

Distorted Love in Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*

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All men dream: but not all equally. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds wake in the day to find that it was vanity: but the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act their dream with open eyes to make it possible.

T. E. Lawrence¹

In a blurb on the back of the French translation of Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* Claude-Michel Cluny says that the novel is: 'Angoisse des bâtards nés des noces de l'Afrique et de l'Occident, du passé avec le futur.....',² It plays out the agony of the bastard, or hybrid, who is the product of a love-hate relationship between East and West and of past and future,³ and reveals, as Octavio Paz puts it, 'that the ancient beliefs and customs are still in existence beneath the Western forms.'⁴ The novel explores the concept of time, a concept so singular in Sudan, due to its environment and distances, that control over either does not seem possible. Life moves at a pace different from that in the Western world and problems are magnified or minimised accordingly by this distorted sense of time.⁵ Moreover, not only time but history is distorted by constant flashbacks and fast-forwards 'punctuated by the agonizing cry of (Mustafa) Sa'eed, totally lost to himself, torn apart between East and West, South and North, Black and White.'⁶

The concept of love in the narration is also distorted. It is a garment to be donned or discarded by its characters to suit their convenience. The work can be seen as a love story, a romance, if one accepts Toni Morrison's definition that romance is 'an exploration of anxiety imported from the

shadows of European culture' and that it makes 'possible the sometimes safe and other times risky embrace of quite specific, understandably human, fear.'⁷ The fear in this case is the fear of the self, the fear of loving and of evoking love. According to Erich Fromm 'the capacity to love in an individual living in any given culture depends on the influence this culture has on the character of the average person.'⁸ My theory is that Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* is a love-story about impaired love, about ailing societies that are incapable of imparting to their individuals a sense of security that is necessary for emotional maturity and healthy psychological development. This paper will look at the patterns of love that inform the novel and seek to show that not only are the succession of time and the continuance of history distorted in it, but that, as a necessity, love in all its forms is disfigured and shown as a crippling rather than an ennobling force.

Following the suicide of Hosna, Mustafa Sa'eed's widow, and two years after his death, the narrator in Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*, finally decides to enter the room whose secret is the legacy left to him by the dead man. He says:

Opening a notebook, I read the first page: 'My Life Story -- By Mustafa Sa'eed.' On the next page was the dedication: 'To those who see with one eye, speak with one tongue and see things as either black or white, either Eastern or Western.' I flicked through the rest of the pages but found nothing-- not a single sentence, not a single word.⁹

The narrator wonders at the meaning of the words, at their significance. Was it, then, possible to have a foot in both cultures, to adapt what seemed laudable in the 'other' culture to suit one's own? It is through the death of Hosna, the woman he loves (141),¹⁰ that he is brought to see that intermarriage between African-Arab and Western values is not always possible. One has to bend at times to avoid a direct clash with an inflexible and merciless society; had he accepted to take Hosna as a second wife, the tragedy would have been prevented. But he is too much immured in the coloniser's culture to do so. Despite this, he returns to his people with a great yearning (1), his seven-year stay in the 'other' culture making him romanticise his own, endowing it with qualities that perhaps it lacked. He gives in to some extent to his poetic effusions. Speaking of the narrator's oblivion to his surroundings, May Maalouf says:

It is extremely ironic that while the narrator sees himself as fixedly rooted in his background like the palm tree and that his village never left him even while he was away, yet he seems to have forgotten all about his culture when he naively expects Hosna to have power against her patriarchal society.¹¹

He cannot expect sympathy for his views on marriage from a society that not only sanctions, but indeed encourages a man to marry more than one wife. The people of the village reject what they consider an invasion of their traditions, a defiance of their time-honoured norms, and the narrator comes to realise that he has to modify his views in order to exist among them and bridge the dichotomy between what he sees as correct behaviour and what his society judges as acceptable. According to Frantz Fanon, 'culture is just the expression of a nation, the expression of its preferences, of its taboos and of its patterns. It is at every stage of the whole society that other taboos, values and patterns are framed.' Therefore, he believes that it is a 'mistake...to try to find cultural expressions for and to give new values to native culture within the framework of colonial domination.'¹² Thus, if his people were to yield to the dictates of the 'other' culture, they would not be enriching their own heritage but giving in to the foreign colonial culture.¹³ The narrator is perceptive enough -- and perhaps sympathetic and realistic enough -- to sense that just as the 'European (and the Englishman in particular) cherished the notion of his gentlemanliness among savages',¹⁴ the villagers cherished their African-Arab identity and could not allow their women to become 'infected' with the seeds of looseness and immorality characteristic of the ways of the 'other' culture. Unlike Mustafa Sa'eed, who was unable to reconcile the two cultures,¹⁵ the narrator comes to terms with the situation and adopts the tactics of tailoring his acquired values to harmonise to some extent with those held by the villagers in order to retain his sanity. Therefore, he opts for life with all its contradictions and distortions of noble concerns rather than self-inflicted death by drowning at the end of the novel.

