

Lost-identity; A Result of “Hybridity” and “Ambivalence” in Tayeb Salih’s *Season of Migration to the North*

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ABSTRACT

During the colonial period, British colonizers marched to the Third and Fourth World countries to exploit them for the purpose of colonizers’ economical uplifts. Therefore, colonizers internalized their own superiority over the inferior colonized countries by devaluing their culture, race, language, and identity in order to pillage the colonized. As the result, many of the colonized individuals migrated to the developed countries to educate there in order to save their motherlands. However, facing with an alien culture and language caused the colonized to have a merged and dual identity. In this regard, *Season of Migration to the North*, written in 1969 by Tayeb Salih, is the story of an intelligent colonized who sacrifices his own life and identity to take revenge on colonizers by traveling to London and educating there. But, Mustafa Saeed, the intelligent colonized, loses his own identity in this way and finally disappears as the victim of this colonizing strategy’s consequence, merged- or lost-identity. Therefore, in this study, it has been tried to investigate Tayeb Salih’s *Season of Migration to the North* through Homi K. Bhabha’s theories of “Hybridity” and “Ambivalence” as the causes of merged- and even lost-identity in post-colonial discourse.

Key words: Lost-identity, *Season of Migration to the North*, Hybridity, Colonizer, Postcolonialism

INTRODUCTION

Postcolonialism and the Concepts of “Hybridity” and “Ambivalence”

Postcolonial criticism started after World War II, in the early 1990’s, and after the debacle of colonial regimes in the colonized countries. During the colonial period, British colonizers marched to the Third and Fourth World countries to exploit them for the purpose of colonizers’ economical uplifts. Therefore, colonizers internalized their own superiority over the inferior colonized countries by devaluing their culture, race, language, and identity in order to pillage the colonized. Likewise, as Lois Tyson says in his *Critical Theory Today*, “...colonized peoples [are] any population that has been subjugated to the political domination of another population” (2006, p. 417). Moreover, being disenfranchised and excluded from their own rights in their own country under the power of colonizers and being treated as inferior and lowbrow creatures, made the colonized to leave their countries to the developed ones and educate there in order to save their motherlands, or stay in their own countries and resist to save their own culture. However, in the both cases, colonized peoples were trapped between two cultures which brought them a merged identity.

Facing with an alien culture and language caused the colonized to have a merged and dual identity as the result of “hybridity” and “ambivalence”, which are two considerable concepts, put into use by Homi K. Bhabha, in Postcolonial criticism. In his *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha introduces “Hybridity” and articulates,

Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the ‘pure’ and original identity of authority). Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination (1994, p. 160).

In fact, “hybridity” happens when a person is caught between two different things, often two different cultures, which leads him/her to a “double vision” or “double consciousness” and finally a merged or even a lost identity. People of a special country and culture have their own special costumes, language, religion, and any other features which introduce them as members of that culture and finally separate them from the other cultures. Therefore, when the person leaves his/her own country and goes to another one, he/she experienc-

es new opinions, new culture, new language... which brings him/her a dual life. Indeed, living in the in-between spaces and between two different worlds brings the person a merged identity. And this is what Bhabha calls the "third space", and describes it full of ambivalence and contradictory. Bhabha says that "border lives" put the person in "the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion, [for] there is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction in the 'beyond'" (1994, p. 1). In fact, anybody who lives in the in-between spaces, between two different cultures, lives a dual life which doubles his/her identity. Moreover, Bhabha points out that, "these 'in-between' spaces provide the train for elaborating strategies of selfhood- singular or communal- that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself" (1994, pp. 1-2).

