

The 'Self' and the 'Other' in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Al-Tayyib Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*: Postcolonial Study

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Abstract: Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* are about Man's journey into his self, and the discoveries to be made there about the 'other'. Both novels present the unpleasant and painful experience of colonialism in Africa which has great effects on almost all faces of life such as language, education, religion, popular culture and the like. If Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (1966) deals with the perceptions of people in the third world to the West, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* deals with the perceptions of Europeans to the third world in Africa. The two novels illustrate that the clashes between East and West are not only external but they are internal too, forcing one to question one's place in a new culture. Marlow's self-concept consists of mental images he has of himself: physical appearance as a white, accomplishments, skills, social talents, roles, intellectual traits, and emotional states. Thus, he feels superior to other Africans. Mustafa Sa'eed's self-concept is that he is intelligent but black and inferior to the Europeans. When he talks about himself Saied sees that he has a wonderful ability for understanding and his mind is like a sharp knife. But he never made use of his intelligence as it should be. Sa'eed emerges as a person who has abused the colonial system because he was abused and destroyed by it, and who has returned to the Sudan, bearing with him the rot and destruction he has come to embody. In both novels the 'self' and the 'other' can be compared in terms of the past colonial experience. The colonial 'other' in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is presented as a vital, alive, wild, superior, triumphant and has an identity, a face, and a personage. But in *Season of Migration to the North*, the narrator and Mustafa Sa'eed are presented as inferior, passive and degraded. If the narrative of *Season* expresses a concern about future relations between Arabs and English and asks the question of whether or not Arabs and English can ever truly co-exist, the narrative of *Heart of Darkness* investigates the same theme but at large. Both novels are based mostly on the cultural and imperial background.

Keywords: Other, Self, West Africa, Colonial Relationship, Conrad, Salih

1. Introduction

Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* was published in 1902. *Season of Migration to the North* is a post-colonial Arabic novel by the Sudanese novelist Tayeb Salih in 1966. Both novels are about alienation, confusion, and profound doubt as it is about imperialism. *Heart of Darkness* is on one level about a voyage into the heart of the Belgian Congo, and on another level, about the journey into the soul of man. *Season of Migration to the North* reflects the conflicts of modern Sudan and depicts the brutal history of European colonialism as shaping the reality of contemporary Sudanese society. The

main concern of the two novels is with the impact of British colonialism and European modernity on rural African societies in general and Sudanese culture and identity in particular. They explore the complex human nature as well as the relevant matter of colonialism. In *Heart of Darkness* imperialism appears as a great power and White colonialism is the primary concern of the story. It is about the difficulty of understanding the world beyond the self, about the ability of one man to judge another. *Season of Migration to the North* is about communication between Eastern and Western cultures.

Heart of Darkness centers around Marlow and Kurtz, two

major characters in the novel. Kurtz symbolically stands for greed and commercial mentality, love for power, the repentant sinner and the influence of barbarism on civilized people. In the same manner, Marlow symbolizes the spirit of adventure and love of knowledge. Both Marlow and Kurtz travel to the interiors of Africa for the collection of ivory, but both return at last being experienced from a different level. Kurtz sees the horror and destruction in the interior whereas Marlow sees the darkest side of the human mind. Salih's novel depicts the nameless narrator and Mustafa Sa'eed, two generations of the European-educated Sudanese elite through the period of domination by the British and into the early years of self-rule. Mustafa Sa'eed, the main protagonist of the novel, is a child of British colonialism, and a fruit of colonial education. He is also a monstrous product of his time. Sa'eed emerges as a person who has abused the colonial system, only to be abused and destroyed by it, and who has returned to the Sudan, bearing with him the rot and destruction he has come to embody. The narrator, in contrast, appears to be the model Sudanese citizen, perhaps an embodiment of the "new Sudan".

2. Theory and Method

This paper is discussed in terms of Post-colonial literary Theory. Postcolonial theory, which became trendy in the 1990s, is a critical approach that deals with literature produced in countries that were once, or are now, colonies of other countries. It may also deal with literature written in or by citizens of colonizing countries. The theory is based around concepts of otherness and resistance. Postcolonial studies are an interdisciplinary field that examines the global impact of European colonialism. These studies revolve around issues of how colonialism is so powerful, the complexities of colonial, and postcolonial identity, national belonging, globalization, economics, politics, religion and culture. It focuses particularly on the way in which literature by the colonizing culture distorts the experience and realities, and inscribes the inferiority, of the colonized people.

The unpleasant and painful experience of colonialism in Africa has great effects on almost all faces of life such as language, education, religion, popular culture and the like. Colonial and post-colonial novels in Africa have therefore become unusual weapons used to change the European idea about the third world peoples and to illustrate how the European colonizer could create unequal relations of power, based on binary oppositions such as "First-world" and "third-world", "white" and "black", "colonizer" and "colonized", etc. This duality can be seen clear in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*. Conrad's novel is filled with literal and metaphoric opposites: the Congo and the Thames, black and white, Europe and Africa, good and evil, purity and corruption, civilization and 'triumphant bestiality', light and the very 'heart of darkness'.

