

TRANSLATING TAYEB SALIH'S PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA AS REPRESENTED IN HIS NOVEL SEASON OF MIGRATION TO THE NORTH: A SEARCH FOR BELONGINGNESS

NAWAL ABUZWAID ALHASAN, RAEES UNISSA

Department of English Language and Translation, Al-Badaya College of Science and Arts, Qassim University, Saudi Arabia.

Email: raees1178@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Tayeb Salih, a prominent British author of Arabic language and origin is regarded as a pioneer who carved an identity of African-Arab literature globally. Salih acclaimed in one of his interviews in the Arabic press that he attempted to reshape the East and West relationship conceived by the world. He stated that the West romanticizes the idea of the East-West interaction merely as an emotion whereas it is an unresolved conflict that leads a trauma related to loss of identity, belongingness, and existentialism (Salih, 1929). Denys Johnson-Davies, an accredited translator, credited with making Arabic literature accessible to readers of the English language, who also translated Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (1966) regards the author and this literary piece as an intelligent work on East-West conflict produced by any Western or non-Western author. *Season of Migration to the North* provides a tapestry of events, multi-layered interpretations, traumatic outbreaks, struggles to identify with the world and finally succumbing to the pain. It is not a simple story of physical migration and the life of an African on the European land. It is an embodiment of an emotional, spiritual, religious, and mental search for belongingness. This present research is an attempt to capture the journey of the protagonist Mustafa Saeed and his life from his birth as a slave in the then colony of Britain, Sudan to his migration to Britain as a free individual. The rollercoaster of events that shape him and his destiny. Did he manage to break the clutches of his birth and slavery? Did he attain freedom from his belongingness to a British colony? Did he get peace to fly away from his roots is what makes this novel an extremely viable research material. The authors attempt to explore the psychological trauma and translate the author's search for belongingness and understand the East-West relationship from his perspective.

Keywords: Culture, Post-colonialism, Roots, Migration, Stigma, Trauma, Isolation, Elite, East-West relationship.

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INTRODUCTION

"Mawsim el Hijra ila el Shamal" or "Season of Migration to the North" is Salih's pioneering piece of writing celebrated for its uniqueness in grasping the turmoil and dilemma that young minds go through when they decide to leave the roots and grow wild. His above-mentioned novella transcends all boundaries. Readers and scholars are still digging into its land to reveal its secrets. The book was translated into more than 30 languages and was published by Heinemann in 1969 and 1970. The Arab Literary Academy in Damascus chose it among the best 100 fictional works of the twenties. This novel was dramatically influenced by the political presence, which was reflected by the author in the book's plot and themes.

One of the major theme of the novel revolves around psychological trauma of the colonized people in Sudan, exploring the loss of identity and displacement caused by migration, as well as the psychological plight of the colonized in their relationship with the colonizer (Zeidanin, 2015; Haner, 2022). The novel uses literary techniques to convey the intolerable wretchedness of the colonized and the failure of communication between the colonizer and the colonized (Haner, 2022). The quote can be interpreted as a moment of awakening or realization for the character, as they experience a shudder followed by a sensation of wakefulness upon entering the cold water (Zeidanin, 2015; Mambrol, 2020; Haner, 2022). The novel's exploration of trauma and its impact on the mind's experience of time and self-aligns with Cathy Caruth's trauma theory, emphasizing the delayed return of the traumatic event and its impact on the individual's experience of time, self, and the world (Takiyeddine-Amyuni, 1980).

The novel delves into the complexities of identity, trauma, migration, and the dynamics between the colonizer and the colonized (El-Hussari 2010). It explores the concept of individuality and how interactions with one's community and society shape a person (Murad, 2018). The novel suggests that trauma has an inherently ethical, social, political, and historical dimension, influencing different fields of study (Abbas, 2019).

Migration is portrayed as a process that can lead to a loss of identity and a sense of displacement, which can lead to destruction if not confronted directly (Norbury, 2012). This loss of identity is often referred to as migratory grief, which encompasses the loss of familiar elements such as language, attitudes, values, social structures, and support networks (Abbas 2019).

The novel also explores the lure of the West, in this case, England, which is seen as accommodating emotional distance. This lure is often associated with the promise of new opportunities and a different lifestyle, which can be both enticing and daunting for migrants (Norbury, 2012).

The conditions of the colonized are portrayed in the novel, reflecting a deep awareness of their psychological plight (Haner, 2022). The relationship with the colonizer renders the colonized psychologically, emotionally, and mentally disturbed, leading to different coping mechanisms such as repression, isolation, and violence (Murad, 2018).

The novel uses certain literary techniques to convey the intolerable wretchedness of the colonized and the failure of communication between the colonizer and the colonized (Haner, 2022). It also explores the conflicting points of view of the narrator and Saeed, adding depth to the narrative and providing different perspectives on the same events (Abbas, 2019).

