

## The Double Colonization of Women in Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

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### ABSTRACT

The present study offers a critical analysis of post-colonial feminism in Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (1969) and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958). It analyzes the notion of double colonization as portrayed through marginalization and subordination of women in the novels. It shows the relationship between the colonizer and colonized and the purpose of colonization. In addition, it examines the status of the colonized women in relation to customs, traditions, and race where customs are obviously against women in their society and women characters appear as an inferior class and have no recognized status and view in that society. The method used can be described as descriptive and analytical relying mainly on the texts of the two novels and the critical literature produced on them that sheds more light on the problem in question.

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### Introduction

To discuss the issue of 'Double colonization' through the two novels, it is important to make an attempt to define what 'Double colonization' means together with an explication of this idea. The notion of 'Double colonization' indicates that women suffer from a double colonization: one is exercised by the colonizer and the other by her society. We can see this notion presented in the work of Neeru Tandon, in her book *Feminine Psyche: A Post Modern Critique* (2008), discussing that women have faced the oppression of colonialism and patriarchy together, which respectively refer to the term of 'Double colonization'. The studies about representation of women from colonizing and colonized culture show that double colonization affected women of different cultures in different ways (p.34). Actually, women have suffered from double colonization in different societies and different cultures. Also, women have faced different kinds of oppression: from their masculine society on the one hand, and from colonization on the other hand. They have experienced the oppression of patriarchy because of socially constructed roles which make them an inferior class in the society with no rights, also they have experienced the oppression of colonization (p. 34).

### Discussion

The first novel, *Season of Migration to the North*, revolves around a Sudanese man called Mustafa Sa'eed and five women: Ann Hammond, Isabella Seymour, Sheila Greenwood and Jean Morris, whom he met during the period of his study in England. These were in addition to his wife Hosna Bint Mahmoud, whom he met in his native country 'Sudan' and married her. What is striking in *Season of Migration to the North* is the world of feminism. All women

who have contacts with Mustafa Sa'eed die: three of them end with suicide, fourth relationship leads to marriage followed by her murder at the hands of Mustafa Sa'eed. He kills her in bed and his wife Hosna dies by killing herself. Mustafa's adventures in London are represented through the use of his genius to make European girls fall in love with him and thus ruin their lives. He considers it a success or more than that when making sexual relationships with them.

Tayeb Salih represents this success by a series of sexual relationships. His protagonist Mustafa Sa'eed is sent from Sudan to London and is portrayed in his adventures with some British women, relationships are often marked by violence and cruelty. "I have come to you as a conqueror" (Salih, p. 60). Mustafa Sa'eed goes to London to seemingly take revenge from the British for colonizing his country. He mentions the war: "and I, over and above everything else, am a colonizer, I am the intruder whose fate must be decided" (Salih, 95). Mustafa, thus considers his relations with British women as a war: he is the invader and they are his enemy that must be defeated. Mustafa's purpose is to portray how much his fellow countrymen suffered from British colonialism. He travels to England to avenge them. He thought that having a relationship with woman is a kind of victory for him.

We can see that the notion of "double colonization" of women is artistically reflected in this novel. We can see a number of attitudes displaying colonizer oppression in the novel. We find Mustafa Sa'eed entering the prison because he killed his wife Jean Morris. At first, when he meets her, she refuses him absolutely, and she tells him "You're ugly, I've never seen an uglier face than yours" (Salih, p. 30). After that, he decides to take revenge. He never stops pursuing her for three years, but at the end she gives up and accepts him. He peruses her until she accepts him and asks him to marry her. After that, he kills her. "So I married her. My bedroom became a theatre of war; my bed a patch of hell" (Salih, pp. 33-34). "My bedroom was a spring-well of sorrow, the germ of a fatal disease" (Salih, p. 34). Mustafa Sa'eed appears as a person who remains far from emotions and love. He is probably like a dumb machine, as one of his loved colleague girl told him. "You're not a human being, she had said to me. You're a heartless machine" (p. 28). But this machine is stocked with a desire for lust and sex with the daughters of the European society to become a machine even in his sexual relationships. He appears thirsty for these relationships because he considered himself a bloodthirsty fighter, and all these girls as invaders: "my caravans were thirsty" (p. 34), "I am the desert of thirst" (p. 33). The sexual relations that we can see within this framework are for Mustafa Sa'eed something else completely different. Mustafa Sa'eed is an example of embodiment of the picture of African violence and he represents a sadistic man who enjoys the torture of others specially women. "Everything I did after I killed her was an apology; not for killing her, but for the lie that was my life" (p. 29). We see in the novel that Mustafa's life is a lie and he asks people and the jury through the trial to kill him and finish his life. This could mean that he is not Mustafa Sa'eed, the man who was noble, not the man who had the brain of a genius whose mind is able to realize a Western civilization. He considers himself a soldier who has to finish this battle that he himself had not chosen. Mustafa dedicates himself to that war, "At any rate I devoted myself with the whole of my being to that new life" (Salih, p. 22). He devotes himself not to learn but to be a great warrior through his brilliant genius to seduce them with gifts, honeyed words and charming phrases: "my storehouse of hackneyed phrases is inexhaustible" (Salih, p. 35).