It is therefore true to say that the primary concern of most post-colonial African novelists, like Al-Tayyib Salih, Chinua

Achebe and others, is to change for better the history of their people which colonialism has taken off or manipulated. The African novel occupies a central position in the criticism of colonial portrayal of the African continent and its people. It grew, in part, from a history of active resistance to the colonial encounter. It has been crossing boundaries and assaulting walls imposed by History upon the horizon of the continent whose aspirations it has been striving to articulate. Therefore Al-Tayyib Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* illuminates the threshold between past and present, thought and action, self and other, and Africa and the world.

The colonization of Africa is referred to as, "the vilest scramble for loot that ever disfigured the history of human conscience and geographical exploration." [1] The cultural differentiation between the colonizer and the native African is utilized as a mechanism for the European society to justify the cruelty, suppression and alienation towards the African people.

Among the aspects of the postcolonial study is the impact and legacy of European imperialism, and colonial territorial acquisition and control. This is because more than three quarters of the world was controlled by Europeans. So, the postcolonial theory appeared, within its lights, it can be possible to study the cultures and thoughts of the colonized nations:

Postcolonial theory has emerged from an interdisciplinary area of study which is concerned with the historical, political, philosophical, social, cultural and aesthetic structures of colonial domination and resistance; it refers to a way of reading, theorizing, interpreting and investigating colonial oppression and its legacy that is informed by an oppositional ethical agenda [2].

In a very general sense, postcolonial study refers to "the study of the interactions between European nations and the societies they colonized in the modern period." [3] In practice, however, the term is used much more loosely: "it is not only the period after the departure of the imperial powers that concerns those in the field, but that before and during independence as well [3]. So, the post-colonial study covers "all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day" [4].

3. Discussion

Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (1966) deals with the perceptions of people in the third world to the West and Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* deals with the perceptions of Europeans to the third world in Africa. So, the two novels can be read in light of the ever-shifting political, cultural and colonial landscape of both the Congo and Sudan during and after the British occupation. Both novels depict the colonial experiences of the two central characters – Charlie Marlow in *Heart of Darkness* and Mustafa Sa'eed in *Season*.

Conrad and Salih attempted to depict the 'self' and 'other' in their novels throughout Marlow and Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness* and Mustafa Sa'eed and the narrator in *Season of Migration to the North*. This paper attempts to show how

each sees his self and the other. Both Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness* and Mustafa Sa'eed in *Season* encounter what many post-colonial critics refer to as the colonial 'other', a construct created by colonial writers in their attempts to deal with the idea of colonialism in literature. Both Kurtz and Mustafa Sa'eed, who represent the 'Self' and the 'other' at the same time, see themselves as inferior while Marlow, Jean Morris and other Londoners who represent the colonial 'Other' see themselves as superior.

In this paper, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Al-Tayyib Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* are examined in the context of Post-colonial theory that mainly focuses on the relationship between the 'Self' and the 'Other'. The paper seeks to consider how Al-Tayyib Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* provides an avenue for the 'other' to represent itself, instead of the hitherto practice whereby the West would represent the 'other'. The paper is preoccupied with examining the relations between Third-World literatures, represented by Al-Tayyib Salih and the European portrayal of the African other, represented by Joseph Conrad.

Joseph Conrad's novella, *Heart of Darkness*, describes a life-altering journey that the protagonist, Marlow, experiences in the African Congo. The story explores the historical period of colonialism in Africa to exemplify Marlow's struggles. It shows that the European colonization of Africa was intended to bring the light of civilization and European society to the darkness of an unknown and poorly understood continent. Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* can be described as a kind of a post-colonial answer or a response to *Heart of Darkness*, only that this novel is not an apology but a re-examination of exile and migration and reaction against colonization. *Season of Migration to the North* is a good depiction of the plight of Arabs and Africans who find themselves no longer sustained by their past and not yet included into a viable future. It is a brilliant exploration of African encounters with the West, and the corrupting power of colonialism. It is about the sort of cultural conflict and internal conflict from colonization. Following a white man (Marlow) traveling upriver into the heart of Africa, where he indulges in a fantasy of primitivism, Salih sends Mustafa Sa'eed down the Nile and into the heart of Europe. *Season of Migration to the North* has been held up by postcolonial critics as a kind of *Heart of Darkness* in reverse. Critics said that "Al-Tayyib Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* is a clever inversion of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* ... a classic example of 'the empire writing back'" [5].

Salih's inversion of Conrad's compass is taken to be an act of resistance, a critique of the imperialist perspective that *Heart of Darkness* is assumed to represent. But this reading slights the complexity of both works, as well as the relation between them. It makes Conrad's racism, which is obvious and conventional, the keynote of his fiction. And it imputes a narrowly political agenda to Salih, whose primary concerns lie elsewhere. The central drama of Salih's novella is not Mustafa Sa'eed's journey to the heart of Europe but the confrontation between Sa'eed and the narrator who once

travelled to Europe and how their experiences were similar. They are like Marlow, in *Heart of Darkness*, who feels himself captured by the incredible. It is Salih's understanding of this dilemma, which is ethical and literary rather than straightforwardly political, that makes his reading of Conrad distinctive.