The tale of migration in the novel entails the inevitable pain of loss, lust, and guilt. These themes are common in literature that explores the complexities of identity, especially in the context of migration and colonization (Muhaidat and Waleed, 2018). The novel seems to provide a nuanced exploration of these themes, offering insights into the psychological and emotional experiences of the characters.

It is the story of a young and ambitious Sudanese, Mustafa Saeed, who imbibes on a long journey of self-realization and guilt. An orphan

raised by a socially marginalized mother, Saeed was a dedicated student, aspiring to achieve success and recognition. He is loved by the colonizers who offered him a scholarship to study at the best British universities. The favoritism he gets from the rulers wins him the title of the son of the invaders. Although he achieves what he wants in his academic life and career, he fails to reconcile his identity with his land and people. His internal conflict contributes to the expression of trauma and is represented in his struggle to uphold his identity as a villager, subjected to social traditions and customs, and a modernized British resident, socially successful with a free lifestyle. He dwindle between two entirely different worlds. Despite the efforts exerted so as not to be cut off from his roots, he found that the British life environment started exercising its influence on him; it does not make a person forget everything related to his roots, but the person finds himself being forced to do so, he had to choose between two crucial options and found no midway; either to accept the culture in which he lived and get merged into it or to leave it entirely; otherwise, he would suffer psychologically and mentally.

The story of his life takes a new turn when the then-ruling British officer in charge, Robinson, and his family, nominate him for a scholarship from Britain to study, thus taking the role of benevolent caretakers of the young protagonist. On setting foot in London, Saeed has no turning back. He turns the opportunity into success, thus leading the life of a free bird. Time sees him becoming a carefree philanderer, shedding the old colors of tradition and culture and putting on the new feathers of detachment and freedom. He is in love with his newfound freedom and westernized lifestyle Makdisi, S. (1992).

Everything is dreamy and relishing for Saeed until he gets into an existential crisis. The conflict compels him to return to Sudan to search for his home and identity (Abbas, Fatin, 2019). He struggles in his search for individuality as he finds himself alienated. His journey could be compartmentalized into different stages from being a poor orphan, a struggler, winning over life with brilliance, turning into an emotionless philanderer, and then finally into a broken soul who wants to find himself. Saeed represents a tapestry of events and evolution. From deprived but culturally rich roots to a carefree life of abundance but culturally deprived in Britain, where he seduced English women and indulged in illicit sexual relationships, he never committed himself to anyone in his life, but his art of seduction compelled many women to trust his moves which only resulted in scandalous affairs with innocent women committing suicide. Saeed relentlessly carried on with his life when his wife, Jean Morris, got accidentally killed during a heated physical intimacy. He was found guilty of his act of brutality and sentenced to 7 years in Britain. On his release, he silently retired to his village in Sudan and tried to live a low life in secrecy; he married a simple villager who knew nothing about his past and highly prolific life. He went on to have two children from this marriage and struggled to reconcile with people and life in Sudan. Saeed never came out of his past life, which kept haunting his present. Later, he surrendered himself to the river Nile and ended his life controversially, leaving many questions unanswered to the world around him. Just like people in Sudan knew so little about his life, they also ended up questioning his death. Some think he was killed, while others believe he committed suicide.

TRAUMATIC PROSPECTIVE: THE ANALYSIS OF SAEED'S INTERNAL STRUGGLE AND SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

Saeed's life is shadowed by pain and crises throughout. He was lonely as he was never able to merge with the society in which he was living. Thus, we can conclude that his life was full of trauma and can be analyzed from this perspective.

WHAT IS TRAUMA?

Trauma theory emerged in the 1960s from several areas of social concern: recognition of the prevalence of violence against women and children (rape, battering, and incest); identification of the phenomenon of post-traumatic stress disorder in (Vietnam) war veterans; and

awareness of the psychic scars inflicted by torture and genocide, especially regarding the holocaust.

According to the American Psychological Association, trauma is "an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape, or natural disaster." However, a person may experience trauma as a response to any event they find physically or emotionally threatening or harmful.

A traumatized person can feel a range of emotions both immediately after the event and in the long term. They may feel overwhelmed, helpless, shocked, or have difficulty processing their experiences. Trauma can also cause physical symptoms. Trauma can have long-term effects on a person's well-being. If symptoms persist and do not decrease in severity, it can indicate that the trauma has developed into a mental health disorder called post-traumatic stress disorder

There are several types of traumas, including:

1. Acute trauma: This results from a single stressful or dangerous event.
2. Chronic trauma: This results from repeated and prolonged exposure to highly stressful events. Examples include cases of child abuse, bullying, or domestic violence.
3. Complex trauma: This results from exposure to multiple traumatic events.