Therefore, leaving one's own country puts the person in "diaspora" and brings him/her "hybridity" and "ambivalence". In fact, "home" plays a crucial function in stability of one's identity. Therefore, "unhomeliness" can be the main cause of a merged or even a lost identity. As Bhabha mentions, "to be unhomed is not to be homeless, nor can 'unhomely' be easily accommodated in that familiar division of social life into private and public spheres" (1994, p. 9). Likewise, the colonized intelligentsia who leave their motherlands are facing with such problems of identity crisis. They travel to the colonizer countries because those countries are more developed and they want to learn there in order to save their motherlands by bringing high education with themselves to their own lands. But, facing with the alien cultures and languages, and their border and in-between lives puts them in "hybrid" situation and steals their pure identity. Indeed. They vacillate between two or more different worlds and this oscillation victimizes them. As Frantz Fanon stipulates that, "in the world in which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself" (1986, p. 227). Thus, what is left for an intelligent in the foreign lands is a fragmented self.

In this regard, what can be exploited is that; any individual facing with another culture is under the impact of losing his/her real and pure identity as the result of hybridity and ambivalence. And this should be mentioned that both colonizer and the colonized can be the victims of such circumstances.

Reciprocal Impression and Merged-identity of Colonizer and the Colonized

Homi K. Bhabha in his *The Location of Culture* argues that Colonizer through "mimicry strategy" or "sly civility" wants the colonized "almost the same but not quite" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 86). He mentions that colonizers do this strategy and plan to achieve their goal, which is controlling over the colonized and internalize over them the colonizer's superiority and the colonized's inferiority. But, what is important is the reciprocal impression between colonizer and the colonized because both of them are a part of this strategy. Colonizer influences on the colonized and the colonized influences on the colonizer, consequently, "The play between equivalence and excess makes the colonized both reassuringly similar

and also terrifying" (Huddart, 2006, p. 41). Moreover, Lois Tyson writes that,

The colonizers believed that only their own Anglo European culture was civilized, sophisticated or as post-colonial critics put it, metropolitan. Therefore, native peoples were defined as savage, backward, and undeveloped. Because their technology was more highly advanced, the colonizers believed that their whole culture was more highly advanced, and they ignored or swept aside the religions, customs and codes of behavior of the peoples they subjugated. So the colonizers saw themselves at the center of the world, the colonized were at the margins (2006, p. 419).

Therefore, colonizers use simulation to internalize their hegemony of power over the colonized, but simulation can be a kind of strategy for the colonized, too. Annie Reich in this regard says, "It is imitation... when the child holds the newspaper *like* his father. It is identification when the child learns to read" (qtd. In Bhabha, 1994, p. 61). On the other hand, in Werbner words, "in the colonial encounter, it is not just the colonized who are subjected to Western ways, the colonizers too are transformed, while the colonized deploy borrowed forms to tell their own, distinct narratives which unsettle and subvert the cultural authority of the colonizers" (2009, p. 136).

Likewise, in Tayeb Salih's postcolonial novel, Mustafa Saeed, a colonized who has lived almost all his life in the colonizer's countries to take revenge on them uses colonizer's simulation strategy in order to ruin them, however, he loses his own identity and the struggle of vacillation between two opposite identities leads him to his downfall. Therefore, in this study, it has been tried to investigate Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* through Homi K. Bhabha's theories of "Hybridity" and "Ambivalence" as the causes of merged- and even lost-identity in post-colonial discourse.

Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*

Tayeb Salih (1929- 2009) was born in the Northern Province of Sudan but lived most of his lifetime outside his birthland. As a Sudanese writer he studied at the University of Khartoum and then left his country to London, Qatar, and Paris to educate and work there. Therefore, as a colonized individual Salih experienced the life of colonizers, too. Moreover, living in diaspora and also having the Black skin of Arabs in the White London made him to write about his origin identity and his ancestry land, Sudan, in order to complete and discharge his deal in resistance literature of his country. Salih was the author of four novels and a collection of short stories but *Season of Migration to the North*, was by far his best-known work, which is translated from the Arabic by Denys Johnson-Davies and published by Heinemann in 1969.

Season of Migration to the North, written in 1969 by Tayeb Salih, is a postcolonial novel which is the story of two men who have spent time in Europe. One of these two man is the unknown narrator who has come back to the village of his birth in Sudan after seven years of education in London. And the other is an intelligent colonized, Mustafa Saeed, who has sacrificed his own life and identity to take revenge on colonizers by traveling to London and educating there.