Conrad and Salih render all sides of the relationships between colonial powers and their Third World victims. In an act of reverse colonization, Mustafa Sa'eed, the Sudanese version of Kurtz, migrates northward from Sudan into the heart of London, where he receives a first-class British education and sleeps with some British women, each of whom has her own obsession with Sa'eed's exotic African nature. He recounts his story to the novel's nameless narrator who, during frequent periods back to the rural Sudanese village of his childhood, becomes enraptured with Sa'eed's sordid past -- a past that includes not only violent womanizing but seven years spent in prison for murdering his British wife (Jean Morris). The novel is read from the point of view of both Mustafa Sa'eed and the narrator who are two sides of the same coin -- also very close to the experience of Salih himself -- the educated Sudanese from a humble rural background who goes to England to study and then returns to Sudan as part of the ruling class. Both the narrator and Mustafa Sa'eed go to Britain for advanced study; Sa'eed in economics and the narrator in English literature. So, they represent the 'self' that underwent the experience of colonial 'other'.

In *Heart of Darkness* Marlow's direction is to the south (the Congo in Africa) where he meets Kurtz and other Africans whereas in *Season of Migration* Mustafa's direction is to the north (England) where he meets a lot of Londoners specially the British women like Jean Morris, Sheila Greenwood, Ann Hammond, Isabella Seymour and Mrs. Robinson. Marlow, Jean Morris and the other British are symbols of the European colonizer whereas Mustafa and Kurtz are symbols of the African colonized. The clashes between East and West are not just external, they are internal too, forcing one to question one's place in a new culture, and the place one has left behind or only thought to have done. More than once Sa'eed makes reference to the north as more than just a direction, but more of an ideology. "I am the south that yearns for the North and the ice" [6]. The competition between the north and south in both the minds of Mustafa and the narrator is present throughout the novel. Along with this, Sa'eed embodies an "icy" aura and contends to have no feelings or emotions, just a heartless and reckless person. The two aspects are present together in his dealing with women, "...a southern thirst being dissipated in the mountain passes of history in the north" [6]. Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* deals with the colonial problems in Africa and describes a long journey that the protagonist, Marlow, experiences in the African Congo. The story explores the character of the European colonizer (as 'self' and 'other' at the same time) represented in Marlow, and the character of the colonized African like Kurtz; and how both see themselves and the others. So, depicting the 'self' and the 'other' is for

both the colonial European and the colonized African. Conrad reinforces the racist assumption upon which the British Empire was built and consolidated. He leaps into the realm of ignorance about Africa and Africans, conceiving the African Congo as peopled with cannibals and heathenism.

Chinua Achebe writes in his 1977 article 'Racism in the *Heart of Darkness*' that "*Heart of Darkness* projects the image of Africa as 'another world' [7]. By 'another world' Achebe is almost talking about what the Europeans believed to be an uncivilized society. Later Achebe writes 'it is not the differences that worry Marlow, but the lurking hint of kinship, of common ancestry' [7]. Marlow tries to comfort himself by telling himself that Africa is simply a different world, but he recognizes their mutual humanness.

Al-Tayyib Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* represents postcolonial literature that investigates "what happens when two cultures clash and when one of them with its accompanying ideology empowers and deems itself superior to the other" [8]. Salih focuses particularly on the impact of the colonizers on the colonized peoples which attempts to articulate their identities and reclaim their past in the face of that past's inevitable otherness. Salih explores the 'Self' represented in the characters of the African-Arab-Sudanese like Mustafa Sa'eed and the unnamed narrator and also the 'other' in the characters of the British women like Jean Morris depicted in the novel. Mustafa Sa'eed is depicted as highly diverse in his nature and in his traditions. He and the narrator are both constructed and changing, so that "while they may be 'other' from the colonizers, they are also different one from another and from their own pasts, and should not be totalized or essentialized" [9]. Consequently, their identities as colonized people are characterized by confusion. Thus, it seems from the beginning that the concept of 'self' and self-esteem is different from the concept and esteem of the 'other' in both novels.

Theories of Self-Concept emphasize how identity is constructed through interaction with others. Pragmatic theories emphasize social processes of interacting within a community. Marlow's self-concept consists of mental images he has of himself: physical appearance as a white, accomplishments, skills, social talents, roles, intellectual traits, and emotional states. He acquired all of these traits from his past as a European colonizer. He looks to Kurtz as a black and inferior to him and less-talented. On the contrary Mustafa Sa'eed in *Season of Migration to the North* may maintain a self-concept that is at odds with his true feelings to win the approval of others and 'fit in,' either socially or professionally. This involves repressing his true feelings and impulses, which eventually causes him to become alienated from himself, distorting his own experiences of the world and limiting his potential for self-actualization, or fulfillment. This is because they look to their past as colonized and inferior to the colonizer. So, they try to be other than their characters. Sa'eed realizes that he is intelligent when he talks about himself: "I have a wonderful ability for understanding. My mind is like a sharp knife. My mind is like the teeth of the plough" [6]. But he never made

use of his intelligence as it should be. He is indifferent and cold. Mrs. Robinson described him as "dull and insensitive [6]. Both Marlow and Sa'eed are the product of their societies and they acquired their self-concept from their social experiences. Psychologists like Carl Rogers described the self as a social product, developing out of interpersonal relationships and striving for consistency. Rogers maintained that there is a basic human need for positive regard both from others and from oneself. He also believed that in every person there is a tendency towards self-actualization and development so long as this is permitted and encouraged by an inviting environment [10]. Thus, in *Heart of Darkness* Marlow's concept of himself is that he is superior to the other black Africans but in *Season of Migration* Mustafa Sa'eed sees himself as inferior to the British people though he is more intelligent. Sa'eed emerges as a person who has abused the colonial system because he was abused and destroyed by it, and who has returned to the Sudan, bearing with him the rot and destruction he has come to embody. Throughout the interactions between the colonized and the colonizer the incidents of the two novels run to illustrate how each part sees oneself and the other.