Sheila Greenwood is a waitress in a restaurant. He seduces her with gifts and sweet words until she falls in his trap. She is a virgin when he takes her to his graveyard (his bedroom) and leaves her carrying the germ of self-destruction within her. She commits suicide without saying anything. We see him using his genius to trap these women. For every woman, he has special words and special ways to share her; "for every occasion I possess the appropriate garb" (Salih, p. 35).

With each woman, he wears a new mask. He promises every woman marriage and gives her a new name just for him with a new story about his life. With Isabella Seymour, he fabricates a new story about his life and his country. He lies to her that he has lost parents when he was six years old and they drowned with thirty other people in the Nile. He finds her an easy prey and gets an easy response from her.

We can see how he deceived Ann Hammond and made her fall in his net: "In my bed I transformed her into a harlot. My bedroom was a graveyard that looked on to a garden" (Salih, p. 30-31). He has deceived her; he promises to marry her and that their marriage would be a bridge between North and South. She is an easy prey for Mustafa when he invites her to his bedroom and transfers her into a victim. He describes his bedroom as a graveyard: any woman who enters his bedroom enters her grave. She commits suicide by gassing herself. He found a small piece of paper on which was written, "Mr. Sa'eed, may God damn you" (p. 147).

Sylvie Da Lomba, in her book *The Right to Seek Refugee Status in the European Union*, significantly identifies violence against women as:

Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life (p. 73).

Clearly, when we read the novel, violence against women appears as an act of violence, of a physical or psychological nature.

We can see other attitudes of patriarchal oppression in the novel. Shelia Greenwood falls in love with Mustafa. And Shelia tells Mustafa: "My mother used to tell him, she would go mad and my father would kill me if they knew I was in love with a black man, but I don't care" (p. 139). I see that the narrator tries to annul the segregation between white and black with Greenwood's love of Mustafa; she loves him so much and she is ready to die for her love. If her father knew about her relationship with the black man, he would kill her, but she didn't care, the most important thing for her is love. Clearly, we find how women suffer from local oppression not only in African society, but also in the Western society. Women are considered to have no value or opinion. We can see different types of violence against women embodied in Mustafa's relationships with European women, such as sexual, physical and psychological violence.

We can see through the novel certain depictions of physical violence against women which include sexual and emotional violence at the same time. An example of patriarchal oppression is how, Mustafa's wife, Hosna, after his death, is forced by her family to marry Wad Rayyas but she kills him and kills herself. Hosna's father told her "she'd marry him whether she liked it or not" (p. 122). Mahjoub tries to dissuade Wad Rayyas from this idea, but he insists on marrying her. Mahjoub also talks to her father, but her father said, "he wouldn't be made a laughing-stock by people saying his daughter wouldn't listen to him" (p. 122). We can see from this statement how women are turned to be victims of social norms in the Sudanese society. Women have no decisions about their own lives and must accept the opinions of their fathers or their custodians without questioning. We see here how Hosna is forced by her father to marry Wad Rayyas; she is another victim of traditions in her society. We see Hosna through the novel as an example of resistance and change. We see her through the novel presenting an offer to the narrator to marry her, trying to change the norms of her village after her father ordered her to marry Wad Rayyas. But the narrator refuses her demand. Also, she shows an example of resistance in her refusal to marry Wad Rayyas and deciding her fate with her own hands by killing herself. We see Bint Majzoub telling that narrator, after his return from conference in Khartoum in a sad tragic way about Hosna's end:

Wad Rayyes was as naked as the day he was born; Bint Mahmoud too was naked apart from her torn underclothes. The red straw mat was swimming in blood. I raised the lamp and saw that every inch of Bint Mahmoud's body was covered in bites and scratches — her stomach, thighs and neck. The nipple of one breast had been bitten through and blood poured down from her lower lip. There is no strength and no power save in God. Wad Rayyes had been stabbed more than ten times — in his stomach, chest, face, and between his thighs (Salih, p. 126-127).