Mustafa Saeed is a stranger in the village and a few people know about his life. Despite his many years of life abroad in developed cities of Europe, he never shows off to people and never talks about those years. Mustafa has chosen to live in secret but one night when he is drunk as a lord he sings an English poem in a fluent English accent which unmasks his past and makes the unknown narrator curious to discover Mustafa's real identity.

After speaking with Mustafa, the unknown narrator understands about him and his revengeful life in colonizers' lands so that in the middle of the story a sense of disillusion and furious reveals in the character of the unknown narrator and Mustafa becomes his twin and bothers the narrator's soul. In fact, what scares the narrator is "loss of the origin identity", as Mustafa Saeed has lost it in the colonizers' countries. Thus, in this study it has been tried to investigate the role of in-between life in creating or losing the individuals' identity.

DISCUSSION

The Concepts of "North" and "South" in Season of Migration to the North

During the colonial and even postcolonial period, leaving "home" and "migration" to the developed countries, and the consequences of migration has been under the attention of postcolonial scholars. According to McLeod,

The concept of 'home' often performs an important function in our lives. It can act as a valuable means of orientation by giving us a sense of our place in the world. It tells us where we originated from and where we belong. As an idea it stands for shelter, stability, security and comfort. (2000, p. 210).

Likewise, in *Season of Migration to the North*, the concept of "home" reveals through the word of "South", which is the birth place of the protagonists, and "North" refers to the 'host' lands, the colonizer's countries to which the protagonists of the story travel. During the story, Mustafa points out to the 'North' for several times and his mean is the ideology rather than the direction itself. "I am South that yearns for the North and the ice" (Salih, 1969, p. 32 & 108). The conflict between 'North' and 'South' can be seen obviously in Mustafa's and the narrator's mind all over the story. Simultaneously, Mustafa has a 'cold' temperament and pretends to have no sentiment and affection and is a cruel and adventurer person whose goal is just to revenge on the colonizers who have stolen his homeland's culture and identity.

Mustafa and the narrator both have lived abroad and away from their origins. But, Mustafa yearns for the 'North' and the narrator yearns for the 'South'. McLeod argues that, "to be 'at home' is to occupy a location where we are welcome, where we can be with people very much like ourselves" (2000, p. 210). Therefore, Mustafa yearns for the 'North' because he does not have any belongings in the 'South' and because of his cold temperament he do not think about his birth land and his only goal is to revenge. In contrast, the narrator has many belongings in the 'south' that had the role of 'valuable scraps' which reminded him his past during years

of his life in the foreign land. When the narrator arrives his homeland he says,

The important thing is that I returned with a great yearning for my people in that small village at the bend of the Nile. For seven years I had longed for them, had dreamed of them, and it was an extraordinary moment when I at last found myself standing amongst them. They rejoiced at having me back and made a great fuss, and it was not long before I felt as though a piece of ice were melting inside of me, as though I were some frozen substance on which the sun had shone — that life warmth of the tribe which I had lost for a time in a land 'whose fishes die of the cold'. My ears had become used to their voices, my eyes grown accustomed to their forms (Salih, 1969, p. 14).

Both Mustafa and the narrator speaks about the 'North' as a place of ice and coldness. The narrator speaks about its coldness because he believes in the warmth of the 'South' as his homeland and Mustafa believes in the coldness of the 'North' as a predatory colonizer who has stolen the culture and identity of him and his motherland's, therefore, he hates it in the bottom of his heart and wants to revenge. Indeed, Mustafa Saeed yearns for the 'North' and ice because its coldness lets him to be such cruel.

Another element in the story of *Season of Migration to the North* which manifests the concepts of 'North' and 'South' is the Nile. The small village in which the story happens is "at the bend of the Nile where the river, after flowing from south to north, suddenly turns almost at right angles and flows from west to east" (Salih, 1969, p. 53). As it was mentioned before, during the colonial and postcolonial periods many intelligentsia left their countries to the developed ones, from East to the West and from South to the North. Nile in the story, therefore, is a symbol of flowing and movement of colonized's lives and vicissitude of their identities when they migrate to the other lands.

