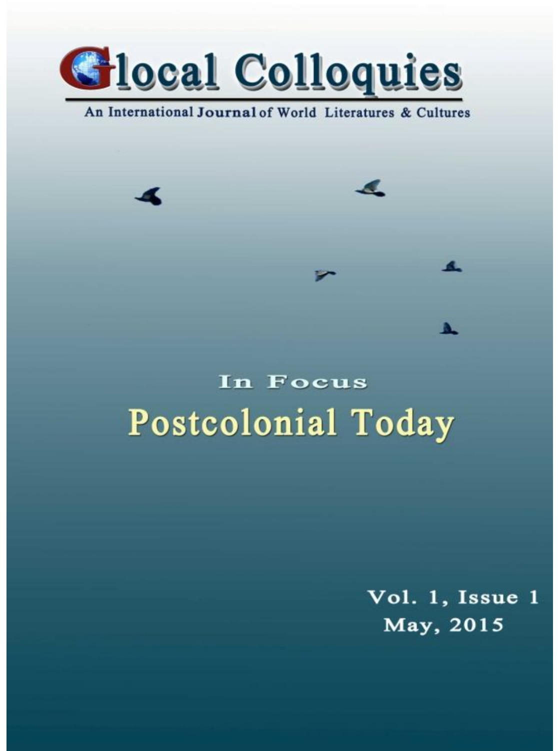

For publication details,please visit:
http://glocalcolloquies.com/

Poisons and Perversions: Toxic Modes of Self-Othering in *Season of Migration to the North*

Mookerjee, Rita
Temple University, USA
rita.mookerjee@temple.edu
Published online: 09 May 2015.

To cite this article: Mookerjee, Rita. "Poisons and Perversions: Toxic Modes of Self-Othering in *Season of Migration to the North.*"*Glocal Colloquies* 1.1 (2015): 114-123. Web

Glocal Colloquies is a non-profit, international, double-blind, peer reviewed, refereed, open access E-journal. The journal is an initiative to create a shared space for scholars to engage in trans-cultural global literary conversations. The journal publishes critical and scholarly writings, interviews, book reviews on literatures and cultures from across the globe.

* The manuscript uploaded here cannot not be retransmitted or redistributed without written permissions from the paper's publisher/author. However, it can be used for research, teaching, and other academic purposes as long as it is properly acknowledged.

Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and the views of the author(s), and are not the views of or endorsed by **Glocal Colloquies.

Mookerjee, Rita
Temple University, USA
rita.mookerjee@temple.edu

Poisons and Perversions: Toxic Modes of Self-Othering in *Season of Migration to the North*

Abstract

Though TayebSalih's *Season of Migration to the North* is delivered through an unnamed narrator, the story revolves around Mustafa Sa'eed who capitalizes upon images of Otherness projected onto him. Sa'eed adopts a pluralized Otherness wherein the identities he assumes do not blend together in hybridity, but instead clash, rendering him forever unknowable. While it is easy to compartmentalize Sa'eed as a postcolonial subject exacting vengeance upon the colonizer, many scholars have felt that this is a myopic reading of the text. Salih uses this character to call attention to the myriad of sociohistorical, economic, racial, gendered, and sexual issues that plague the postcolonial subject. Salih makes instances of self-Othering obvious on Sa'eed's part (his use of alternative names, for example), while some are much more nuanced, like his presence as the narrator's double. Sa'eed is able to shapeshift in and out of cultures. This awareness in shapeshifting creates fissures in his existence; in this way, Sa'eed moves beyond a conflict of double consciousness and into a state of multiple identity fractures. Existing scholarship has commented on the use of the supernatural within Salih's work, yet it has not closely inspected shapeshifting as a trope. The current body of criticism surrounding the novel is too concerned with Western tropes such as the doppelganger.