This quotation shows the horrid way in which Wad Rayyas behaves with his wife Hosna. He is like a monster devouring his prey without mercy or pity. He is like a crazy man. Mabrouka said, "Wad Rayyes dug his grave with his

own hands" (p. 128). I think that Mabrouka was right that Wad Rayyes had dug his own grave with his hands because Hosna did not like him, but she was forced to marry him.

Sudanese women have suffered so much from that patriarchal society where men keep control over women. We can find that in A. H. Abdel Salam's and Alexander De Waal's book, *The Phoenix State: Civil Society and the Future of Sudan*, which claims that women were treated in a bad way in Sudan even after its national independence. At the time of the independence in 1956, the pattern of Sudanese society was still clannish and tribal and there was a division of labor where women's roles were restricted to those of housewives and menial agriculture laborers. Sudanese women have suffered a lot whether in rural or urban society. The patriarchal society considers women inferior to men and men dominate and control women. Sudanese women have always experienced the influence of this patriarchal society and its norms. Sudanese women were forbidden from basic liberties like freedom of expression, freedom of travel, and freedom of taking their own decisions. The power of patriarchal system was reflected even in laws and basic social institutions such as schools and family (Salam and De Waal, p.73-74).

Friederike Bubenzer and Orly Stern (2011), in their book *Hope, Pain and Patience: The Lives of Women in South Sudan*, indicate that the main reason behind sexual violence in South Sudan is the patriarchal society. Men are seen as dominating and hold position as the heads in the Sudanese society. Women are seen as inferior to men in South Sudan, and all forms of violence are seen as acceptable means of punishing wives there (p. 60).

Fatima Zahra El Arbaoui, refers to the idea of persecuting women among other things and expresses that clearly:

In the writing of *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe portrays the history of Igbo; he does so by depicting both the straightness and weaknesses of their culture and traditions that made them distinct from Western cultures like their beliefs in the power of ancestral gods, the killing of twins and the persecution of women (8).

The second novel, *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, revolves around Okonkwo, his daughter and his three wives. The first wife is unnamed and is the mother of Nwoye and Obiageli, the second wife is Ekwefi (Ezinma's mother) who leaves her husband for Okonkwo, and the last wife is the youngest one 'Ojiugo', the mother of Nkechi. Okonkwo loves his daughter Ezinma so much, but because of that socially constructed traditions, he is prevented from showing his emotions or giving her a bigger role than the one imposed on her by the community. Okonkwo rules his house with severity and strength. He is unable to control his anger, making everyone fear him. His wives are always afraid of him, especially the youngest, who is living in horror of his nervous temperament, as well as his children. The notion of double colonization can be shown also in this novel. We can see Okonkwo's mistreatment of his wives. For example, one day, his youngest wife called 'Ojiugo' provokes his anger; she goes to plait her hair at her friend's house and does not return early to cook the afternoon meal for Okonkwo and he beats her up very severely. His other wives entreat him by the sacred week to stop, "But Okonkwo was not the man to stop beating somebody half-way through, not even for fear of a goddess" (p. 25). Okonkwo's neighbors heard his wife crying and some came to see what is happening. It is unusual to have some people being beaten during the sacred week. It is clear that the youngest wife "Ojiugo" in this case suffers from Okonkwo's violence on one hand, and from the insult on the other, which Okonkwo causes to her in front of the neighbors. This is represented in Adams's discussion and who distinguishes between abuse and violence against women that violence refers to all forms of physical aggression, while abuse refers to aggression that causes affront and also to nonphysical acts of maltreatment that cause harm. The two terms are used in literature as synonymously and interchangeably. Violence refers only to physical acts at all levels of severity, while abuse includes violence and nonphysical acts (Halli. S., & Brownridge. D., pp. 52-53).

Another example of oppressing women in the novel takes place in the festival season. Okonkwo asks "who killed this banana tree" (Achebe, p. 33). The tree is very much alive and the second wife has cut a few leaves off to wrap some food and she said that to him, without argument. Okonkwo beats her severely and left her crying and none of the other wives could interfere. He is not sufficed, after he pays off his anger, he decides to go hunting, so he asks

Ikemefuna to fetch his gun. He hears the wife who has just been beaten murmuring something about guns that never shoot, so he runs madly to his room and brings the loaded gun and aims it at her while she is climbing over the dwarf wall of the barn and he fires at her. There is a loud explosion accompanied by the wail of his wives and children. But he does not kill her. He thus rules his family with an iron fist and expects everyone to act on his commands.