There are two theories that describe how social interactions shape one's views of oneself. One defines perceptions of the judgments of others called 'Reflected Appraisal.' It is the notion of receiving supportive and non-supportive messages from those who are interacting with him. This theory of 'Reflected Appraisal' states that positive appreciation and a high level of self-value are gained when supportive messages are received. In contrast, receiving non-supportive messages leads to feeling less valuable, lovable, and capable. The other theory defines evaluation of ourselves in terms of how we compare with others, called 'Social Comparison.' There are two types, superior or inferior comparison and same as or different from others. (11) Kurtz, Mustafa Sa'eed and the narrator are given non-supportive messages from the colonial 'others' who have a high level of self-value. In his journey into the Congo, Marlow commented:

We penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness. It was very quiet there. ... We were wanderers on a prehistoric earth, on an earth that wore the aspect of an unknown planet. We could have fancied ourselves the first of men taking possession of an accursed inheritance, to be subdued at the cost of profound anguish and of excessive toil. ... The pre-historic man was cursing us, praying to us, welcoming us -- who could tell? We were cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings; we glided past like phantoms, wondering and secretly appalled [12].

It seems that Marlow looks at Africa and Africans from an arrogant point of view. And when he was among the Africans, "He was obeyed, yet he inspired neither love nor fear, nor even respect" [12].

In *Season of Migration to the North* Mustafa Sa'eed, like Kurtz, received a lot of non-supportive messages from all Londoners with whom he interacted. Jean Morris described him as 'ugly', 'insensitive' and 'barbarous ox'. Isabella

Seymour said to him: "You are a primitive naked man who catches a spear in one hand and an arrow in the other" [6]. Ann Hammond described him as 'a lying dawn'. She left a note before her committing suicide saying 'Mustafa, may God curse you' [6]. The judge in the court commented to him "You are a stupid man who wastes his energy of love" [6]. So, Mustafa Sa'eed has a low level of self-value. He sees himself as a lie and a villain. He always repeats "I am a lie. I am the desert of thirst" [6]. Therefore, the colonizer has a view of contempt to the colonized who finds that it is necessary to revenge on the colonizer.

'Social learning theory' is also concerned with the ways in which one views oneself, especially in terms of one's perceived impact on one's environment. In the first major theory of social learning, G.B. Rotter claimed that "the expected outcome of an action and the value one places on that outcome determine much of one's behavior" [13]. In *Heart of Darkness* Marlow has a positive self-concept that leads him to believe he will succeed at any task in his mission in the Congo. While Sa'eed has a passive self-concept that leads him to failure as he ends his mission in London spending seven years in prison. So, both Marlow and Sa'eed behave in ways that match their self-concept. Both the colonizer and the colonized see each other as a stranger and any stranger becomes the 'other'. And the concept of the 'other' can be understood as an individual who is perceived by the group as not belonging, as being different in some fundamental way. Perceived as lacking essential characteristics possessed by the group; the 'other' is almost always seen as a lesser or inferior being and is treated accordingly. Therefore, otherness takes some forms. The 'other' may be someone who is of a different race (White vs. Black) or a different origin (native born vs. immigrant.) The 'other' is perceived as different in kind, as lacking in some essential trait or traits that the group has [14].

Both Conrad and Salih see the 'other' as fearful and unjust from their own perspectives. Conrad expresses the fear and anxiety that this 'colonial other' may be something that has the strength to overwhelm and overpower. He expresses concerns about the nature of colonialism and its atrocities; Marlow who, though obviously worried about the future of imperialism, cannot think far enough outside the paradigm of imperial and colonial thought to imagine a future without the necessity of colonialism. To Conrad, as to Marlow, the "African other" is wild and fearsome, inferior perhaps in civility and intellect but not necessarily in strength or will; and the only future he can conceive is a colonial one though he expresses reservations, concerns and worries about such a future in his novel. Salih sees that the 'self' and the 'other' can be compared in terms of the past colonial experience. Mustafa Sa'eed, returning from Britain after a long time, is referred to, by the native Sudanese, as "the germ of the greatest European violence." i.e. he is infected by the European violence. He is imported into Sudan (and Africa) by European invaders and colonizers. So up till then, he is considered to be an 'other' by his native citizens the Sudanese. He himself asserts that the germ was of a "deadly

disease" that struck Europeans. He described his sleeping room as a "source of sadness, a germ of a killing disease" [6]. During being in London, his charisma overwhelms the white women he meets and turns each into his slave. Here he may satisfy his desire of revenge on the 'other'. Sa'eed talks to himself as if he talked to the colonizer; only the tragedy of discourse is within the same person, saying: "I was the invader who had come from the south, and this was the icy battlefield from which I would not make a safe return.... I am a drop of poison with which you injected the arteries of history" [6].