Keywords: Sudanese, hypermasculinity, Otherness, hybridity, violence

Within *Season of Migration to the North*,TayebSalih weaves the story of his unnamed protagonist narrator with the tale of Mustafa Sa'eed, a scholar of the West with a strange and sordid past. Salih himself gained fame for this text's ability to speak from the liminal space of Afro-Islam. After years of teaching and serving as a diplomat, Salih published the novel as *Mawsim al-Hijraila al-Shamal*in 1966 with the English translation following in 1969. After receiving countless accolades from around the globe, *Season of Migration* was declared "the most important Arabic novel of the 20th century" by the Arab Literary Academy ("Sudan"). Though Salih passed in 2009, his novel is still seen as revolutionary in its characterization of the clash of East and West,which is embodied by the character Mustafa Sa'eed.Sa'eedis styled as an Other on several planes, notably, as a gentleman who is above his native Sudan, as an exotic womanizer who seeks to dominate white women, and as an Othello-esque African Arab man of

status. As such, Salih positions the character as a sociocultural Other, a racial Other, and at times, Sa'eed's[1] Otherness becomes otherworldly. He is described as a ghost and a false god, but he is also likened to a genie and an ifrit, a type of fire demon. In other words, his alienation takes the form of the supernatural, mythic, or metaphysical.Though his fabricated personas seem like manipulative acts of triumph over the oppressive West or the seizing of agency as a cultural hybrid, Sa'eed'sOthered identities exist on a superficial level and they ultimately poison his sense of self, the very existence of which remains debatable within the text.

Sa'eed's self-Otheringstems not only from living in a European country as a colonized black/Arab/Muslim man; it begins when he pursues an education in his native Sudan, consuming the knowledge and perceptions of the Western colonizing body.In *Season of Migration,*Othered selves do not blend together in hybridity but instead, consume one another. HomiBhabhahasasserted that hybrids have the ability to turn the colonizer's gaze onto itself and to destabilize "the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power but [reimplicate] its identifications in strategies of subversion" (Bhabha 112). While Sa'eedends up with all the necessary features of a cultural hybrid, he plays back into stereotypes and confines himself to fragile,reductive identities which lead to his literal incarceration as well as his existentialcollapse. For this reason, I am trying to argue that the shapeshifter is a better model than the hybrid for the purpose of analyzing this character. Within the text, there is no grand moment wherein Sa'eed challenges the colonial powers and wreaks havoc on systems of oppression. When the Nile River floods in the novel, the threads holding Mustafa Sa'eed'sidentities together are too weak, and he is washed away,disappearing from the text entirely. This particular reading of the text shows the difficulty and potential impossibility of negotiating a hybrid identity as a postcolonial subject.

It is necessary to begin this analysis with an examination of mimicry and hybridity. Considering the character of Mustafa Sa'eed through the lens of HomiBhabha'snotion of deviant mimicry as figured in *Location of Culture* allows for some of the possible motivationsfor self-Othering(conscious or otherwise) to become apparent. Bhabha demonstrates that while the colonial subject may imitate the colonizer in the hopes of securing power and status, the postcolonial subject remains "the effect of a flawed colonial mimesis" (125). Thus the colonized individual can never perfectly replicate the model of the colonized despite his best efforts. That said, Bhabha explains that mimicry can be performed in ways that challenge the colonizer which in effect, liberate the colonized.Bhabha iterates that it is the liminal space between colonizer and colonized that "carries the burden of the meaning of culture" and from this site, rebellious mimicry can succeed and the fully-actualized hybrid can emerge (56). The mimesis of the hybrid "mocks its [the colonizer's] power to be a model" and "disrupts its authority" (125). While such acts of subversion can be identified in the text, Sa'eed's acts of mimicry all end up feeding back into the stereotypes and pre-existing power structures of the colonizer. ShadiNeimneh points to a scene where the narrator finds Sa'eed digging in the ground around a lemon tree. Sa'eed exclaims, "Some of the branches of this tree produce lemons, others oranges" (15). According to Neimneh, "This grafted tree in *Season* can be taken as a trope for cultural hybridity, for it bears two kinds of fruits just as Mustafa and the narrator speak two languages and have experienced two cultures" (Neimneh 8). Unlike the tree, Sa'eed does not flourish as a product of disparate

[1] I refer to this character as "Sa'eed" in keeping with the way the narrator addresses him in the text.