In highlighting the isolation of those who stand out from the crowd, Salih's novel has been compared to some European works, notably Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le noir* Camus's *L'Etranger* and Shakespeare's *Othello* with all of which it has much in common. Mohammad Shaheen¹⁶ compares Sa'eed to Heathcliffe who remains a social outcast because of his colour; to

Kurtz who goes as invader from North to South; and to Julien Sorel whose love becomes for him a vehicle for social advancement, while Muhyi al-Din Subhi¹⁷ finds that Sa'eed is as much a stranger in his relation to Jean Morris as Othello¹⁸ is to Desdemona, because they each move in a circle distinct from that in which the European woman moves; hence the awareness of both Sa'eed and Othello that they are unable to penetrate the life of the woman they love. Subhi also compares the alienation of Sa'eed from his world to that of Mersault who is an outsider to both himself and society.¹⁹ Sa'eed's thirst for the knowledge that the invader has brought into colonised Africa alienates him from his people. Moreover, his hunger for the 'other' culture and his powerful feelings of hatred and revenge isolate him from human love. He describes his relation with his mother as loveless, a relation based on mutual interests and on a chance meeting of strangers in the road of life. His parting from her is cold, calculated and businesslike (23). Then, as a result of his desolate childhood he is later incapable of responding to the maternal warmth shown to him by the Robinsons to whom he was like a son. He says:

At that time I was wrapped up in myself and paid no attention to the love they showered on me. Mrs Robinson was as tender to me as a mother to her son. (26)²⁰

Yet Mrs. Robinson merely inspires in him a sexual yearning, which Yosif Tarawneh and Joseph John see as the incestuous attraction of the foster son for his surrogate mother, a variation on the Oedipus complex.²¹ Or perhaps because he senses that her love for him is mixed with the condescending pity one feels for an orphaned native, she comes to embody the Europe on whose women, to put it in Edward Said's words, Mustafa Sa'eed 'unleashes ritual violence.'²² According to Kabbani, part of the imperial world view was to perceive the East as a sexual domain, and a domain to be colonised.²³ By the same token, Europe and its women become for Mustafa Sa'eed the fertile land to be conquered and subdued. He tells the narrator:

....as I stood on the station platform amidst a welter of sounds and sensations, with the woman's arms around my neck, her mouth on my cheek, the smell of her body – a strange European smell – tickling my nose, her breast touching my chest, I felt – I, a boy of twelve – a vague sexual yearning I had never previously experienced. (25)

Soon after, unable to return the love bestowed on him by a fellow student, he is accused by her of being sub-human:

I thought of my life in Cairo. Nothing untoward had occurred. My knowledge had increased. Several minor incidents had happened to me; a fellow student had fallen in love with me and had then hated me. 'You're not a human being,' she had said to me. 'You're a heartless machine.' (27-28)

In view of his later escapades in London with English women, this incident reveals Sa'eed as someone who perceives the act of love as an act of supremacy and who has no wish, therefore, to control a fellow African-Arab or to ensnare her. His domination has to be of the women of the 'other' culture. He sees the act symbolically as one of liberation. In this respect, Sa'eed is not unlike V.S. Naipaul's protagonist in *The Mimic Men*.²⁴ Ranjit Singh reinvents himself in London as a dandy and a conqueror of the well-meaning middle-class foreign girls whom he sets out to meet (at the British Council) and to exploit. In Salih's novel, a Sudanese minister claims to the narrator that Sa'eed, once his teacher, had said: 'I'll liberate Africa with my penis' (120). The sexual act becomes for Sa'eed, then, not an act of tenderness but one of wielding political power, an expression of distorted brutal love. Sa'eed, later, tells the narrator: 'I would do everything to entice a woman to my bed. Then I would go after some new prey' (30). Thus with Ann Hammond, a student of Oriental languages at Oxford:

I deceived her, seducing her by telling her that I would marry her and that our marriage would be a bridge between north and south. (68)

Although Ann Hammond's curiosity about the South is not unlike the curiosity about the Western way of life displayed by the inhabitants of the narrator's village (3), hers is tinged with the orientalist's misconceptions and need to package and label the Orient.²⁵ For, Sa'eed's dark complexion was like the 'veil of mystery which covered the face of the Orient...baffling...inviting.'²⁶ Of Ann Hammond Sa'eed says:

Unlike me, she yearned for tropical climes, cruel suns, purple horizons. In her eyes I saw a symbol of all her hankerings. I am South that yearns for the North and the ice. (30).