Conrad and Salih see that the central characters of their novels experience deep and shattering encounters with something that is beyond their capacity to understand, map, or codify. Both Kurtz and Mustafa Sa'eed encounter what many critics and post-colonial scholars refer to as the 'colonial other'. European writers created binary conflicts within their novels consistently portraying the native African 'other' as something that was inherently savage, threatening, and affecting passively upon the civilized world as in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. But the African writers portray the colonial other as oppressor whereas the native African as oppressed. Each party sees the 'self' and the 'other' from its point of view. Though Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* created the same binary conflicts between the colonial and the colonized, it has been placed within the canon of "post-colonial writings" that depict the influence of imperialism on the colonized countries and how far they feel oppressed and dehumanized by the colonizer. So, the violent sexuality practiced by Sa'eed against the British women is to some extent justified as revenge and at the same time self-satisfaction.

Both *Heart of Darkness* and *Season of Migration to the North* are written on a more complex level, expressing not only discomfort with the colonial 'other' but also discomfort about the future relationship between colonized and colonizer. In *Heart of Darkness*, the 'other' that Marlow encounter is wildly powerful, and ultimately threatening to the order, efficiency, and stability of colonizer and colonization. Kurtz was described as 'very uneasy'. Marlow sees the African others as:

... Cannibals ... they did not eat each other before my face: they had brought along a provision of hippo-meat which went rotten, and made the mystery of the wilderness stink in my nostrils. ... We are accustomed to look upon the shackled form of a conquered monster, but there -- there you could look at a thing monstrous and free. It was unearthly, and the men were -- No, they were not inhuman [12].

So, the relationship between south and north is like the marital relationship between Sa'eed and Jean Morris which is described by Sa'eed as a battle or war: "I fight the battle with the bow, sword, spear and arrow" [6]. Edward Said also commented that "Mustafa Sa'eed is a product of an uncanny collusion between the 'colonial' and the 'colonized'" [15].

It seems that the two novels are about Man's journey into his self, and the discoveries to be made there about the 'other'. Conrad and Salih expose one's self in another culture

and how the foreign culture influences the 'self'. For Conrad, as for Marlow, the 'other' becomes meaningful only so far as it gives some insight or information for the construction of Eurocentric self-image acquired from their European culture. But for Salih the 'other' gives the 'self' (represented in Mustafa Sa'eed) a sort of satisfaction and value through revenging on the colonizers in the character of the English women dealing with him. And this vision seems to be normal because the African culture provides Africans with this acquisition. So, based on cultural background the two novels show that inherent inside every human soul is a savage evil side that remains repressed by society. Often this evil side breaks out during times of isolation from one's culture, and whenever one culture confronts another. History is loaded with examples of atrocities that have occurred when one culture comes into contact with another. Whenever fundamentally different cultures meet, there is often a fear of contamination and loss of self that leads us to discover more about our true selves. Being isolated from his Sudanese culture, Sa'eed shows his evil side in London. But after returning to Sudan he preserved himself by showing the good side of himself. The same can be said of Marlow whose evil side appeared in the form of arrogance and contempt for the Africans. So, what was done by the 'self' represented by Marlow and Sa'eed was to some extent normal as they were out of their own cultures.

Conrad and Salih are more interested in the 'self' than the 'other' i.e. the reader understands the position of the 'other' throughout the eyes of the 'self'. Conrad is conscious of the other's interrelated status with the 'self', but his main concern is the 'self', not the 'other', even though he deals with the natives. As Edward Said indicates in his *Orientalism*, "the Orient (or the other) has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience" [16]. In *Season of Migration to the North* the relation between the 'self' and 'other' is much more complex than that of *Heart of Darkness*; and Al-Tayyib Salih, at least, attempts to look at the relationship between the colonizers and the colonized throughout the past influences upon the hero's self and how far this complex relationship affected and still affects the Arab people represented in the character of Mustafa Sa'eed and the narrator. The narrative of *Season* expresses a concern about future relations between Arabs and English. It asks the question of whether or not Arabs and English can ever truly co-exist, but even for all its attempts, it is still written from an imperialistic perspective. It sometimes appears that Salih puts a great deal of blame on the colonized people represented in the character of Mustafa Sa'eed as well as the colonizer. Nabil Matar argues that

Salih concentrates on the moral failures that the colonized people manifest and which they erroneously but self-righteously blame on the colonizer. For Salih, such a political justification of personal ineptitude is not only invalid, but is detrimental to the emergence of a truly liberated society [17].

Sa'eed exploits and exaggerates his own otherness in order to seduce as many astonished English women as possible. He

actually achieves genuine sexual and emotional intimacy with a partner, the experience defies physical definition: "When I grasped her [Jean Morris] it was like grasping at clouds, like bedding a shooting star, like mounting the back of a Prussian military march" [6]. His seducing English women is a sort of self-gratification against the previous colonizers. In some respects, it goes farther than *Heart of Darkness*; Mustafa Sa'eed is a much more open-minded, cultured and thoughtful examiner of the native relationship with the colonizer than Marlow, and his personal relationships with the Londoners show that he connects between his study, that gives him superiority, and his revenge on the 'other'. Thus, Conrad and Salih sometimes attack colonialism and its effects not only upon the colonized but also upon the colonizers invading the land.