And the river, the river but for which there would have been no beginning and no end, flows northwards, pays heed to nothing; a mountain may stands in its way so it turns eastwards; it may happen upon a deep depression so it turns westwards, but sooner or later it settles down in its irrevocable journey towards the sea in the north (Salih, 1969, p. 59).

Lost-identity; The Result of Hybridity and Ambivalence in Season of Migration to the North

Avtar Brah in her *Cartographies of Diaspora* states that, "'Home' is a mystic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense it is a place of no-return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of 'origin'" (1997, p. 192). Thus, when people of a specific culture and nation leave their homes and migrate, a sense of loss is always with them. Consequently, they begin to imagine their homelands through some scraps of the past, this state of imagination is what Bhabha calls the 'third space'. Therefore, living in the third space in order to "restage the past" brings a sense of hybridity and ambivalence for the person because he/she is caught between two different cul-

tures. As Bhabha debates, "[The] importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge" (1991, p. 211).

Accordingly, merged-identity is the result of hybridity and ambivalence when the person is oscillating between two different worlds. It can be argued that sometimes this phenomenon goes further and leads to a lost-identity as in *Season of Migration to the North* it can be observed through the character of Mustafa Saeed.

Mustafa and the unknown narrator both have been abroad for years, but what differentiates the narrator from Mustafa is the sense of his imagination and reminding his homeland while living in the colonizer's country that saves him from losing his original identity. Mustafa narrates the story of his life in the colonizers' countries to the narrator, and when the narrator listens to him and leaves Mustafa's house he thinks that, "the village was enveloped in a hazy light that gave it the look of being suspended between earth and sky" (Salih, 1969, p. 43). Village, which functions as the homeland of the narrator and identify his origin, in this story is the symbol of stability of the narrator's identity. Thus, when he listens to Mustafa's story, the narrator thinks that the village is suspending between earth and sky as he himself was vacillating between two different world, the world of themselves as the colonized and the world of the colonizer. He thinks the village is suspending because he sees his identity as a merged identity as the result of his ambivalence position. "This is the moment of aesthetic distance that provides the narrator with a double-edge [...] which provides hybridity" (Bhabha, 1997, p. 148). Then the narrator hears his grandfather's voice "reading his collects in preparation for the morning prayers" (Salih, 1969, p. 43). Then he adds that, "my grandfather's voice praying was the last sound I heard before I went to sleep and the first I heard on waking" (Salih, 1969, p. 43). Therefore, he feels relax and comes back to his original identity,

Suddenly I felt my spirits being reinvigorated as sometimes happens after a long period of depression: my brain cleared and the black thoughts stirred up by the story of Mustafa Saeed were dispersed. Now the village was not suspended between sky and earth but was stable: the houses were houses, the trees trees, and the sky was clear and faraway (Salih, 1969, pp. 43-4).

Indeed, the narrator's grandfather plays the role of the narrator's root which stables him and avoids him from losing his identity in the host lands. As Bhabha believes, "The unhomely moment creeps up on you stealthily as your own shadow and suddenly you find yourself taking the measure of your dwelling in a state of 'incredulous terror'" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 15). Therefore, again the narrator scares,

Was it likely that what had happened to Mustafa Saeed could have happened to me? He had said that he was a lie, so was I also a lie? I am from here_ is not this reality enough? I too had lived with them [the colonizers]. But I had lived with them superficially neither loving nor hating them. I used to treasure within me the image of this little village, seeing it whenever I went with the eye of my imagination (Salih, 1969, p. 44).

Actually, the narrator convicts himself that he is not like Mustafa Saeed and the North culture did not have any influence on his identity because he had used to imagine his homeland's scraps and had constructed a third space in his mind in order to save himself from the North's or colonizers' world.