He allows her to wallow in her romantic dream of Africa, in her distorted love for and fascination for a continent she has fantasised about in her daydreams, while he goes about heartlessly entangling her in his web. Not only is she the enemy to be conquered just as her countrymen had raped his continent, but she is also the uncircumcised Western woman, to be used and discarded, being always ripe for invasion, not unlike the female slaves who legally belong to their masters to do with as they chose,²⁷ but different in that the European woman has to pay for the humiliation her countrymen have caused to the people they colonise. Bint Majzoub says of the 'infidel' women's nonchalant approach to the ritual of the sexual act: 'They're uncircumcised and treat the whole business like having a drink of water' (80). And she tells the narrator: 'We were afraid.... you'd bring back with you an uncircumcised infidel for a wife' (4).

Sa'eed later seduces Sheila Greenwood, a country girl, who works as a waitress during the day and pursues her studies in the evening, 'with presents, honeyed words' (39). He tells the narrator:

The smell of burning sandalwood made her dizzy. ...She entered my bedroom a chaste virgin and when she left she was carrying the germs of self- destruction within her. (35)

The germs of self-destruction are perhaps those very same ones that the Europeans introduced into the heart of Africa with their advent, thus creating an identity crisis in a naïve people, the result of what Paulo Freire calls the self-depreciation which the oppressed are made to feel by their oppressors and which 'derives from their internalisation of the opinion the oppressors hold of them.'²⁸ In one way, therefore, Sa'eed seeks both to court the European women and to ruin them. As for the love-starved Isabella Seymour, wife of a successful surgeon and mother of three, he brings her to his bedroom 'where the smell of burning sandalwood and incense' assails her, 'filling her lungs with a perfume she little knew was deadly' (42). He cold-bloodedly selects her as his prey (36) and seduces her with 'fabricated stories about deserts of golden sands and jungles where non-existent animals called to one another' (38). It is of interest to note here that although Sa'eed disclaims any association

with Othello: 'I am no Othello. I am a lie' (33) except in origin: 'I'm like Othello—Arab-African' (38), he uses the same methods of seduction as Othello who himself charms Desdemona with stories of adventure and exotic places.²⁹ At one point, Sa'eed tells the narrator, he feels as if he has 'been transformed in her eyes into a naked, primitive creature, a spear in one hand and an arrow in the other' (38). To Isabella, who has lead a very uneventful life, Sa'eed is the embodiment of a romantic dream woven from the lies he tells her, and corroborated by the lie that he lives. And she becomes one of the victims of the discontented Sudanese economist, a woman 'who could not prevent happiness from entering her heart, even if it meant a violation of convention and the wounding of a husband's pride' (140). He invades the privacy of her life, bringing to the surface passions she did not know existed and that are related to the distorted love of the exotic and an infatuation with the 'other'. She discovers 'deep within herself dark areas that had previously been closed' (140) which causes her personal tragedy and, ultimately, her death.

The same pattern repeats itself yet again in the Jean Morris episode; however, the mutual misconceptions become in this case more pronounced. In an article on Tayeb Salih's works, Rotraud Wielandt says that with the other women, Sa'eed's revenge

for the violence to which African Arabs have been subjected by Europeans in the course of history is taken by the gentler means of seduction. Mustafa Sa'id's (sic) main device for seducing English women is to exploit the prejudices and fantasies they cherish about the civilization he comes from..... He is only playing the role of an African Arab or an 'Oriental' as those women imagine him to be. What is happening in those relations is therefore not a genuine cultural encounter, but a comedy intended for impressing the female partners by showing them what they want to see.³⁰

The encounter with Jean Morris, on the other hand, is one between two cultures; it is therefore fierce and violent. Sa'eed is now no longer the hunter but the quarry (159). Unlike the other women he seduced, Jean Morris is both drawn to and repelled by him. She is mistress of the situation and insists on pulling the strings herself. Like her countrymen, she wants to dominate the 'other' whom she believes inferior (because he is not Western). The love she claims she has for him is a patronising love for creatures whose destiny one controls. 'Thus,' says Wielandt, 'the roles

of the intercultural play are inverted'.³¹ Jean Morris has no illusions about Sa'eed or his background. By virtue of her European descent, she is the colonizer, the 'master', he the colonized, the slave. For Mustafa Sa'eed, Jean Morris becomes the goal to be attained; and he pursues her for three years before she finally capitulates to his persistent chase. He then marries her at her bidding (33). He tells the narrator, resentfully:

My bedroom became a theatre of war; my bed a patch of hell. When I grasped her it was like grasping at clouds, like bedding a shooting-star..That bitter smile was continually on her mouth I would stay awake all night warring with bow and sword and spear and arrows, and in the morning I would see the smile unchanged and would know that once again I had lost the combat. (33-34).

