

A Comparative Study of Postcolonial Aspects in T. Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* and C. Achebe's *No Longer at Ease*

Mohammad Ahmad Al-Leithy¹

¹ Faculty of Arts, Arish University, Egypt

Correspondence: Mohammad Ahmad Al-Leithy, Faculty of Arts, Arish University, Egypt. E-mail: drlaithy@hotmail.com

Received: August 12, 2021

Accepted: September 23, 2021

Online Published: November 17, 2021

doi:10.5539/ells.v11n4p64

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/ells.v11n4p64>

Abstract

This study aims at investigating aspects of coloniality in both novels of the title. The two works expose a number of the evils of coloniality like masked colonisation, stereotyping and hybridity. The coloniser's appointing of national agents to run the country in the coloniser's stead, raising nonentities on the political hierarchy and sowing seeds of hatred among citizens of the same nation will be discussed under the first subtitle, masked colonisation. Under the second, stereotyping and misrepresenting Africans will be investigated. The paper will discuss ideas of language, culture and religion when dealing with hybridity, the third concept in such a trichotomy, to show how these have been affected by colonisation. The paper will respond to the following questions: how do Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* and Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* question the credibility of achieving independence? How (and why) did the (British) coloniser persistently stereotype African nations? How did the evil aftermaths of British colonialism reach and spoil the different aspects of the lives of the colonised nations, as shown in both?

Keywords: C. Achebe, comparative, *No Longer at Ease*, postcolonial, T. Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*

1. Introduction

The two novels of this study expose a number of the evils of colonialism, foremost among which are masked colonisation, stereotyping and hybridity. Under these three subtitles a plethora of notions will be discussed. Ideas of the coloniser's appointing of national agents to run the country in the coloniser's stead, turning social hierarchy upside down by raising "nonentities" (Salih, 1969, p. 40) on the sociopolitical hierarchy and sowing seeds of hatred among citizens of the same nation will be discussed under the first subtitle, masked colonisation. Under the second, stereotyping, such important ideas as misrepresenting African nations, representing Africans as cannibals, corrupt and afflicting the colonised with a sense of helplessness and lack of trust will be investigated. British stereotyping of colonised nations entails a number of accusations that the paper will come to grips with. The coloniser's claims, such as these of enlightening and civilising colonised nations, will be refuted. The paper will, further, get down to such weighty ideas of language, culture and religion when dealing with hybridity, the third concept in such a trichotomy, to show how these have been affected by the far-reaching influence of colonisation.

The aim of this study is to identify and investigate aspects of colonialism as revealed in Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* and Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*. The paper will take to its focal concern the evils of colonialism that proliferate throughout the two novels. Only few studies compared the two novels this paper is investigating; none of these, however, compared the post-colonial aspects in both novels (google.com/search). The comparative approach will be adopted throughout the research. One point or idea will be compared with another in both novels. The paper will respond to the following questions: how do C. Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* and Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* question the credibility of achieving a true, possible independence? How (and why) did the British coloniser persistently stereotype African nations? How did the evil aftermaths of British colonialism reach and spoil the different aspects of the lives of the colonised nations, as shown in both novels?

To start with, it should be pointed out that certain ambiguity underlies the prefix "post-" in postcolonialism. In his book *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, R. Selden comments that

A key problem remains in the actual naming of all such criticism as ‘postcolonial’... Does ‘post-’ signal a break into a phase and consciousness of newly constructed independence and autonomy ‘beyond’ and ‘after’ colonialist, or does it imply a continuation and intensification of the system, better understood as neo-colonialism? (p. 228)

The second of the meanings above is more at work throughout the two novels. Achebe and Salih expose the blights of colonialism and the ruining effects colonialism has had on their nations, even though Salih’s Sudan had actually become an independent country by the time the novel was published.