cultures. After traveling back to Sudan and trying to pursue a humble, quiet existence as a villager, "Sa'eed has ample time to reflect upon his wasted potential and to ponder why he — unlike his unique tree — has not fulfilled the promise of cultural grafting (Geesey 133). While it could be argued thatSa'eed becomes a shell of a character after returning to Sudan from overseas, Abbas asserts that Sa'eed dies when he resolves to kill himself, then actually kills his wife, Jean Morris (Abbas 29). In "Cultural Hybridity and Contamination in TayebSalih's 'Mawsim al-hijraila al-Shamal (*Season of Migration to the North*)'" Patricia Geeseypoints to Bhabha's analysis of hybridization as subversion and posits that while hybridity is not cast in a positive light in this text, it has the potential to act as a weapon of countercolonialism and defy the colonial power. I maintain that Sa'eed is not a successful hybrid in Bhabha's terms; he others himself on too many planes, does not seize agency as a character with great potential for cultural rebellion, and dissolves as a character before the novel ends. He spends time in Cairo in addition to Wad Hammid and London and finds fulfillment and solace in none of these places. His self-grafting is unsuccessful in both East and West. Despite moving back to Sudan after his conviction for the murder of his white wife, Jean Morris, Sa'eed cannot establish a life for himself because he has been consumed by all of his false selves and physically disappears, forever unknowable.

An Entry to the West

During his time at Gordon College, Sa'eed is referred to as "the black Englishman"; this is the first major instance of Sa'eed consuming and regurgitating an Othered identity (Salih 53). While this nickname situates Sa'eed as both an insider and outsider, it still capitalizes upon race and phenotypes since it is delivered by his classmates "with a combination of admiration and spite" (53). During his studies, Sa'eed conceives of world geography "as though it were a chess board" (22). This comparison is significant not only because it is a clear metaphor for the colonial quest for domination, but it also evokes a sense of strategy and calculation on Sa'eed's part. Chess itself is a board game that, while Indian in origin, is reminiscent of Western high culture and so the object itself can be understood as a part of colonial conquest. Sa'eed himself can be read as an artifact of the colonized world that becomes consumed by the West until its native origins are mostly unrecognizable. During his time in Cairo, Sa'eed gains more access to a Western frame of reference via Mrs. Robinson. He recalls, "From her I learnt to love Bach's music, Keat's poetry, and from her I heard for the first time of Mark Twain" then adds, "And yet I enjoyed nothing." (28). This remark suggests Sa'eed's conscious induction into the culture of the West, recognizing that he has to appreciate certain aesthetic modes in order to appear cultured.Sa'eed's experiences with Mrs. Robinson are highly sexualized which alludes to the fixation he will have with women later in London. He associates Mrs. Robinson with both London and Egypt. The smell of London reminds him of her body when she would embrace him and he describes her eyes as "the colour of Cairo: grey-green, turning at night to a twinkling like that of a firefly" (23-24). Here, Sa'eed's frame of reference is hybridized as he sees the object of his desire in the terms of both the East and West, but he quickly adopts a highly Orientalized persona which he uses to manipulate British women.

Hyperbolic Arab Masculinity

While it initially seems that Sa'eed will conquer the West through sexual domination, this is not ultimately the case. Still, the character's many intimate encounters with women create a sense of hypermasculinity. Before exploring this idea in the context of the novel, I will articulate a definition of masculinity as described in R.W. Connell's *Masculinities*. In this text, Connell provides an examination of the scope of male gender identity and how its different manifestations offer a hierarchy of masculinity. Connell posits that masculinity exists as a group of concepts: “a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality, and culture” (Connell 71). Connell's definition is ideal for this analysis because it incorporates the importance of space and interpersonal communication, both of which are areas where the character's hypermasculinity is highly visible. Connell explains that while the property of masculinity is not determined by gender, the male body is not a “neutral surface or landscape on which a social symbolism is imprinted” either (46). This is not an exhaustive explanation, but it partly shows how Sa'eed is able to shift his status as a black Arab male, styling himself as a gentleman, as Othello, as an exotic object of desire, etc. Definitions of masculinity tend to exist on one of four planes: essentialism, positivism, normativity, and semiotics. The masculinity that Sa'eed projects during his time in London falls into a predominantly normative notion of male identity. This approach of defining masculinity acknowledges how men and women differ amongst themselves in their respective gender groups and tries to offer a paradigm of “what men ought to be” (70). Connell notes that these definitions often crop up in media studies, revolving around hyperbolized and inaccessible tropes of maleness. In this case, this is the trope of the desert sheikh, a dusky chieftainfrom an exotic land come to ravage unsuspecting women. Scholars like Denys Johnson-Davies see *Season of Migration* as "an 'Arabian Nights' in reverse, or as a story of a modern-day Othello who seeks to turn the political tables on the West by bedding as many of its women as he can" (Johnson-Davies v). Sa'eed is physically handsome, educated, and articulate so he uses these factors to shape an image that plays upon Westerner's expectations of an exotic Other. In this way, he inflates his own capacity for representation and turns himself into a hyperbolic (albeit flattened) symbol of Afro-Arab masculinity.