It is only by finally stabbing her³² that each can finally love and respect the other. Killing Jean Morris symbolises for Mustafa Sa'eed his conquest of the invading culture, which had taught him to look up to it, to venerate it;³³ while this very deed liberates him in the eyes of Jean Morris, making him at last worthy of her esteem. For, his nobility lies in his ability to absorb Western culture (33) and, like Shakespeare's Caliban in *The Tempest*, is then able to 'use the master's language to deconstruct his absolute power'³⁴ or apply his own standards to him.³⁵ But his act of purification from the subjugation of the West and his negation of their values do not liberate him, regardless of what he believes. According to Mohammad Al-Khatib in *The Breaking of Dreams* this is because Sa'eed rejects the West from a feeling of despair, without conviction, and therefore his nostalgia for his dreams of the West remains a recurring theme after he settles in the narrator's village.³⁶ His creation of a room in the English style in the midst of this village is perhaps his way of paying tribute to a culture that he loves and respects at heart, yet attempts to reject.

Sa'eed's return to the Sudan and his choice of a small village situated at a great distance from the capital, which has not been adulterated by modern technology, is a form of escape from himself and from his dilemma. However, he fails to see that he is carrying the 'germs' from the 'other' culture with him into the village. The impurities of the 'other' culture are not cleansed with his symbolic donning of Sudanese village manners and keeping the outward polite religious form of going to Friday communal prayers (7); they are merely camouflaged. In his article on *Season of*

Migration to the North, Abd Jallab³⁷ says that the colonizers did not move the village to action in all their years of domination as did Mustafa Sa'eed who shook it to its very foundations and left the narrator the legacy to carry on. It is thus that he 'infects' the woman he marries³⁸ with these impurities albeit unintentionally; he would certainly have wanted to protect her from the contagion had he been aware of it as witnessed by his later words in the letter he leaves to the narrator after his death asking him to spare his two sons the 'pangs of wanderlust' (65) so that they can lead a normal life. It is not unreasonable to postulate that Sa'eed guesses that his wife, through contact with him, is no longer the ordinary village woman, and, by leaving the narrator as guardian over his children, hopes that he may eventually marry his widow who would find it hard to survive unmarried among her people. The villagers themselves become aware that Hosna bint Mahmoud has changed. The change is not palpable, but it is disquieting. Although they cannot put a name to it, the villagers sense it. Mahjoub tells the narrator that Hosna

changed after her marriage to Mustafa Sa'eed. All women change after marriage, but she in particular underwent an indescribable change. It is as though she were another person. Even we who were her contemporaries and used to play with her in the village look at her today and see her as something new -- like a city woman, if you know what I mean. (100-1)³⁹

He says that she has gone mad (132), and was imprudent enough to speak her mind (132). His mother calls her 'an impudent hussy' (123) because she asked his father that the narrator marry her. His grandfather says that she is 'a bringer of bad luck' (124), a male of view of women who challenge conventions. Although a savage rejecter of Western values, Mustafa Sa'eed actually brings those same values into his own home and, in refusing to acknowledge the fact, he becomes the instigator of a tragedy: murder and a suicide. In a culture where 'men are guardians of the women' (98) and where 'women belong to men' (99), Hosna's refusal of Wad Rayyes, a rich man in his seventies, as a husband is seen as a defiance of cultural norms. The man who only admired a donkey when he saw other men riding it (100) has no doubt whatsoever that Bint Mahmoud would accept him. His horror is great, to say the least, when he learns of her refusal. He cries out:

I shall marry no one but her ..She'll accept me whether she likes it or not. Does she imagine she's some queen or princess? Widows in this village are more common than empty bellies. She should thank God she's found a husband like me.⁴⁰ (97)

Wad Rayyes is merely voicing the general view concerning the state of women. Although the villagers have changed their local arak and beer for English beer and whisky when they can afford it, the rules relating to women remained unchanged. Waris Dirie writes about the rôle of African women:

Women are the backbone of Africa; they do most of the work. Yet women are powerless to make decisions. They have no say, sometimes not even in whom they will marry.⁴¹

The village men fear the corruption of their women by Western values that would allow them to dance unveiled openly with men and cohabit with them in sin (13) or, worse still, to become impudent enough to show a man their preference for him and woo him (123,132). Their warped love for their women lead them to shield them from what they consider a breakdown of morals. They themselves, though, are unaware of the anomalies in the values that govern their lives. They practise female circumcision and attribute it mistakenly to Islam (81)⁴², they generally take more than one wife because they consider this a sign of their virility (77,103), hold drinking sessions (13) and swear an oath of divorce. Subsequently, they bring out their prayer rugs to perform their prayers or hasten to the mosque to do so. However, the contradictions in their practices are not apparent to them. Those who deviate from the norms, such as the narrator and Hosna, are at variance with society and, are, therefore, condemned by it.