Colonialism has always played havoc with colonised nations. The two novels of this study show important blights, or germs, implanted by colonialism in the colonised countries. “Germs” is the word Franz Fanon (1925–1961) used to diagnose postcolonial evil aftermaths. He says, “imperialism leaves behind germs of rot which we must clinically detect and remove not only from our own land but from our minds as well” (books.google). In his book *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Fanon dubs such blights “tinctures of decay” (Fanon, 1961, p. 249). It is important to remark that Salih used Fanon’s very word “germs” repeatedly in his *Season* to speak of the evil aftermaths British colonisation brought about in his country Sudan. To give one example, Salih’s protagonist Mustafa Sa’eed says, “[the colonisers] imported to us the germ of the greatest European violence, as seen on the Somme and at Verdun, the like of which the world has never previously known, the germ of a deadly disease that struck them more than a thousand years ago” (p. 63).

2. Masked Colonisation

Masked colonisation is an idea that is introduced in both novels of this study. The two works make clear the idea that the coloniser does his best to keep a permanent hold of colonised countries. In this way, the novels question the credibility of the very idea of the independence Sudan had got and Nigeria was getting at the times the novels were published. Achebe’s novel *No Longer at Ease*, it is worth remarking, was published in 1960, the same year in which Nigeria got its independence from British colonisation. Sudan got its independence in 1956; Salih published *Season of Migration to the North* in 1966.

While on a train journey between Khartoum and El-Obeid, Mustafa Sa’eed, the central character in Salih’s novel, happened to be in the same compartment with Mamur, an old schoolmate of Mustafa Sa’eed’s. Mamur is a police title similar to senior officer. The retired Mamur tells the narrator a lot about Mustafa Sa’eed’s exceptional brilliance at school. More importantly, however, he tells the narrator about British colonialism of Sudan. Indeed, Mamur’s words act as Kaliegh light in spotlighting the relationship between the British coloniser and colonised Sudan and the evils incurred upon Sudan because of that colonisation. Mamur, whose job was to collect taxes from the Sudanese and give them to his British employers, tells the narrator that even though their country, Sudan, has got its independence, such achieved independence is only superficial since their country is still manipulated by the colonisers. Before they left Sudan, as Mamur asserts, the colonisers selected and appointed Sudanese citizens to run the country, in their stead, in a way planned and dictated by the colonisers themselves. The retired Mamur says:

Mark these words of mine, my son. Has not the country become independent? Have we not become free men in our own country? Be sure, though, that they will direct our affairs from afar. This is because they have left behind them people who think as they do. They showed favour to nonentities—and it was such people that occupied the highest positions in the days of the English (Salih, 1969, p. 40)

As the above quotation from Salih’s novel makes clear, one of the evil practices of the coloniser is that of employing agents, national citizens from the colonised countries, to run the country the way the coloniser liked. The coloniser is said to have employed those in power in Salih’s *Season* to run the country after evacuation of the colonising forces.

As the above quotation from Salih’s novel makes clear, the coloniser’s favouring of nonentities is another of the evils of the coloniser. Those natives who occupied the highest positions of power are said to be thinking and acting in the ways of the coloniser that raised them above on the social hierarchy; their loyalties are, therefore, be to the coloniser. Nonentities are those who cannot rise above themselves; those who, more than anything else, observe and favour their own individual interest and give it priority over common good, i.e., the nation’s interest. This makes the challenge even more difficult. Such nonentities who have come to be in control of a nation’s destiny and future would care only for “their stomachs and their sensual pleasures” (Salih, 1969, p. 77). This accounts for Salih’s narrator’s recurrent reference to postcolonial corruption in Sudan, and more specifically, “the corruption of rulers” (p. 51), “the corruption of those in power” (p. 70) and scandals and stories of bribery and of the corruption of those in power (p. 75). Even though such people are national citizens of Sudan, they are, as the novel reveals, seen as agents of the coloniser and, therefore, an extension of colonisation, but in different

forms. The idea of changing of who rules is, thus, questioned. It is in that very respect that Fanon asserts that “change does not mean reform, that change does not mean improvement” (beruhmte-zitate).

The same idea of empowering and favouring some natives to support and act on behalf of the coloniser has its counterpart in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*:

If we should try to drive out the white men in Umuofia we should find it easy. There are only two of them. But what of our own people who are following their way and have been given power? They would go to Umuru and bring the soldiers, and we would be like Abame. He paused for a long time and then said: “I told you on my last visit to Mbanta how they hanged Aneto” (Achebe, 1994, p. 176).