Prilleltensky and Nelson describe the term "oppression" as a state of domination where the oppressed suffer the consequences of deprivation, exclusion, exploitation, control of culture, discrimination and even violence. Mari talks about oppression as a process that includes organized individual and collective ways of behavior when one group attempts to dominate and control another in order to secure economic, political and psychological dominance (Prilleltensky, I., & Nelson. N. 2002, pp. 12-13).

Gender division of patriarchy appears in the novel where Okonkwo, the main character, believes in traditional gender divisions. We can see that the women of Umuofia do have lots of work that center round cleaning, food preparation, raising children, and household chores, but men do much of the heavy labors such as, farming, and fighting for and defending their clan as needed. For instance, the preparations for the Feast of the New Yam; "Okonkwo's wives had scrubbed the walls and the huts with red earth until they reflected light." (Achebe, p. 32). Also, we see in the novel that Okonkwo wishes if his favorite daughter, Ezinma, was a boy: "If Ezinma had been a boy I would have been happier, she has the right spirit" (Achebe, p. 57). Okonkwo fears that his son, Nwoye, will be like his grandfather, lazy and unsuccessful. Okonkwo believes that his daughter, Ezinma, has the spirit of the boy, but not Nwoye: "Sit like a woman" (p. 38). Okonkwo shouts at Ezinma when she asks to accompany him to see wrestling: "No, that is a boy's job" (p. 38). We see how Ezinma is marginalized by her father not only because she is still a small girl but also because she belongs to the feminine gender. We can see that argued in John Archer and Barbara Lloyd's work *Sex and Gender* (2002) when they discuss the origin of gender roles. In the social sciences, many of the explanations for the origin of gender roles focus on patriarchy and male domination of women. In the nineteenth century, anthropologists such as Lewis H. Morgan constructed some changes which are supposed to have been passed in human society, from promiscuity to matrilineal descent to patriarchy. Feminist theory is concerned with gender roles and aims to understand the nature of inequality. Also, it focuses on analyzing gender inequality and on the advancement of women's rights and issues. The development of feminist theory is related with relationship with the feminist movement that occurred through three waves successively. Specifically, feminist theory developed, besides the issues, which saw women as the most submissive beings.

Feminism and masculinity are interrelated theories. Masculinity is considered as male dominance in the society. Feminist theories are concerned with women and gender. Women in society are considered as misfortunate compared to men. People should strive for gender justice to benefit both men and women. Feminist theories don't look at men as a unified group. Rather, they see men ideologically and materially fortunate by male status (Flood, et al, p. 208).

There are also many examples in the novel that show how women are marginalized and made to suffer from psychological oppression. It can be noted in the novel through various aspects of the social life and customs like the story of the twins thrown away in the forest and left to die or to be eaten by monsters for the belief that they were damned:

Nneka had had four previous pregnancies and child-births. But each time she had borne twins, they had been immediately thrown away. Her husband and his family were already becoming highly critical of such a woman and were not unduly perturbed when they found she had fled to join the Christians. It was a good riddance (Achebe, p. 131).

Clearly, women suffered from uncultured habits in their societies which oppress women psychologically. We see how Nneka is discarded from her society because all of her four pregnancies give birth to twins. This makes Nneka

feel that she is a different and strange woman and thus unaccepted in society, so we find her converting to another religion, when the missionaries come, she leaves her original religion as her society did not care for her.

We can also see through the novel that women are also oppressed by colonization. For instance, the Igbo people and their tribal life was deeply influenced by colonial missions. In an article, Zéphirin Mokogna, stresses the fact that this influence “forced African parents and children to reject their customs in favour of Christianity as a new doctrine, to be opened to the new economic world, and to be governed by the new forms of administration and justice” (139). Thus Women appear to have no opinion even in the new religion. When many women convert to the new religion, we can see the missionaries go to some meetings without women. The missionaries come and use their religion to spread their own culture. Women in the new religion got no role except only to serve men and the church. We see that on the Easter day, "Mr. Kiaga had asked the women to bring red earth and white chalk and water to scrub the church for Easter" (Achebe, p. 140). We can also see that the new religion does not protect women when they serve men and the church. When they go to bring water, red earth and chalk to scrub the church on Easter day, they were met by some young men who chase them with whips: "They said that some young men had chased them away from the stream with whips" (Achebe, p. 140).