Thus, Hosna commits a transgression when she refuses a persistent suitor whom she does not love. Although she has refused younger men than Wad Rayyes (86), she is not allowed to refuse the latter since her father has given him his word.⁴³ She is sworn at and beaten by her father (122) and coerced into marrying Wad Rayyes. In Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*, in another instance of cultural contradictions, Jamila's father, Anwar, though outwardly liberal and westernised to a great degree, uses a different method of intimidation to force his will on his daughter—he

blackmails her by going on a hunger strike to marry the boy of his choice. Jan Goodwin says:

Even though Islam states that a woman has the right to refuse a husband selected for her, in reality, familial pressures can be so strong, they may result in her death if she is not acquiescent.⁴⁴

For love, in all its forms, whether paternal or marital, is expressed in twisted means through dominance and obedience.⁴⁵ Mahmoud had earlier 'given' Mustafa Sa'eed one of his daughters--perhaps Hosna--in marriage (6). However, Wad Rayyes, the suitor, unlike Sa'eed, the former husband, exercises his prerogative as a man by communicating his desire/love for Hosna through his power to control the woman and her destiny. That Wad Rayyes 'changed women like he changed donkeys' (96) did not weigh against him: 'women were women' (82) and a stallion was not finicky (79), he would say. In this he is not unlike King Mark who found gold and brass in both Isolde and Brangane: 'To him one woman was as another.'⁴⁶ Their love for the women they claim to cherish is based on purely physical desire, a misshapen love since the beloved is both dispensable and replaceable. However, neither forfeits the right to the woman, for she becomes a possession to be fought over to the death. The murder and suicide resulting from Was Rayyes's forcing himself on Hosna is again blamed on the woman, women being 'sisters of the devil' (123). This belief echoes the medieval misogynist view of the Church fathers who saw 'womankind as being essentially sinful; vain, inconstant, deceitful – more liable to temptation,'⁴⁷ a view based on the Biblical image of Eve who brought pain and suffering to humankind (God said to Eve: 'You shall eat bread with the sweat of your brows—you shall give birth in pain.' *Genesis* 4,16), made earth a vale of tears and closed the doors of Paradise to her descendants (Mary reopened the doors to Paradise). And Pierre Abelard, scholar and philosopher, himself a passionate lover, wrote in his *Historia Calamitatum* to excuse himself for having loved Heloise: 'I protested that I had done nothing unusual in the eyes of anyone who had known the power of love, and recalled how since the beginning of the human race women had brought the noblest men to ruin.'⁴⁸ Accordingly, Hosna has brought Wad Rayyes to his death through an act of horrific dimensions. She is only given a burial for the sake of decency (133). Mahjoub tells the narrator: 'We'd have thrown her into the river or left her body out for the hawks' (133). The crime is not that an old man should force himself brutally on a younger woman, biting and

scratching her in his mimicry of the act of love (126-27) but that the woman should defend herself and reject his advances. Hosna's feeling of her own worth instilled in her by Sa'eed, her awareness of a dignity her culture had deprived her of, work against her in the end. It is certainly rather curious that Bint Majzoub -- an unconventional woman both 'daring and uninhibited', a uniquely independent woman who has had eight husbands and who swears an oath of divorce like men and smokes and drink to the same extent that they do (76) -- should be so traditional insofar as the question involves women's departure from what is considered the norm for her society. She laments the loss of her dear friend, Wad Rayyes, with: 'She (Hosna) accepted Mustafa Sa'eed, why could she not accept Wad Rayyes?' (129). Her love and friendship for Wad Rayyes blind her to the transgression he has committed by ravishing, albeit legally, another woman. Her attitude is puzzling since one would have expected her as a free spirit to sympathize with Hosna in her attempt to establish her worth as equal to that of men. Yet one cannot condemn her out of hand since she is the product of conditioning.