While the two novels are similar in their narratives that feature disarming and disturbing encounters with a colonial 'other'; the form of the 'other' in each novel is different. In *Heart of Darkness*, the colonial 'other' is presented as a vital, alive, wild, superior and savagely triumphant. The colonial 'other' is given an identity, a face, and a personage in the heart of Africa. The 'other' depicted in this novel is stronger and awarded a fiercer will, capable of bursting free from its colonial restraints for some time. For Marlow, the 'other' represented in black African is "a burst of yells, a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands clapping, of feet stamping, of bodies swaying, of eyes rolling" [12]. For Marlow, perhaps, the Africans are inhuman so he comments on their inhumanity: "They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity – like yours – the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. Ugly" [12]. Feeling superior Marlow may symbolize the positivism of imperialism. He sees through the European viewpoint. He realizes the evil that negative Imperialism has caused, and decides it is truly unnecessary. When Marlow states, "I had got a heavenly mission to civilize you," he expresses his good intentions to help the Africans progress and advance. Furthermore, when he says, "I was an impostor," Marlow recognizes the fact that he is an invader into a foreign land, yet he sticks to his moral values. Thus, Conrad portrays British imperialism perhaps in the character of Marlow, who is glad to see the 'vast amount of red' on the Company's map; signifying the British territory.

The reality of the colonial 'other' is also portrayed by Conrad in the form of the District Manager; a real imperialist, taking full advantage of his position and that of the colony. The manager is the epitome of the negative effects of the institution of Imperialism. He is corrupt, uncaring, arrogant and self-centered. He symbolizes the arrogance of Europeans as they encountered native Africans. Marlow sees the Manager's only positive quality as the fact that he was never ill. His good health symbolizes the everlastingness of Europeans who invaded Africa and their ability to continually come to Africa and rape it of its natural resources. He is the true symbol of the evil and cold-heartedness of imperialists. By assigning all the blame for the

terrible conditions on the manager, Conrad stresses the feeling that Europeans were not owners of technology, but distributors of immoral corruption.

If the colonial 'other' in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is presented as feeling superior and positive most of the time, in Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*, the narrator and Mustafa Sa'eed who represent Africa and consequently the colonized third world are presented as inferior, passive and degraded. The narrator's own life is relatively subdued, with low key relationships with his parents and grandfather and with the other members of the village. The narrator passively accepts any criticism. In the end, this passivity plays an indispensable role in the fulfillment of Mustafa Sa'eed's dark destiny. This passivity appears in Sa'eed's violent sexuality against English women. Observing (as always) the wreckage of a catastrophe he could have averted, the narrator realizes "All my life I had no choice, had no decision. Now I am making a decision" [6]. It is unclear whether this decision has come too late, and whether it will be the right one. So, most of the novel concerns the narrator's recollections of the exceedingly strange story that Mustafa Sa'eed tells him — a story which haunts and oppresses, yet also challenges him in terms of defining his own value system in 'postcolonial' Sudanese society.

All over the novel Sa'eed sees himself and is seen by others as passive. The general attorney Sir Arthur Hignes in the court described him as the man who devoted himself to quest for pleasure with women [6]. He never defended himself in the court; he described himself as a 'dead corpse' and the members of the jury see him as 'a man who lost the wish of life' [6]. Filled with rage at everything that has happened, and also at himself after the death of Mustafa Sa'eed, the narrator has nothing to do except plunging into the Nile to wash his past memories. A "numbness" strikes him, "half-way between north and south", leaving him "unable to return" [6]. From the water, he sees birds flying "northwards", perhaps in a "migration", and he "wak[es] from the nightmare... He decides that there are things worth living for, and he shouts for help" [6]. The 'self' in both of these novels is largely indifferent to the 'other' or its constructions of meaning. In *Heart of Darkness*, traveling down the river was like "traveling back to the beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted and the big trees were kings", and Marlow thinks of himself and his companions as "Wanderers on a prehistoric earth, on an earth that - wore the aspect of an unknown planet" [12]. Stacked up against these walls of trees and primitive surroundings, Marlow likens the boat to a sluggish beetle crawling on the floor in their irrelevance to this primitive force; it was something that "made you feel very small, very lost" [12]. Marlow expects "the wilderness to burst into a prodigious peal of laughter" at the idea that Kurtz owned everything; that in fact Africa's ivory was his ivory [12]. Like Marlow, Sa'eed is indifferent to the other European women whom he seduces. He sees that what he is doing is right because the European colonizer, in his view, must pay a part of the bill for the colonized.