It appears that women suffer not only from patriarchy, but also from colonization. In addition, we can see how colonization disperses between the members of family when some women diverted to the new religion and leave their sons and houses. Also, when many women converted to the new religion, colonizers do not give them new roles in the society. We see the missionaries go to some meetings with men only. In his article entitled “Re-reading Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart: A Postcolonial Perspective*”, A.K.M. Aminur Rashid aptly concludes that “due to the effect of a post-colonial affair of the white missionaries, Achebe has noticed that a rich native culture is destroyed under an imperial power” (p. 3).

Okonkwo wants his son (Nwoye) to be a tough man to be able to rule his father's household after his death. So, he is very happy when he hears him grumble against women because this shows that he would be able to rule his family's women: "No matter how prosperous a man was, if he was unable to rule his women and his children (and especially his women); he was not really a man" (Achebe, p. 45). These words reflect that the control of men in these tribes is rooted s inherited things.

Several instances can be cited about psychological oppression against women in the novel. Some men come to Ikemefuna's home, talk to his father in a low voice, then take him away with his mother, but she cannot do anything except weep bitterly. That was the mourning of woman for her child. Also, we can see that women are not asked for their opinion. This appears when the elders ask Okonkwo to look after the boy until they decide his fate. When the boy 'Ikemefuna' comes to Okonkwo's house, Okonkwo calls his senior wife to care for him and tells her "He belongs to the clan, so look after him"(Achebe, p. 12). His wife asks him if he is staying long with them, but Okonkwo replies to her in a strict way "Do what you are told, woman" (Achebe, p. 12).

Moreover, women were oppressed psychologically and this appears in Kelby Harrison's *Sexual Deceit: The Ethics of Passing* (2013). He describes psychological oppression as, "the appropriation of and dominion over the self-esteem of an individual" (Harrison, K., p. 78). He discusses it as the ability in narratives to produce the experience of self and self-regard in a destroyed way. Kelby Harrison mentions that Sandra Bartky argues that Psychological oppression is “institutionalized and systemic” (cited in Harrison, p. 78). It supports the structure of power that make domination easier and destroy the spirit of the dominated by enabling them to understand the nature of the agencies which are responsible for their subjugation. Psychological oppression makes people blind regarding the social structures which nature and maintain system of oppression (Harrison, K., 2013, and p.78).

Women are marginalized and subjugated to men not only as black but also as women. Achebe portrays women in an inferior position in the novel. They are considered as mere objects of men. They are treated as cattle. Gender divisions constitute a misconception of patriarchy. But Okonkwo believes in traditional tribal gender division.

Kelly and Johnson distinguished between two types of intimate violence: situational couple violence and coercive controlling violence. Situational couple violence is when the argument arises but there is no desire to control: it could be one incident or frequent. Terrorism could describe the coercive control, where the physical violence may be one of the methods used to control one partner over the other (Lombard and McMillan, p. 85).

## Conclusion

Thus, it may be concluded that the notion of double colonization can be detected clearly in the two novels. The similar aspects between two novels show that women live in a society ruled by traditional customs and habits, where women fall as a sacrifice under these norms. Women appear as inferior human beings in the society where their freedom is restricted with tribal customs and habits and consequently they have no attitude or opinion. We see the relationship between the colonizers and colonized as based on economic, politic, and private interests. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* shows the policy of colonization clearly. The colonizer had sent the missionaries to tribes with the intent to spread a new religion: the religion of justice and equality. The colonizer instead began to spread its culture by using religion, then started to exploit the resources of the countries. In opposite direction, the policy of colonization in *Season of Migration to the North* is different, Mustafa Sa'eed endeavors to take revenge from British people. The issue of gender discrimination is reflected more frankly in *Things Fall Apart*, thus we see how Okonkwo treats his daughter Ezinma in tough way and wishes if she were a boy. In addition, the women of Umuofia have restricted house works like: cleaning, food preparation, raising children, while men do much of the heavy labors such as, farming, and fighting for and defending their clan as needed. Also, we can see in *Things Fall Apart* that women's subordination is deeply rooted as an inherited tribal norm. They sow in their children's brain's the idea that whoever wants to be a man he must be able to control his wives, and this appears in the novel when Okonkwo becomes so happy when he heard his son treat women in tough way. The condition of weakness is strongly associated with the state of being female, but women are integrated in the society to fulfill specific roles in their society. This can be presented in the idea that emphasizes the weakness of femininity in the Igbo society and ensures the continuation of patriarchy. However, it should be added that naturally women in Igbo culture enjoyed greater freedom and social power before the time in which *Things Fall Apart* is set. Thus it can be said that Igbo women had enjoyed their own tribal freedom and women's group associations and titles. Both novels artistically reflect the issue of the double colonization of women through a successful post-colonial perspective.

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