Islamic Arabic texts have historically figured masculinity as "reflected in marital ability" not just virility (Roded57-58). Such a quality is linked to the larger early Islamic notion of *muru'a* which refers to "the physical and material qualities of man, [and] by extension, encompasse[s] moral qualities...and good manners" (Roded58). The concept of *muru'a* is important because it works against the images of the savage sheikh as seen in the "desert romance" genre. Women seem to draw out a fervent rage in Sa'eed, seen most clearly in his murder of Jean. An inspection of how Arab men have been stereotyped and eroticized specifically in the West helps to elucidate the particular persona Sa'eed adopts around women. Here, the desert romance is a key genre in that it situates the Arab male as predatory— a savage of the sands invested in abducting, seducing, or raping white women. According to Elizabeth Gargano, constructing the Arab male as the scapegoat for any erotic content makes the rather sexual and sadomasochistic nature of the genre permissible (Gargano 171). Readers of desert romances do not have to be punished for their pleasure-seekingbecause the deviant acts in the text are the fault of the ruthless, animalistic Other, not the innocent reader nor the victimized European women in the text. Mustafa Sa'eed certainly fits into the idea of the Arab male as a scapegoat for Western female sexuality. While Gargano postulates that the eroticized "desert

sheikh" allows for guilt-free sexual and escapist experiences, the women who encounter Mustafa Sa'eed go far from unscathed. Ann Hammond, Sheila Greenwood, and Isabella Seymour all commit suicide after their trysts with Sa'eed. This represents the larger process by which Sa'eed's self-exoticization becomes visible and poisons those who fall prey to it. Since the deaths of the women are self-inflicted[2], they do not mark a rebellion on the part of the colonized, Westernized character. The women do not live on in the text as Sa'eed's subjects; they die, leaving him alone. The suicides are connected to another sense of Otherness: Sa'eed as male not female, life-taker versus life-giver. The women Sa'eed encounters are intoxicated by his eloquence and good looks and drawn into his bed expecting some kind of fulfillment through the Other (like in the case of the desert romance wherein a Western woman can explore dark desires then blame them on the Arab male). Previous scholarship regarding *Season* often notes the theme of contamination in the novel. After Sa'eed has sexually and psychologically conquered the women, the toxins of his artificial self linger within them. He recounts his interaction with Sheila Greenwood:

> It was my world, so novel to her, that attracted her. The smell of burning sandalwood and incense made her dizzy; she stood for a long time laughing at her image in the mirror as she fondled the ivory necklace I had placed like a noose round her beautiful neck. She entered my bedroom a chaste virgin and when she left it she was carrying the germs of self-destruction within her (Salih 35).

Here, the "germs of self-destruction" refer to the contact of East and West during the time of the Arab crusades and the idea of the black world infiltrating the white West. Unhindered by the correctional forces of the colonizer, the black Arab male is able to seize white females who cannot conceive of his domination of them. Roger Allen indicates thatSa'eed's murder of Jean Morris "symbolizes the absolute clash of these two cultures within a Western context" (Allen 159).

Poisoned Interiors

It is noteworthy that in the novel, Sa'eed embodies conceptual clashes within cultures as well as between them. He is often linked with contamination as well as interiority, two concepts generally associated with womenin the Arab world. In *Season of Migration*, Sa'eed's living spaces do not serve to confine him; rather, they exist as stages for his cultural performances.Within the text, Sa'eed lives between two spaces which stand to represent the Sudanese East and the English West. They compose "an exaggerated simulacrum of the [respective] cultural paradigms" (Geesey 135). His flat in London contained an "Oriental fantasy bedroom" perfumed with incense and decorated with draperies, statues, and mirrors (Geesey 135). Within this enclosure, Sa'eed was able to act out his desert sheikh identity, entrapping the women in his Orient-in-miniature room. In this way, the contaminant (the Afro-Arab male) was turned against the contaminators (the British women who represent the colonial powers). This space does showcase the character of Sa'eed in a way that aligns with Bhabha's notions of subversive mimicry but it is a transient space and, according to Abbas, the place where Sa'eed experiences his existential demise. In Wad Hamid, Sa'eed keeps a locked room that is later entered by the narrator. This room resembles a Western study with its grand fireplace, Victorian