This, then, is another example of the difficulties inherent in attempting to make black and white judgements. Only those who see with one eye, as Sa'eed says, can divide things as cleanly into black and white, east and west. It would take a broader vision -- perhaps the narrator's -- to accept a picture that included apparent anomalies. But before achieving this integrating vision, the conflicts of feelings of the narrator become unbearable for him: should he, after all, have spared Hosna such a fate by taking her as a second wife against all his principles? In behaving correctly to his own wife and refusing to hurt her sensibilities by remarrying, he has hurt Hosna whom he loves. What is love then, he asks? Is it hatred? Are love and hate interchangeable? Are they two aspects of the same concept? It is in this frame of mind that he contemplates an easy way out of his misery: he will allow himself to drown halfway across the river as he swims symbolically from North to South. However, his responsibility toward his culture, toward those he loves, is stronger and, unlike Sa'eed, he opts for a life to which he will try to give meaning and a sense of value. By accepting the shortcomings of the two cultures, he can perhaps reconcile them both. He makes the decision to live and to shoulder the burden of shaking the village a little more from its smug beliefs. His last words before he shouts out for help are: 'If I am unable to forgive then I shall forget. I shall live by force and cunning' (169), another example of the crippling effect of love. His love

for his people, his village, his family makes of him a survivor in the face of adversity, yet instead of ennobling him, love degrades him, transforming him into him a devious trickster, a fake. His determination to live on in spite of all the odds and his belief in himself seem to make it possible for him to win where he believes Sa'eed has failed. Sa'eed's choice of death was due to the realisation that life would be as distorted as love if his inner life was in conflict with the outer one. The narrator, however, succeeds in reconciling the apparent dichotomy of the images of love and life and North-South East-West. He seems to be able to fit together the pieces of the disjointed picture.

Thus we see that distorted love is a characteristic of the novel. The narrator's ultimate pure vision of a paradoxical love which is at once a liberating force and incompatible with life as he lives it in his village, is contrasted with the distorted vision of Mustafa Sa'eed, provided by the North-South East-West divide and which only death can reconcile. Salih shows that the characters who come within the divide are torn between these polarities and are, therefore, victims of the destructive force of love which render them unfit as members of a unicultural community. The image of the love they project is debilitating and jagged like the edges of a jigsaw puzzle. Just as Sa'eed dies because he is unable to survive the contradiction between his inner and outer world, Hosna dies because she cannot give in to the rape of her dignity, or her acquired views of her personal rights, in a society that does not recognise a woman to be anything but a possession and that bows to the concept that she can only acquire worth through her male kin. Nevertheless, *Season of Migration to the North* does not end on a pessimistic note. It holds some hope, through the narrator, for those whose vision is pure like the narrator's. Only those can survive in a changing world where East and West, North and South are forever meeting and inevitably clashing.

Notes

¹"Introductory Chapter", *Seven Pillars of Wisdom: A Triumph*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1962; Jonathan Cape: 1935, p. 23.

²*Saison de la migration vers le Nord*, traduit de l'arabe par Abdelwahab Meddeb et Fady Noun, Paris: La Bibliothèque arabe Sindbad, 1972 (texte arabe 1969).

³ See also Marie Cardinal, *The Words to Say It: An Autobiographical Novel*, trans. by Pat Goodheart, London: Picador, 1984. A young French woman born in Algeria is possessed by what she calls the 'Thing' which poisons her waking hours and finally diagnoses her illness: 'It seems to me that the Thing took root in me permanently when I understood that we were to assassinate Algeria. For Algeria was my real mother. I

carried her inside me the way a child carries the blood of his parents in his veins.' (P. 69). For a discussion of the black and white dialogue in Cardinal's autobiographical novel see Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, New York: Vintage Books, 1993, Preface, pp viii ff.

⁴*The Labyrinth of Solitude*, trans. by L. Kemp, Y. Milos and R. Phillips Belash, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1990, p. 89. Paz here refers to the conquest and colonisation of the Mexican people.

⁵Cf. the comment of the renowned French Orientalist Jacques Berque on the back cover of the French translation of Salih's novel (see n.2 above): 'Le récit de Tayeb Salih a rompu la succession du temps comme l'histoire a rompu la durée du Soudan.' He suggests that the events of the novel fragment the chronology of the novel like colonial rule has interrupted the flow of the history of Sudan.

⁶Mona Takieddine-Amyuni, 'Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*: An Interpretation,' *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 2 (Winter 1980), 11. She further adds: 'The chronology of the narration is continuously broken down by souvenirs, mirages, dreams, obsessions, a diary within a diary, struggles and wars, successfully conveying Sa'eed's agonizing attempts to conquer the forces that are crushing him.'

⁷*Playing in the Dark*, p. 36.

⁸*The Art of Loving*, London: Thorsons, 1995, p. 65.

⁹Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*, trans. by Denys Johnson-Davies, London: Heineman, 1976; Washington DC: The Three Continents Press, 1980, p. 150. All further references are to this edition. Page numbers will be noted parenthetically in the text.

¹⁰Amyuni (1980), 13, suggests that the 'Narrator enacts Sa'eed's story against his will and unconsciously falls in love with Hosna,' He does not confess his love, however, because he is able to fight Sa'eed's phantom.