If the 'self' is indifferent to the 'other' in both novels, this

is because the 'other' is brutal and savage. In *Heart of Darkness* the colonial 'other' is presented as savage and brutal against the colonized Africans. To expose this brutality Conrad provides a critical view of European imperial activities. He explores the issues surrounding imperialism in complicated ways. He depicts the colonial 'other' to be in a state of 'attack' as superior while the colonized is in a state of 'defending and revenging' as inferior. As Marlow travels to the Congo, he encounters widespread inefficiency and brutality in the Company's stations. The native inhabitants of the region have been forced into the Company's service, and they suffer terribly from overwork and ill treatment at the hands of the Company's agents. The cruelty and squalor of imperial 'other' contrasts sharply with the impassive and majestic jungle that surrounds the white man's settlements, making them appear to be tiny islands amidst a vast darkness. As Marlow travels from the Outer Station to the Central Station and finally up the river to the Inner Station, he encounters scenes of torture, cruelty, and near-slavery. At least, the incidental scenery of the book offers a harsh picture of colonial 'other.' Marlow sees colonization as "robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale, and men going at it blind - as it is very proper for those who tackle darkness" [12]. The colonial 'other' is portrayed as a blind bearer of light. Conrad's critique of European colonialism is most apparent through the oppositions of light and darkness, with the contrast of good and evil in characters. Further, he sees such conquests as taking land and materials away from those people who "have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses." As he understands it, colonization is only successful if there lays within it a "devotion to efficiency" and a creation of civilization.

In *Season of Migration to the North* the brutality of Mustafa Sa'eed appears in his sexual conquests that compete across the east-west relations in the novel. In a form of brutal revenge for the colonial past in his country, Sa'eed devotes himself to seducing English women as a sort of self-satisfaction and revenge at the same time. Three of women are driven to suicide; while he eventually murders the most provocative of them, who had humiliated and taunted him before — and also during — their stormy marriage. Jean Morris, Mustafa's last British "prey", proves to be different from all the other British women he has met. Her mental toughness and refusal to sleep with him come as an irritating disappointment to him. Finding himself incapable of dominating Morris, both mentally and physically, he stabs her with a knife into her heart. He kills her and is jailed for seven years for the murder. The murder of this English woman has been interpreted as revenge on colonialism. This act (a sort of sex-murder) is in his own eyes, however, the grand consummation of his life: "The sensation that... I have bedded the goddess of Death and gazed out upon Hell from the aperture of her eyes — it's a feeling no man can imagine. The taste of that night stays on in my mouth, preventing me from savouring anything else" [6]. Elsewhere Mustafa Sa'eed says of this relationship that he "was the invader who had come from the South, and this was the icy battlefield

from which [he] would not make a safe return" [6].

Sa'eed's brutal sexual relationships with British women seem to him the only possible means for revenge on the British Empire because he has nothing to do more than that. By capitalizing on his ethnicity, he is able to "capture" women that are eager to experience the exotic 'other' (i.e. Mustafa) via sex. Through intercourse Mustafa Sa'eed tries to conquer his women both mentally and physically. Therefore, in his own way, he is "bringing down" the British Empire since it stripped him from the love and compassion of every woman he was close to throughout his whole life. As a child, due to his superior intellect, the British find the education in Sudan not worthy of Mustafa Sa'eed and decide to move him to Egypt where a proper education is available. This causes his separation from the primary female figure in his life, his mother. "That was our farewell: no tears, no kisses, and no fuss." Sa'eed also comments about the latter moment stating: "I remembered that moment and I wept" [6].

In *Heart of Darkness* the Africans are dehumanized by the colonial 'other' but in *Season of Migration to the North* the African Arab, Sa'eed and the narrator, are dehumanized by themselves. Africans in *Heart of Darkness* are ill-treated. The evilness of how the Africans were treated is critiqued well in several situations "the men who work for the company describe what they do as 'trade' and their treatment of native Africans is part of a benevolent project of civilization" [12]. This is a very true statement which shows that the way the colonizers treated the African was more like slaves rather than people. The novel describes this inhuman behaviour as follows:

Each chief was authorized to collect taxes; he did so by demanding that individuals should work for a specific period of time for a minimum payment. This, of course, was another name for slavery. The so-called taxpayers were treated like prisoners; their work was carried out under the supervision of armed sentries, and, as can be easily imagined, the system lent itself to all kinds of tyranny, brutality and subsequent reprisals by the natives. In one concession alone one hundred and forty-two Africans were killed. The spirit of bitterness and hatred generated in the people was quite terrifying, but little could be done about it as there was not enough control in the area to prevent the various agents from misusing their power [12].

Here, Conrad sums up the immorality and the misuse of power against the Africans. It also gives insight into the horror of the colonization that was taking place at that time. The black man is beaten unmercifully and there is a black man with a bullet in his head. "A nigger was being beaten nearby." Dehumanizing Africans in *Heart of Darkness* has various forms. Africans are mostly objects: Marlow refers to his helmsman as a piece of machinery, and Kurtz's African mistress is at best a piece of statuary. It can be argued that the novel participates in an oppression of non-whites. Africans become, for Marlow, a mere backdrop, a human screen against which he can play out his philosophical and existential struggles. Their existence and their exoticism

enable his self-contemplation. This kind of dehumanization is harder to identify than colonial violence or open racism. Marlow says that Kurtz has a dark nature to him: "He could be very terrible. You can't judge Mr. Kurtz as you would an ordinary man" [12]. Kurtz is depicted as a thief, a murderer and a liar.

Thus, *Heart of Darkness* offers a powerful condemnation of the hypocritical operations of colonial 'other'. The African writer, Chinua Achebe, pointed out that the colonial 'other' in the novel dehumanized the 'self' of the native Africans

The story can be read as a racist or colonial parable in which Africans are depicted as inanely irrational and violent, and in which Africa itself is reduced to a metaphor for white Europeans fear for themselves ... that Africa is a 'heart of darkness', where whites 'go native', releasing the 'savages' within themselves [18].