---

[2]With the exception of Jean Morris, who Sa'eedkills.Since that murder sends Sa'eed to prison (where he is literally confined by the systems of the West), it cannot be read as a victorious act by a cultural hybrid.

chairs, and stacks of books. When the narrator finally enters the secret room, he is shocked and his mind races: "Books on the chairs. Books on the floor. What play acting was this?...Not a single Arabic book. A graveyard.A mausoleum.An insane idea.Aprison.A huge joke.A treasure chamber."(Salih 114). The narrator envisions himself setting a Persian rug aflame and burning down the room as though to protect himself from the contagion that constituted and claimed Sa'eed. The burning incense and fireplace of the two rooms can be read as Mustafa's attempts to destroy his false selves while the mirrors represent self-confrontation. They would stand to remind the character of what he had become and later, they force the narrator to look inside himself as well.

Sa'eed as False Othello

Having defined the proverbial stages wherein Sa'eed acted out his various selves, it is necessary to turn to the most theatrical property of the text: Sa'eed's repeated self-comparison to Othello. WhenSa'eed takes advantage of images of Otherness projected onto him by the people he meets, fabricating fantastic tales of his Sudanese homeland, heexplicitlylikens himself to the Shakespearian character. In doing so, Sa'eed couches his Otherness within the context of European high culture, self-fetishizing while offering an accessible referent for his Western audience. Yet there are several layers in this comparison because Sa'eed is actually quite unlike Othello. In *The Arabization of Othello*, Ferial Ghazoul demonstrates how *Othello* "is the product of an acculturation involving a double circulation of the Other and a complex intertwining that combines the effect of an African/Arab (i.e., Othello and his background) on European imagination and, in a reversed way, its impact on Arabs/Africans" (Ghazoul 1). Like *Othello*, *Season of Migration* takes into account the difficulty of defining the Afro-Arab male within the inherently hegemonic and oppressive discourse of Europe. Ghazoul notes that many works of literature that contain an Othello character like Mustafa Sa'eed reveal "anger at the deformation of the Self in a distorting mirror" that is, the realization of displacement and subsequent misrepresentation which are in Sa'eed's case largely self-imposed (2). It is clear that in Salih's novel, the "distortion of Self" does not just occur within the gaze of the colonizer; like the mirrors in the two bedrooms, the text works to turn the image of Sa'eed against himself and against the narrator. Sa'eed remembers his initial encounter with Isabella Seymour:

> There came a moment when I felt I had been transformed in her eyes into a naked, primitive creature, a spear in one hand and arrows in the other, hunting elephants and lions in the jungles. This was fine. Curiosity had changed to gaiety, and gaiety to sympathy, and when I stir the still pool in its depths the sympathy will be transformed into a desire upon whose taut strings I shall play as I wish...'I'm like Othello ―Arab-African.'(Salih 38).

Sa'eed is content with women's hyperbolic perceptions of him because ultimately they constitute his "spear", the weapon with which he controls them. For Ghazoul, Isabella reproduces "Desdemona's chain of emotions" and this chain is repeated with each of Sa'eed's interactions with Western women until Jean, a woman whose passion and anger is reciprocal to Sa'eed's,sees the artificiality of his behavior(20). Unlike Shakespeare's Othello, Sa'eed is an antihero. It could be argued that Sa'eedkills Jean Morris out of buried, vengeful rage for the West, but I maintain that this murder cannot mark a victory.Barbara Harlow reads the significance of Othello outside

the plot as well as within it. Identifying the novel as a Western form absorbed by the Arab world in the 19th and early 20th centuries, a time when "Europe and the Middle East confronted each other over issues of culture, colonialism, and curiosity", she explains how *Season of Migration* is an instance of "mu'aradah, literally opposition, contradiction, but here a formula whereby one person will write a poem and another will retaliate by writing along the same lines, but reversing the meaning" (Harlow 75). In this way, *Season of Migration* can be read as an anti-*Othello*. Like Othello, Sa'eed understands how he is expected to perform in the Western world, but he realizes the superficiality of this identity and is incapable of adhering to its protocols for the entirety of his life. Perhaps Sa'eed believes that he can reclaim a genuine sense of self and for this reason, the character returns to Sudan to try to free himself from his cycle of toxic self-Othering. Ghazoul observes how the handkerchief scene is reversed in *Season of Migration*; when Sa'eed confronts Jean about an unfamiliar handkerchief among other items, Jean berates him, scoffing that even if she was unfaithful, Sa'eed would only "sit on the edge of the bed and cry" (Salih 162). This emasculating comment antagonizes Sa'eed and in part, urges him to murder her.