¹¹'Tayeb Salih and Joseph Conrad Revisited: *Season of Migration to the North* and *Heart of Darkness*,' *International Journal of Arabic-English Studies*, 1,1 (June 2000), 161. In a recent study on globalization, Thomas Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization*, New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1999, p 27 says the following: 'Olive trees are important. They represent everything that roots us, anchors us, identifies us and locates us in this world – whether it be belonging to a family, a community, a tribe, a nation, a religion, or most of all, place called home. Olive trees are what give us the warmth of family, the joy of individuality, the intimacy of personal rituals, the depth of private relationships, as well as the confidence and security to reach out and encounter others.' Olive trees are the counterparts of palm trees (and perhaps lemon trees, *Season*, 15)

¹²*The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. by Constance Farrington, Preface by Jean-Paul Sartre, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967, p. 196.

¹³It is interesting to compare the condescension of the English during the Victorian period, which is precisely the period when Britain was most active 'colonially'. See Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, New York: Signet Classic, 1964, p. 155: 'But there was a foreign gentleman amongst them ... and there was a droll disposition, not only on the part of Mr Podsnap but of everybody else, to, treat him as if he were a child who was hard of hearing.'

¹⁴Rana Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions: Europe's Myths of Orient*, revised and expanded edition, London: Pandora, 1994, p. 78.

¹⁵ It is interesting to compare the treatment of the issue of identity in such works as V. S. Naipaul's *A Home for Mr Biswas* and Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*.

¹⁶ *Tahawulat al-Shawq fi Mawsim al-Hijra ila-Shamal (The World of Longing Transformed : A Comparative Study of Tayeb Salih's Season of Migration to the North)*, Beirut : Arab Institute for Research and Publishing, 1993.

¹⁷ 'Mawsim al Hijra ila-Shamal bayn Utail wa Mirsu' ('Season of Migration to the North between Othello and Mersault'), in Ahmad Sa'eed Muhammadiya, et. al., *Al-Tayeb Salih: Abqari al-Riwayya al-Arabiyya (Tayeb Salih: The Genius of the Arabic Novel)*, Beirut: Dar al-Awda, 1976, pp. 39-77.

¹⁸ Othello is mentioned three times in Salih's novel, pp. 33, 38, 95.

¹⁹ It is interesting to compare Marlow's view of existence *a propos* of which he says: 'We live as we dream—alone.' See Joseph Conrad, *Youth and Heart of Darkness*, London: Dent & Sons, 1965, p. 89.

²⁰ Maalouf (1980), 134, suggests that Salih undermined the sympathetic report Mrs. Robinson gives of 'Moozie' by ascribing to her a sentimental and pampered diction.

²¹ 'Tayeb Salih and Freud: The Impact of Freudian Ideas on *Season of Migration to the North*', in *Arabica*, tome xxxv, 1988, 332. Personally, I do not subscribe to this view.

²² *Culture and Imperialism*, New York: Vintage Books, 1994, p. 211.

²³ See Kabbani (1994), p. 59.

²⁴ See Jyotsna Singh 'Othello's Identity, Postcolonial Theory, and Contemporary African Rewritings of *Othello*', in *Women, 'Race', and Writing in the Early Modern Period*, ed. by Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker, London & New York: Routledge, 1994, p. 298. Singh says that as an invader to England, Mustaf Sa'eed is a 'mimic man' because he reverses the roles and plays the part of Lord Kitchener and others.

²⁵ See Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, Reprinted with a new afterword, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1995, pp. 40-41: 'The Orient was viewed as if framed by the classroom, the criminal court, the prison, the illustrated manual. Orientalism, then, is knowledge of the Orient that places things Oriental in class, court, prison, or manual for scrutiny, study, judgment, discipline, or governing.'

²⁶ Fuad Sha'ban, *Islam and Arabs in Early American Thought: The Roots of Orientalism in America*, North Carolina: The Acorn Press, 1991, p. 182.

²⁷ Cf. Wad Rayyes's sexual encounter with the young black slave girl whose naked beauty he lewdly and unashamedly sings the praises of just before he is bundled into marriage with another (74).

²⁸ *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. by M. B. Ramos, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1996, p. 45.

²⁹ See I.3.141-151. Brabantio also accuses Othello of having seduced his daughter 'with some mixtures powerful o'er blood/ Or with some dream conjured to this effect.' (I.3.105-06). One wonders if his love for Desdemona was not tinged with the desire to possess and control an object which belongs to the master's culture.

³⁰ 'The Problem of Cultural Identity in the Writings of Al-Tayyib Salih', *Studia Arabica et Islamica*, ed. by Wadad Qadi, Beirut : The American University Press, 1981, p. 495.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 496.