TRAUMATIC ASPECT OF THE BOOK

Tayeb Salih's novel, *Season of Migration to the North*, portrays the psychological trauma of the colonized people in Sudan (Zeidanin, 2015). The novel explores the concept of individuality and how interactions with one's community and society shape a person. Trauma has an inherently ethical, social, political, and historical dimension, and it influences different fields of study (Takiyeddine-Amyuni, 1980). The novel suggests that migration creates a loss of identity and a sense of displacement, which can lead to destruction if not confronted directly (Murad, 2018; Haner, 2022). The relationship with the colonizer renders the colonized psychologically, emotionally, and mentally disturbed, and in response to their pain, victims resort to different mechanisms such as repression, isolation, and violence (Haner, 2022). The novel uses certain literary techniques to convey the intolerable wretchedness of the colonized and the failure of communication between the colonizer and the colonized (Haner, 2022). The novel also explores the conflicting points of view of the narrator and Saeed (Takiyeddine-Amyuni, 1980).

Trauma has recently emerged in many Sudanese writings, like Salih's novellas. This article tries to shed some light on this elite chronic traumatic representative novel, which deals with the behavior of a stressed mind that tries to hide his internal thoughts that result in uncontrolled brutal revenge toward the colonizers.

As reported by Caruth (2016), a person's mind psychic trauma is damage inflicted on breaking their experience of time, self, and the world; and that causes great emotional grief in the victim (Takiyeddine-Amyuni, 1980; Mambrol, 2020).

Psychological responses are used as a defence mechanism when someone faces a strong conflict that is difficult for a person to handle or resist. Freud *et al.* (1953) created many ego defences, which were further developed and elaborated by his daughter Anna Freud in 1936 by adding other mechanisms, one of which is displacement. It occurs when the individual satisfies an impulse by reflecting it on a person or an object in a socially unacceptable way; this was exactly what Mustafa Saeed did with his British victims.

Yeddi (2016) observes that Mustafa Saeed was employed by his master to accomplish part of his perverted task and the narrator was employed to continue where Mustafa Saeed had left and proceeded, on behalf of the colonial forces, to enforce the colonial agenda in conservative societies. He quotes,

"Mustafa Saeed was an orphan boy who lost his father in the army. His mother was a slave-marginalized woman who failed to fit herself

into society and adopt the common norms of social life. They lived in isolation without contact with the external even their relatives. The latter had affected Saeed's personality seriously because he grew up like a branch without an origin" (Yeddi, 2016, p. 221-222)

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Sudan and Sudanese writers are not exceptional when it comes to postcolonial impacts on their writings. The most influential category is the elite one, represented in the character of Mustafa Saeed who suffered from chronic elite trauma throughout the novel. The instances during which this traumatic behavior appears are a lot, for example, during his life in Britain and the double life he used to live as a sophisticated educated man who pays great attention to social etiquette and the other savage revenge taker whose prior goals were to seduce, torment and witness his British female victim suffer to death by committing suicide.

Another instance was when he returned to his village after long years of luxurious life in the West, he started to treat his folk with an inferior way of looking. The novel reflects the traumatic negative influence of colonialism that led to emotional and mental disorders. Both males and females are victims of colonial disguised concern which was a master-slave policy.

Salih thoroughly displays the shredding caused by the colonizers in the lives of his people. The crucial damage was the one that ruined the human relationship and the source of pride for the villagers, particularly the maternal one; when Mustafa Saeed left his mother the only family he had, and went to Britain, without thinking of her feelings or destiny being left alone filled with a feeling of betrayal by her only son. This behavior from Saeed's side has a psychological background; the desire to follow his master; an elite traumatic symptom. The widowed mother, who was left alone without a male supporter in a male-dominated society, manifested the traumatic image of colonialism once again. Being exposed to hardship, Saeed's mother passively reacted to his pursuit of knowledge; she showed unable to stop him from leaving her alone because his master wanted him to join the modern society in every aspect. This shows how Saeed was psychologically unstable in a scene that is expected to be highly emotional. This emotional dryness reflects the way colonial exploitation ruins the relationship between the villagers.

CONCLUSION

Tayeb Salih's awareness and well-acquired knowledge about both his native society as well as his artificial British one was clear in this novella. He succeeded in drawing his readers' attention to thinking, speaking, and discussing unspoken social actions like sexual relationships. The journey of Mustafa Saeed from his birth to death was narrated in an ambiguous way that sometimes lets one feel and notice Saeed's psychological disorder, like the way he used to make love with the British women, his reaction toward his British wife, which led to her death by his own hands during a very emotional moment as well as the double life he used to live with his native wife.

In conclusion, the theme of identity in Season of Migration to the North evolves through the characters' experiences of migration, cultural dislocation, and the ongoing struggle between their native and adopted cultures. The novel suggests that identity is not fixed but is continually shaped and reshaped by one's experiences and cultural contexts (Abbas, 2019).

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

We have collaborated personally and professionally and are jointly responsible for every aspect of the research.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

We also declare that there is no conflict of interest associated with our research and publication.

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