Achebe also claims that *Heart of Darkness* projects Africa as "the other world"; a place that in the novel was the antithesis of Europe/civilization, where "man's vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality" [7].

Marlow's expression that the cannibals were "fine fellows – in their place", especially because they "did not eat each other before my face", seems an indication of the colonial 'other' as a racist. He sees "proper" colonialism as an improvement on some of the savages, especially the one who works the vertical boiler on the boat. So, he describes the "improved specimen" as a savage improved by the colonial 'other':

He was an improved specimen; he could fire up a vertical boiler. He was there below me, and, upon my word, to look at him was as edifying as seeing a dog in a parody of breeches and a feather hat, walking on his hind-legs. A few months of training had done for that really fine chap ... He ought to have been clapping his hands and stamping his feet on the bank, instead of which he was hard at work, a thrall to strange witchcraft (the boiler), full of improving knowledge. He was useful because he had been instructed [12].

The Africans were also viewed as monsters, not an ancient race to be respected for their own customs. In the end, Marlow comes to the realization that the real monsters are the colonizers. This is evident as Marlow recognizes that "[i]t is strange how I accepted the partnership, this choice of nightmares forced upon me in the tenebrous land invaded by these mean and greedy phantoms" [19]. Overall Marlow believes that white men are cruel. They are inhuman and have no respect for others.

In *Season* Al-Tayyib Salih recognizes that the white man is "no less evil than the mad who believe in the excellence of the white man in South Africa and in the southern states in USA" [6]. and he criticizes Mustafa Sa'eed for dehumanizing his 'self' by himself by not making use of his intelligence and energy well: "If he [Sa'eed] devoted himself for science, he would find real friends from all races; and his science would benefit his country" [6]. This indicates that Salih believes that Mustafa Sa'eed is the product of a dehumanized society not only by the colonial 'other' but also

by itself. He criticizes the native Arabs and Africans for believing in myths and unreal things:

You [Arabs and Africans] believe in the myth of industrialization, the myth of nationalization, the myth of Arab unity and the myth of African Unity. You are like children. You believe that you will solve all your problems and set up a paradise. All these are illusions and day dreams [6].

Salih acknowledges that Mustafa Sa'eed and the narrator - the representatives of the African 'self' - are dehumanized by their government and system of education. The narrator, in contrast to Mustafa Sa'eed, appears to be the model Sudanese citizen, perhaps an embodiment of the "new Sudan" in which he serves as an official in the Department of Education. Yet he realizes very well the emptiness and corruption of the governmental system of Africa he is a part of, reflecting to himself on "the new rulers of Africa, smooth of face, lupine of mouth, their hands gleaming with rings of precious stones, exuding perfume from their cheeks ... expensive silk rippling on their shoulders like the fur of Siamese cats" [6]. But the narrator's realization of such corruption is no excuse for his passivity and its consequences. The narrator's work at the ministry of education has nothing to do with the real needs of the Sudanese educational system, as a friend points out to him:

Let them build the schools first and then discuss unifying education. ... They waste time in conferences and poppycock; and here are our children having to travel several miles to school.... What's the use in our having one of us in the government when you're not doing anything? [6].

This lack in schools and the wide gap between the responsible for education system and educational reality are considered a sort of dehumanizing the Arab African people.

Such atrocities, savageness, brutality and dehumanization of both the 'self' and the 'other' are sometimes denied and other times justified by both Salih and Conrad. Conrad attacks colonialism directly throughout the book. Obvious and scathing statements are made telling of the horrors of the colonial 'other'. One example is Marlow and his description of the Roman colonization of ancient Britain:

They grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much [6].

Through this statement Conrad attacks the vicious and selfish nature that colonialism infests upon colonizers.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion both Conrad and Salih see that the 'self' and the 'other' should have mutual acceptance. Conrad is not opposed to Imperialism completely but he does indicate that the white man as a colonial 'other' is too materialistic and does not understand how spiritually advanced the natives are. He believes that in Imperialism, the colonial 'other' is oppressor, arrogant and evil in dealing with the 'uncivilized

natives.' However, he also believes that Africa is too large to have any momentous impact by European invasion, as shown when the French ship is unaffectedly shelling the African coast. Conrad's main message that he tries to reveal to the reader is that man's greatest sin is his atrocities to man. At the end of *Season of Migration to the North*, Salih wants to say that revenge on the 'other' is not acceptable even if it is colonial. Here Salih delivers a message that it is good and humane for the 'self' to accept the 'other'. It appears that Mustafa Sa'eed is repentant when he left his will to the narrator, he recognizes that he was deceiving himself and Jean Morris and consequently he was mistaken. After the death of Mustafa Sa'eed, the narrator enters a secret room that Mustafa had built next to his home a replica of a British gentleman's drawing room. Pride of place has been given to Mustafa's painting of his 'white' wife, Jean Morris. The room also contains a book, purportedly the Life Story of Mustafa Sa'eed, dedicated to those who see with one eye and see things as either Eastern or Western. Frankly Sa'eed expresses the author's view of attacking revenge because, in Salih's view, revenge may be like colonization in its atrocities.

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