The challenge becomes even more difficult as such “new rulers of Africa” (Achebe, 1994a, p. 66) are natives from the same country. It is this very concept that Amitav Ghosh comes to grips with in his masterpiece *The Glass Palace* as he poses the question of “how do you fight an enemy who fights with neither enmity nor anger but in submission to orders from superiors, without protest and without conscience?” (p. 30).

The point of “nonentities” being favoured by the coloniser is raised by Achebe in *Things Fall Apart*, which can be said to set the background to his *No Longer at Ease*. In *Things Fall Apart*, Obierika, Okonkwo’s closest friend, tells Okonkwo that the British coloniser has employed such citizens, from the tribe of Umuru. Such citizens are seen as “agents of government” (Fanon, 1961, p. 38) and, therefore, an extension of colonisation. Significantly, Obierika speaks of such who have been given positions of power by the coloniser as “foreigners” (p. 174). The word can mean that such natives do not belong to the consortium of nine villages known as Umuofia or that by helping the coloniser to conquer their own people, they should not be considered natives. Either way, the word connotes a downgrading look of the speaker. It should be mentioned that Umuofia coalition was much feared by all other Nigerian tribes and that that Umuofians would think of themselves as the strongest and the most feared of all Nigerian unions.

In a conversation with his friend Mahjoub about a conference that discussed education in Africa, the narrator, in Salih’s novel, finds it almost unbelievable to tell his friend about how African ministers looked and how they were very luxuriously dressed:

He will not believe the facts about the new rulers of Africa, smooth of face, lupine of mouth, their hands gleaming with rings of precious stones, exuding perfume from their cheeks, in white, blue, black and green suits of fine mohair and expensive silk rippling on their shoulders like the fur of Siamese cats, and with shoes that reflect the light from chandeliers and squeak as they tread on marble (p. 66).

Highly satiric of how representatives of the colonised nations look and dress, the narrator implies the idea that such ministers do not really look like Africans, neither in appearance nor even in their smoothed complexion. Sarcastically, they look neither like Africans who experience tribulations of poverty nor the English they imitate in the ways they dress. The idea of mimicry is inferred. Mimicry is mimesis and mockery. Somehow, they look like the coloniser but in a ridiculous way.

Importantly, the coloniser does not deny the colonised’s claim of the coloniser being in control of colonised nations even after evacuation. Indeed, the coloniser sees that colonised peoples are incapable of running their own countries. The concept of masked colonialism, “neo-colonialism” as Fanon calls it (Fanon, 1961, p. 12), is asserted by the British Mr. Richard who said to Mustafa Sa’eed:

you cannot manage to live without us. You used to complain about colonialism and when we left you you created the legend of neo-colonialism. It seems that our presence, in an open or undercover form, is as indispensable to you as air and water (Salih, 1969, p. 34).

In Achebe’s *No Longer at Ease*, as well, Mr. Green, in an over-generalising tone, asserts that there is “no single Nigerian” who is prepared to forgo a little privilege in the interests of his country. “From your ministers down to your most junior clerk. And you tell me you want to govern yourselves” (p. 116). He does not hesitate to tell Nigerians they cannot control their own country; he thinks too lowly of them all and always objectifies and others Nigerians around him and charges them with being backward, mindless creatures (Achebe, 1994a, p. 5).

One of the most important accounts of masked colonisation is that given by the Salih’s Mustafa Sa’eed himself after he attended a conference held by the Ministry of Education. Delegates from twenty African countries were invited to discuss “ways of unifying educational methods throughout the whole continent” (p. 66). The following quotation from Salih’s *Season* must raise enough doubts about the reality of independence Sudan and many African nations that believe they have achieved:

Mahjoub will not believe that for nine days they studied every aspect of the progress of education in Africa

in the Independence Hall built for the purpose and costing more than a million pounds: an imposing edifice of stone, cement, marble and glass, constructed in the form of a complete circle and designed in London, its corridors of white marble brought from Italy and the windows made up of small pieces of coloured glass skillfully arranged in the framework of a teak. The floor of the main hall was covered with fine Persian carpets, while the ceiling was in the form of a gilded dome; on all sides chandeliers hung down, each the size of a large camel (Salih, 1969, p. 66).