According to Ghazoul, in this text, the killing of the European woman is not "undertaken as an emotionally miscalculated passion, a flaw, as in the Elizabethan drama, but designed in a cold-blooded and calculated way. Violence, duplicity, fragmentation, and schizophrenia seem the inevitable results of North-South encounters in colonial enterprises" (Ghazoul 21). Though the moment of murder is charged with a mix of horror, eroticism, andpain and, in its belabored, deliberate execution, shows a degree of calculation, Jean's reaction is strange and somewhat omniscient. As Sa'eed moves to stab her, Jean strokes the dagger her hold and speaks of "'the shores of destruction'" that they are headed towards (Salih 136). As she bleeds out on the bed, Jean implores Sa'eed to join her: "'Come with me. Don't let me go alone'" (136). It is as though Jean sees that Sa'eed cannot exist in his fractured identities, and now, having committed a crime that he will inevitably be punished for, has no recourse but to stop living. In Sa'eed's mind, this is the moment where "'the universe, with its past, present, and future, was gathered together into a single point before and after which nothing existed'" (136). This reads as a straightforward indicator from Salih that this character has reached an impasseand will not be able to seize agency or destabilize the system. He will only haunt the text through the memory of the narrator.

Mythological Otherness

Aside from his status as a ghost, Sa'eed is figured as a supernatural Other in several places within the novel. The aforementioned images of fire evoke early definitions of *djinn* or genies that predate the Quran. Early practitioners of Islam understood *djinn* as beings possibly made up of "flame or smoke" but generally, "material more subtle than that of which humans are made" (Tritton 716). They were believed to inhabit spaces inside and outside of the human world and usually revealed themselves at night (718). Certain *djinn* had the ability to assume any form and appeared to wayfarers "to deceive and mislead them" (721). Sa'eed's status as a *djinn* is most legible within the space of the London apartment where he lures the entranced women. As previously stated, his European residence is highly Orientalized; women who enter are "assailed" with the "deadly" "smell of burning sandalwood and incense" which imparts a mysterious, otherworldly effect upon his living space (Salih 36). The hypnotic repetition of the passages where Mustafa's strategies of seduction are described ("deadly contagion", "taut bow and arrow", "stirring the still pool") reinforces his Oriental mystique.Though he uses this language in

recounting his history to the narrator, it is meant to show the spellbinding quality of his seduction and manipulation.Ann Hammond and Isabella Seymour both compare Sa'eed to a god, though Isabella also calls him an "African demon" (Salih 106). For Sa'eed, their likening of him to a deity affirms his successful domination and places him above the Western world. This gives him an illusion of power which enables him to murder his wife. Before he kills Jean, Sa'eed feels himself powered by a "Satanic warmth" (163). Though this is a more Western reference point, it still evokes the darkest supernatural Other and contributes to his status as a dark shapeshifter. To contrast, the character Mahjoubcalls him the "Prophet El-Kidr", a figure of Islam also known as "The Green One" who is commonly associated with eternal life and joie de vivre (107).While the prophet was believed to have consumed from the river of immortality and thus represents water as life, Mustafa Sa'eed is a purveyor of poison[3]. Through a combination of these otherworldly references, it is evident that Sa'eed moved beyond potential hybridity and instead strayed into a mythologized tier of Otherness.

The Narrator and Sa'eed

Even after Sa'eed's story has concluded and he has physically vanished from the novel, he remains in the story through the mind of the narrator. On a textual level, the narrator is unlike Sa'eed; the reader has access to the narrator's thoughts and reactions to Sa'eed's tales. Sa'eed's commentary is only available through the speech of the narrator. The narrator is threatened by Sa'eedprimarily because he likes being the only man in the village with a Western education but Sa'eed's presence in the village also disrupts the narrator's ideas of constancy and permanence. The narrator often associates truth and stability with nature; he feels that he is "not a stone thrown into the water but seed sown in a field" (Salih 6). Both characters share moments of identification with the natural world but with different sentiments in mind. While Sa'eed revels in the presence of the grafted lemon tree, the narrator finds solace in the sturdy palm in the courtyard: "I looked at its strong straight trunk at its roots that strike down into the ground, at the green branches hanging down loosely over its top, and I experienced a feeling of assurance. I felt not like a storm-swept feather but like that palm tree, a being with a background, with roots, with a purpose." (Salih 2). This scene occurs early in the text and prefaces the introduction of Sa'eed, who presumably becomes the "storm-swept feather" in the narrator's eyes though "meeting with Mustafa Sa'eed...force[s] the narrator to reexamine his certainties expressed so naively at the novel's opening" (Geesey 131). The key instance that situates Sa'eed as the narrator's Other is when the narrator,upon entering the locked room, sees his own reflection in a mirror on the wall and mistakes it for the face of Mustafa Sa'eed. After the narrator has heard the story of Sa'eed, he questions his cultural purity as a Sudanese man who studied in the West and whether or not he too lives as an anti-Othello and "a lie".

