Sa'eed, "the black Englishman" (53).

At his trial for murder, Sa'eed's lawyer characterizes him as "a noble person whose mind was able to absorb Western civilization but it broke his heart" (33). Herein lies a fundamental difference between the narrator and Sa'eed. The narrator has the mind, and more importantly, the heart of a poet. He uses language metaphorically and appreciates the colorful qualities of his village and his people. Sa'eed, the economist, has a manipulative mind. However, when Sa'eed reveals the details of his trial

to the narrator, emphasizing his lawyer's attempt to turn "the trial into a conflict between two worlds" (33), the narrator recognizes the slow cultivation of dual natures within his own character. His sense of identity and place seemed secure. He was "not a stone thrown into the water, but seed sown in a field" (5), but gradually he questions his values. His sense of place is destabilized, like the sinking stone, loosed and falling into unknown depths. He wonders, "Was it likely that what happened to Mustafa Sa'eed could have happened to me? He had said he was a lie, so was I also a lie?" (49). He later convinces himself, over guilt for loving Hosna bint Mahmoud, that he, "like him [Mustafa Sa'eed]...was not immune from the germ of contagion that oozes from the body of the universe" (104). Sa'eed, therefore, can be viewed as the force behind the narrator's conflict- a susceptibility for corruption cause by his prolonged immersion in Western culture.

This internal conflict is seen through changes in the narrator's role regarding the traditions of his village life. He has returned to serve his village and use his education to improve conditions, working as a civil servant. Although the traditions and welfare of the village takes precedence, as is custom, the narrator's life in England has affected some of his views about duty and tradition. After the death of Mustafa Sa'eed the narrator learns he has been appointed guardian of Mustafa Sa'eed's two sons. Wad Rayyes, known for his womanizing, has expressed interest in taking Hosna bint Mahmoud as a wife. The narrator advocates that her desire to remain unmarried and focus on raising her sons should be respected. Tribal and social traditions designate that the father and brothers of Hosna bint Mahmoud are responsible for decisions of marriage and have already agreed to the marriage. The narrator forgetting, or perhaps refusing to recognize his place within his native community, tries to persuade Wad Rayyes to abandon the plan. In a response that deftly puts the narrator back in his place, the elder Wad Rayyes says,

Her father's agreed and so have her brothers. This nonsense you learn at school won't wash with us here. In this village the men are the guardians of the women (98).

Further emphasizing adherence to tradition, Mahjoub, his contemporary, who has never lived outside the village, says of the matter; "Women belong to men, and a man's a man even if he's decrepit" (99). The narrator expresses his opinion that "These are things that no longer fit in with our life in this age" (99). "Our life," or the life of the villagers is

contrasted to "this age," in other words, modernity, suggesting a value judgment on the part of the narrator. His character, he now recognizes, has been altered. "The world's changed" (130), he says, but it is his understanding and experience of life, *his* world of self, not the world itself, that has transformed.

Conclusion

The narrators resolve their respective conflicts in different fashions, but only after struggling with the often uneasy and painful process of understanding of their identity and place. Each recognizes the duality, the cultural schizophrenia, afflicting them, and accordingly engage in symbolic actions in an attempt to eradicate further conflict. Ram can continue to work for Dr. Hamza's secret organization, confronting and exposing political corruption. This would be a genuine decision, symbolic of his dedication to Egypt and its future. But having been raised in the manner of the sophisticated gentry--coupled with his obsession with European culture--he abandons his political involvement and marries the Didi, the daughter of his rich aunt, thus cementing his financial future and position within the status quo. He chooses the persona that watches and judges over the one that participates. Dramatically, the narrator in *Season* enters the Nile "swimming towards the northern shore" (166). This action at first seems to mirror the death of Mustafa Sa'eed; it can also be understood as a gesture cleansing and a return to purification.

Midway between North and South the narrator confronts his "destructive forces" (168). He begins to struggle back to the Southern shore, to his loved ones, responsibilities, and place in the village.

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