The above quotation can speak volumes of how the colonised keeps going on within the shades and precincts of the coloniser. The very idea of the Independence Hall, the conference venue, being round-shaped and designed by the coloniser, arouses the idea of the vicious circle the colonised is in, a vortex designed by the coloniser for the colonised. Ironically enough, the Independence Hall symbolises the very presence of the coloniser under whose very eyes they discuss education, one of the most important pillars of a nation's independence. The building stands for the coloniser's presence and domination and, thus, demolishes the idea of true independence.

In Achebe's *No Longer*, President of Umuofia asks whether "they" have given Obi a job:

Have they given you a job yet?' the chairman asked Obi over the music. In Nigeria the government was 'they'. It had nothing to do with you or me. It was an alien institution and people's business was to get as much from it as they could without getting into trouble (Achebe, 1994a, p. 27).

He used the word "they" deliberately to show that the government is a separate entity, an alien body implanted among them; even though the government officials are Nigerians, they do not really belong to or represent Nigerians. Government officials were administered by the white man. Significantly, President of Umuofia uses the same word, "they", to refer to white men.

Sowing the seeds of hatred among people of the same nation and making them love the coloniser is another evil scheme of coloniser. It is known that the coloniser employs citizens from the colonised countries as policemen and tax collectors. Many people would not like the idea of dealing with either employees. Mamur tells the narrator in Salih's novel that the British, "would employ us, the junior government officials who were natives of the country to bring in the taxes" (p. 30). What is really ridiculous is that citizens of colonised Sudan would resort to the English Commissioner to complain about the heavy taxes collectors ask for. More ridiculous even is that the English Commissioner "showed mercy" (p. 30) to those complaining. People of the same nation, thus, came to hate one another and love the British coloniser. In this way the British coloniser "sowed hatred in the hearts of the people for us, their kinsmen, and love for the colonisers, the intruders" (Salih, 1969, p. 30).

In *Things Fall Apart*, identifying how Nigerians have been divided on different bases, including religion, devised by the coloniser, Obierika tells Okonkwo about how the white man managed to divide the nation. He tells Okonkwo that colonisers managed to break the bonds that held the nation together:

The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart (Achebe, 1994b, p. 184).

3. Stereotyping

Stereotyping is one of the well-known colonial practices through which the coloniser sets the colonised within confines that cannot be easily transcended. Stereotyping "involves the representation... of others in ways which ratify and endorse unequal social relations. Stereotypes diminish the social standing of those targeted, reducing them to a particular attribute or disposition that ... demeans them" (onlinelibrary.wiley). There can be only little controversy or doubt that Africans have been misrepresented by English novelists more than any others. As Fanon says, "[b]lack Africa is looked on as a region that is inert, brutal, uncivilized—in a word, savage" (Fanon, 1969, p. 161). This disfiguring has been inculcated within the psyche of the British, and European, readers. Africans have, more often than not, been represented as cannibals (researchgate.net), "savages in the bush" (Conrad, n.d., p. 78), brutes, beasts (Salih, 1969, p. 19), devil[s] (Salih, 1969, p. 23), "demon[s]" (Salih, 1969, p. 59) or slaves. Importantly, this is how the coloniser wanted to see the colonised rather than what colonised nations were really like. Achebe condemns this demeaning depiction of Africans throughout his *No Longer at Ease*:

It was clear he loved Africa, the Africa of Charles. The messenger, the Africa of his garden-boy and steward boy. He must have come originally with an ideal—to bring light to the heart of darkness, to tribal head-hunters performing weird ceremonies and unspeakable rites. But when he arrived, Africa played him false... (Achebe, 1994a, p. 84).

The British Empire, with its occupation of one-fourth of the globe, enabled the British, to a large extent, to create

ways in which countries of the world could see one another. It also created the very way through which the British saw themselves, “the empire was a mirror in which the British saw themselves as they wanted to be seen, “powerful, ... bringers of civilisation and emancipation” (Watson & Shafquat, 2012, p. 346). The empire created and fostered a convention in the British to look at themselves as “the norm of civilisation” (Barry, 2002, p. 200). The English man is the one who can set the world in order (Barry, 2002, p. 200).