Sometimes during the summer months in London, after a downpour of rain, I would breathe in the smell of it, and at odd fleeting moments before sunset I would see it. At the latter end of the night the foreign voices would reach my ears as though they were those of my people out here. [...] I would imagine the faces over there as being brown or black so that they would look like the faces of people I knew (Salih, 1969, p. 44).

On the other hand, what has saved the narrator from losing his identity in the colonizer's country is his grandfather and his imagination of him. "It signifies that one can forget all, but not the indigenous roots and real belonging" (Bhat and Mir, 2014, p. 124).

I feel a sense of stability; I feel that I am important, that I am continuous and integral. No, I am not a stone thrown into the water but seed sown in a field. I go to my grandfather and he talks to me of life forty years ago, fifty years ago, even eighty; and my feeling of security is strengthened. [...] Whenever I went away I was afraid he would die in my absence. When overcome by yearning for my family I would see him in my dreams (Salih, 1969, p. 15).

Robin Cohen Believes that diaspora people "acknowledge that 'the old country'- a notion often buried deep in language, religion, custom or folklore always has some claim on their loyalty and emotions" (1997, p. 4). Likewise, the narrator's homeland's "claim on his loyalty" is his grandfather. But, in the case of Mustafa there was not such a "claim". Mustafa Saeed was a little boy when he decided to go to school, a decision taken by his own free will for the first time (Salih, 1969, p. 26). He went to school without getting permission from his mother in a time when people would avoided their sons from going to school, because they would thought that school is "a great evil that had come to them with the armies of occupation" (Salih, 1969, p. 25). Mustafa went to school and studied there and was known as an intelligent there, thus the next step was to go to the other places to learn. In his farewell with his mother as Mustafa narrates there were "no tears, no kisses, and no fuss" (Salih, 1969, p. 27).

As it has been mentioned before, what make the persons to restage their pasts and remind their homelands and real origins in the foreign countries are some 'scraps' or 'fragments' which are the basis for their imagination of their homelands. Mustafa also had three of these scraps which one of them was a remembrance of his Arabic nationality. An expensive Wage-wood vase", "a rare Arabic manuscript", (when Jean Morris chewed it as spat it out, Mustafa says that it was as though she had chewed at his very liver), "a silken Isphahan prayer-rug" (Salih, 1969, p. 127), (which was given by Mrs. Robinson to Mustafa when he left Cairo and was his most valuable thing), these were Mustafa's remembrances of his

past that Jean Morris, who can be considered as the representative of the colonizers, effaced them.

Mustafa, an African-Arab, goes to London, France, Germany, China, and Denmark, and lives with the colonizers for a long time so that his own culture and identity effaces. He goes to colonizers' lands in order to study there and influences on them and take revenge on them because he believed that the colonizers have stolen their lands, culture, identity, and even people. He becomes a part of them and tries to free and save his homeland but while achieving his goal he loses his own identity. Choosing European women as his victims for taking revenge on the colonizers, leads him to his downfall at last. He does not remember his mother during the years of his traveling, so he is not living with her image and is not tangled to his past.

Hybridity and merged identity happens to the ones who are trapped between two different cultures, that of the colonizers and that of themselves as the colonized. They live a dual life; sometimes among the colonizers with the images of their own culture and home, and sometimes among themselves with the images of the alien culture which they have lived for some periods. As the result, these people are all along their lives vacillating between two cultures which brings them merged identity. But Mustafa loses his identity because on the way of his goal to revenge on the colonizers' and the North's world, he has become a part of them. Thus, he cannot escape from colonizer's world.

Mustafa Saeed's Disability to Escape from Colonizer's World

Mustafa tells his whole story to the narrator, gives the narrator the key of his own room and disappears one night. There was a rumor in the small village that Mustafa has drowned himself in the Nile, the river which was flowing from South to the North. In fact, Mustafa sacrificed himself to show his superiority over the colonizers. Mustafa in order to take revenge on the colonizers went to their countries, became a part of the colonizers' institutions, influenced on them, and finally deceived their women, caused them to death and killed Jean Morris as the representative of the colonizer. When London's court wanted to punish him, he narrates that, "I had a sort of feeling superiority towards them" (Salih, 1969, p. 75), because he had achieved his goal then. Mustafa believed that the Law punishes the aggressors, so he was happy that he could become an aggressor in the colonizers' land because the colonizers were aggressors in his homeland too and now he could take revenge on them by their own strategy.