³² Cf. Sophy's sexual fulfilment through the drawing of blood. See William Golding, *Darkness Visible*, New York: Farrar. Straus. Giroux, 1979, 145-46. Also the sexual connotations in the ripping open of the sow's throat in Golding's *Lord of the Flies*,

London & Boston: Faber and Faber, 1954, p. 149. See also the encounter between Wad Rayyes and Hosna, below.

³³ Cf. Robinson Crusoe who considers that the very colour of the 'savage' makes him fit to be his servant: 'I likewise taught him to say Master, and then let him know, that was to be my name.' See Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965, p. 209.

³⁴ Ana Maria Manzananas Calvo, 'What Does it Mean to Be Caliban? Visions of 'the Other' in *The Tempest* and Afro-American Slavery', unpublished paper, p. 11.

³⁵ Cf. E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1936, p. 42. Mrs Turton's manner grows more distant when she discovers that some of the Indian ladies on the tennis lawn spoke English 'and might apply some of her own standards to her.'

³⁶ 'Inkisar al-Ahlam', *Arab Critical Studies, 1*, Damascus: Publications of the Ministry of Culture, 1987, 109. Arundhati Roy in *The God of Small Things*, London: Flamingo, 1997, also deals with the theme of the rejection of the coloniser's ways, yet equally the fascination by them.

³⁷ In Muhammadiya, et al., 1976, p. 137.

³⁸ His choice of a wife is conventional, as if he wishes to reject the European approach to a relationship. The narrator is told that 'Mahmoud had given him *one* of his daughters in marriage' (6) (the italisation is mine).

³⁹ In *Price of Honor: Muslim Women Lift the Veil of Silence on the Islamic World*, New York: A Plume Book, 1995, p. 32, Jan Goodwin says: 'Once married, every aspect of a woman's life will be dictated by her husband....'

⁴⁰ See Ovid, 'The Loves' in *The Art of Love*, trans. by Rolfe Humphries, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1957, Book II, XIX, 3, p. 65: 'Easy things nobody wants, but what is forbidden is tempting.' See also Andreas Capellanus, *The Art of Courtly Love*, with an introduction, translation and notes by John Jay Parry, New York & London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1969, p. 185, Rule XIV: 'The easy attainment of love makes it of little value; difficulty of attainment makes it prized.'

⁴¹ *Reader's Digest*, June 1999 issue, 1. The magazine ran an article on female circumcision taken from supermodel Waris Dirie's book *Desert Flower* that she co-authored with Cathleen Miller. The article deals with the unspeakable horrors involved in the maiming of young girls in Somalia to make them marketable for marriage.

⁴² Leila Ahmad in *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1992, pp 175-76, says that 'this custom, practiced by some classes in Egypt, appears to be geographically confined, among Arab countries, to Egypt, the Sudan, and some parts of Arabia. It is not an Islamic custom, and in Egypt, for instance, is common among Christians as among Muslims.' And in *Womanpower: The Arab Debate on Women at Work*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, p 156, Nadia Hijab says: 'There is nothing in either Islamic or Christian texts condoning circumcision, which is practised mostly in sub-Saharan African countries and in Egypt, Sudan and Somalia, by Christians, Muslims and animists.'

⁴³ The theme of the daughter being forced to marry a man much older than her merely because her father had given his word to him abounds in Western literature. A case in point is the marriage of Julie to M de Wolmar, old enough to be her father, because her own father had promised her to him. She is beaten into submission. See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie ou la Nouvelle Heloise*, Paris: Classiques Garnier, Première partie, Lettre LXIII de Julie à Claire, pp. 149-151.

⁴⁴ *Price of Honor*, p. 32.

⁴⁵ In Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* the old king relies on Imoinda's obedience to her king (to replace her love for him) to make her do his bidding, namely to separate her from his grandson and appropriate her for himself. See *Oroonoko and Other Writings*, Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 15. And Etsuko in Kazuo Ishiguro's *A Pale View of the Hills*, brings about her daughter's untimely death by her sense of duty and service to her husband. The question of duty v. personal choice, or *noblesse oblige*, is prevalent especially in medieval literature, where a knight in particular is bound in honour to his liege lord.

⁴⁶ Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan*, with the surviving fragments of the *Tristan* of Thomas, trans. by A. T. Hatto, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, p. 208.

⁴⁷ Gillian Cloke, *The Female Man of God: Women and Spiritual Power in the Patristic Age, AD 350-450*, London & New York: Routledge, 1995, p. 27. It is noteworthy that in the *Koran* the reason given

for the expulsion of both Adam and Eve from Paradise is their joint disobedience of God.

⁴⁸ *The letters of Abelard and Heloise*, trans. with an introduction by Betty Radice, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974, p. 70.

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