The African’s outlook on the white man sharply contradicts with the white man’s look at Africans. So paramount was the image of the British coloniser to Nigerian Obi, in *No Longer at Ease*. To give one example, Achebe’s Obi was so much impressed by this idea. Obi admits, “the only thing [the white man] cannot do is mould a human being” (p. 12). This idolising, on Obi’s part, of the white man reveals the the colonised’s admiration and idealising of the coloniser.

Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* is about “darkest Africa” where layers of “corruption, barbarism and inhuman cruelty” accumulate. A world of “the horror, the horror” (Bradbury, n.d., pp. 54–55). Such distortions and misrepresentations were needed to pave the way for colonising such nations. False claims of the coloniser included: the claims of enlightening, equality, and education; “he comes to Africa with the goal to shape natives to suit the European world by spreading its ideas, religion and culture” (papersowl). Professor Maxwell Foster-Keen, a member of the Supreme Committee for the Protestant Missionary Societies in Africa, “would say to me with undisguised irritation: “You, Mr Sa’eed, are the best example of the fact that our civilising 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 (p. 63).

The promises and vision of the British coloniser are often at odds with reality as the novels in this study make clear. Had it not been for such writers as Achebe and Salih and the like, British claims of civilising and enlightening colonised nations would have remained unrefuted. The novels falsify the claims of British colonisation. Mustafa Sa’eed, in Salih’s novel, still remembers that prior to anything else, British ships carried “guns not bread, and the railways were originally set up to transport troops” to Sudan (p. 53). This belies the coloniser’s promises of “civilizing mission” (Selden, 2017, p. 226). Okike, in Achebe’s novel, tells us that the white man “does nothing to bring about this enlightenment” (Achebe, 1994a, p. 95). This disproves the white man’s claimed sense of duty towards backward nations and the concept of “the white man’s burden” (Stephen, 2000, p. 304), invented by R. Kipling to describe the duties of the Empire (Stephen, 2000, p. 305). Sa’eed also realises well that the English coloniser has looked down upon colonised nations in their entirety, “the white man, merely because he has ruled us for a period of our history; will for a long time continue to have for us that feeling of contempt the strong have for the weak” (Salih, 1969, p. 44).

Importantly, Conrad’s novel *Heart of Darkness*, typifies Africans not only as backwards and savages but it depicts such peoples as spiritually dark as well. As one critic notes, Conrad’s novel “traverses... the darkness which lies in human heart” (papersowl). Mustafa Sa’eed was accused of being spiritually dark, “in your spiritual make-up there is a dark spot” (Salih, 1969, p. 41). In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow states clearly that, “I had no particular desire to enlighten them, but I had some difficulty in restraining myself from laughing in their faces so full of stupid importance” (monoskop.org/). This discourse of othering, diabolising and distorting African nations paved the way for British, and European, invasions of these countries under the claims of civilising and enlightening such savages. Such claims of enlightenment have, however, turned out to be false ones since colonial powers aimed really at exploiting the rich “natural resources” of such countries, which the coloniser “extracts, and exports to meet the needs of the mother country’s industries” (Fanon, 1961, p. 159).

It is important here to mention that at the zenith of British imperialism, houses of the British were museum-like in the sense that they had ornaments, artifacts and products from countries all around the globe. These included Indian jewels, diamonds and gold, skins of African tigers and lions, ivory tusks of African and Indian elephants, Egyptian cotton products and Persian carpets. “Imperial goods and products were conspicuous in Victorian homes, ‘the empire was visible everywhere at home in the 19th century” (Watson & Shafquat, 2012, p. 342). Arthur C. Doyle’s *The Sign of Four* (1890) can provide many examples in this respect. It is in this context that the notable historian Robert Montgomery’s explanation of what India meant to him and to the people of Britain should be understood, “it meant a far distant land, rich in barbaric gold, precious stones, and architectural beauty...a million square miles of the most varied, fertile, and interesting portion of this globe” (Watson & Shafquat, 2012, pp. 345–346).