To conclude, I turn to the final scene in the text: the flooding of the Nile River. The narrator flounders in the river crying for help and resolving to "choose life", that is, not succumbing to the same system of conformity and artificiality as Sa'eed (Salih 139). This event can be understood as a cleansing force that occurs twice in the novel. Earlier they mark Sa'eed's departure from the text; waves wash over him revealing the superficiality of his identities which

[3]Kidr appears in *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and survives a great flood, unlike Sa'eed, who can be assumed to have met death by water.

are not tethered to any core sense of self. The narrator is also subjected to this cleansing judgment.Ultimately, Sa'eed's consumption of white European culture was poisoning him for the duration of his life but his replication of Othered selves intensified the toxins. Through his contact with Sa'eed and his status as the listener of his life tale, the narrator, too, becomes poisoned. The dedication in Sa'eed's journal — "'To those who see things with one eye, speak with one tongue, and see things, as either black or white, either Eastern or Western'" reads as a blessing for those who do not suffer a similar fate as a botched, toxic hybrid (Salih 150). *Season of Migration to the North* illustrates a failed instance of hybridity and how the colonial subject's attempts to combat the West can turn against him and account for his demise. The fact that Mustafa Sa'eed's body is never recovered in the text speaks to the effacing of his Sudanese heritage and the subsequent implantation of a broken identity, rife with caricature and hyperbole.

Works Cited

Abbas, Ali Abdallah. "The Father of Lies: The Role of Mustafa Sa'eed as Second Self in *Season of Migration to the North*." *Takieddine-Amyuni*.27-37. Web.

Allen, Roger. *The Arabic Novel: An Historical and Critical Introduction*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995. Print.

Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture.*London: Routledge, 1994. Print.

Connell, R. W. *Masculinities*. Los Angeles: University of Berkeley, 1995. Print.

Gargano, Elizabeth. "'English Sheiks' and Arab Stereotypes: E. M. Hull, T. E. Lawrence, and the Imperial Masquerade."*Texas Studies in Literature and Language*. 48.2 (2006): 171-186. Web. 15 April 2014

Geesey, Patricia. "Cultural Hybridity and Contamination in TayebSalih's 'Mawsim al-hijraila al-Shamal (Season of Migration to the North).'"*Research in African Literatures*. 28.3 (1997): 128-140. Web. 15 April 2014.

Ghazoul, Ferial J. "The Arabization of Othello."*Comparative Literature* 50.1 (1998): 1-31. Web. 2 May 2014.

Harlow, Barbara. "Sentimental Orientalism: Season of Migration to the North and Othello." *Amyuni* 75-79. Web.

Johnson-Davies, Denys. "Introduction."*Season of Migration to the North*.New York: Michael Kensend, 1989. i-vi. Web.

Neimneh, Shadi. "Cultures, Identities, and Sexualities in Leslie Silko's*Ceremony* and TayebSalih's*Season of Migration to the North*."*Teaching American Literature: A Journal of Theory and Practice* 5.2 (2012): 1-31. Web. 2 May 2014.

Roded, Ruth."Alternate Images of the Prophet Muhammad's Virility."*IslamicMasculinities*.Ed.LahoucineOuzgane. London: Zed Books, 2006. 57-67. Print.

Salih, Tayeb. *Season of Migration to the North*. Three Continents Press: Colorado Springs, 1969. Print.

"Sudan Novelist TayebSalihDies."*BBC News.* 18 February 2009. Web.

Rita Mookerjee holds a Master's in Literature from Temple University. Her areas of scholarly interest include contemporary postcolonial literature as well as gender studies and performance theory. In the fall of 2015, she will begin her PhD in Literature at Florida State University.