Professor Maxwell Foster-Keen_ one of the founders of the Moral Rearmament movement in Oxford, a Mason, and a member of the Supreme Committee for the Protestant Missionary Societies in Africa_ did not conceal his dislike of me. In the days when I was a student of his at Oxford he would say to me with undisguised irritation: "You, Mr. Saeed, are the best example of the fact that our civilizing mission in Africa is of no avail. After all the efforts we've made to educate you, It's as if you'd come out of the jungle for the first time" (Salih, 1969, p. 75).

Actually, the above lines indicate that Mustafa has made the colonizers disappointed at their strategy of bringing the colonized under their control and internalizing their superiority over them. But, why Mustafa cannot escape from colonizer's world and why he decides to leave his family in the small village and disappears one night?

After coming back to his home land, Mustafa married to an Arab-African woman, Hosna, and made a family with two sons. In fact, by coming back to his origin land, Mustafa wanted to be free from the colonizers' culture and get back his lost-culture. But, he could not accomplish this affair because the colonizers' culture and language had become an integral part of his character. He sang a poem in English when he was drunk (Salih, 1969, p. 31), sometimes at night when he was asleep he'd say things in gibberish like European talk (Salih, 1969, p. 74), and he had a locked room full of European's remembrances (Salih, 1969, Chapter 10). Indeed, it can be argued that, the foreign lands have become like Mustafa's homeland and their remembrances had the role of 'scraps' for Mustafa and played the role of his belongings. Thus, Mustafa's hybrid situations in the home-land and the host-land have led him to his lost-identity, which is the result of "hybridity" and "ambivalence". And this fading identity makes him to disappear himself because he is neither a colonized nor a colonizer, but he is a hybrid one who cannot escape both.

CONCLUSION

Postcolonial discourse, as a major force in literary studies, started after the Second World War in 1990's. Therefore, many researchers and scholars endeavored to convey Postcolonialism concepts. In this regard, Homi K. Bhabha is one of the most important figures in contemporary post-colonial studies who has developed a number of key concepts, such as hybridity, mimicry, difference, and ambivalence. Such terms describe ways in which colonized peoples have resisted the power of the colonizer, according to Bhabha's theory.

"Hybridity" and "ambivalence" are two concepts of post-colonial criticism which Homi K. Bhabha refers to them in his *The Location of Culture*, (1994). According to Bhabha, when people leave their countries and homelands and travel to the foreign countries, they trap between two different cultures. In fact, a sense of 'double consciousness' reveals in them so that they are all the time vacillating between two different things, for example, two different cultures, languages, identity, and etc.... Thus, they face a merged-identity as the result of these contradictories and they live a dual life. Likewise, during the colonial period, many colonized intellectuals left their countries to the developed lands in order to educate there and bring back high education with themselves to save their homelands from exploiting. But, most of these intellectuals lost their original identity in this way.

Accordingly, Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* is the story of two intellectuals, Mustafa Saeed and the unknown narrator, who go to Europe to educate there. The narrator faces a merged-identity but at last finds

his origin and rediscover his real identity when he comes back to his home land and meets his grandfather. But, Mustafa Saeed loses his identity as the result of his hybrid life in the colonizers’ lands for a long time. In fact, Mustafa who wanted to take revenge on the colonizers, himself becomes a part of them unconsciously and when he achieves his goal in the foreign land and comes back to his real homeland he cannot adapt himself to the present situation and cannot forget his past life in the colonizers’ lands. Therefore, trapping between two different culture and identity leads him to his lost-identity and downfall. Thus, in this study, the focus was on the investigation of Tayeb Salih’s *Season of Migration to the North* through Homi K. Bhabha’s theories of “Hybridity” and “Ambivalence” as the causes of merged- and even lost-identity in post-colonial discourse.

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