Corruption is a stigma that the coloniser has always insisted on sticking to the colonised. It is true that the novel exposes an outrageous state of the spread of bribery in the Nigerian community and that this corrodes and demolishes hopes of building a better Nigeria. As Achebe’s *No Longer at Ease* makes clear, the coloniser has

always insisted on stigmatizing the colonised as corrupt. The coloniser has seen Africans to be corrupt to the core (Achebe, 1994a, p. 5). Bribery is one of the main aspects of corruption in Nigeria. When interviewed for a job, Obi was asked by an old Nigerian official if he wanted the job to take bribes, “Why do you want a job in the Civil Service? So that you can take bribes?” (Achebe, 1994a, p. 32). The question angered Obi as he was really honest to his country and people. It should be mentioned that on returning from England, Obi was greatly idealistic. He was determined to participate in the building up of a better Nigeria. He believed he should be one of the pioneers leading Nigeria to the right path of progress and prosperity, “We of this generation are only pioneers.’ What is a pioneer? Someone who shows the way. That is what I am doing” (Achebe, 1994a, p. 57). This goes in line with Fanon’s words, “decolonization is the veritable creation of new men” (p. 36). Obi refused paying (p. 25) or taking bribes (pp. 66, 69) a number of times. His financial predicament, however, led him eventually to take bribes.

It should be acknowledged that bribes were so common in Obi’s Nigeria. It is interesting here to consider how some of those around Obi looked at bribe taking. Clara, his fiancée, finds it something detestable for a girl to offer her body as a bribe. Her words, “offering money is not as bad as offering one’s body” (p. 72), however, imply that money paid as bribe can be received. Christopher, Obi’s friend, finds that it is not that bad for a girl to offer a sexual bribe to get something of some worth (p. 91) and says to Obi, “You are the biggest ass in Nigeria...that is not bribery” (pp. 91–92). Even the Minister of State, at a time when he was drunk, said that it is sometimes worse to reject a bribe than to take it:

Had not a Minister of State said, albeit in an unguarded, alcoholic moment, that the trouble was not in receiving bribes, but in failing to do the thing for which the bribe was given? And if you refuse, how do you know that a ‘brother’ or a ‘friend’ is not receiving on your behalf, having told everyone that he is your agent? Stuff and nonsense! (Achebe, 1994a, p. 67)

It is important here, however, to point out that the English are not disinterested as they may seem. It is worth noting that among the reasons (British) Mr. Green believes Africans are corrupt and to blame is that they can accept bribes and that they take long leaves. We are told, however, that the English make the same mistakes, but no one dares to confront them about that. The Vice-President of Umuofia asserts that the white man takes bribes; he is not at all disinterested even though he pretends to be so. Obi reminds us that England itself had a history of corruption (Achebe, 1994a, p. 35). This implies that Nigeria can hope for a better future only if it can resist and overcome corruption, the ugliest aspect of which is, of course, bribery. We are told that white men take even more bribes than Nigerian officials do. “You think white men don’t eat bribe? Come to our department”. The Vice-President of Umuofia goes on to assert that white men “eat” more bribes than Nigerians do (Achebe, 1994a, p. 27).

Another reason why Mr. Green sees Nigerians as corrupt is that they take long breaks. Mr. Green criticises Obi for taking a two-week leave:

‘Did you have a good leave?’ Mr Green asked when he saw Obi. It was so unexpected that for a little while Obi was too confused to answer. But he managed in the end to say that he did, thank you very much.

‘It often amazes me how you people can have the effrontery to ask for local leave... for an African like you, who has too many privileges as it is, to ask for two weeks to go on a swan, it makes me want to cry’ (p. 116).

Obi reminds readers that taking long leaves was started by the British themselves.

Instilling a sense of weakness in the colonised, a feeling of inability to bring about a positive change in one’s own country is one of the blights colonisation implants within the psyche of the colonised peoples. It effects an overwhelming sense of submissiveness that leaves a person helpless and indifferent to whatever corruption that may take place. The narrator tells his friend Mahjoub, who is enthusiastic about his nation’s education and future that “civil servants like me can’t change anything.’ If our masters say “Do so-and-so”, we do it” (Salih, 1969, p. 77). The idea has its counterpart in Achebe’s *No Longer at Ease*. Throughout the fifteen years he spent in Nigeria, Mr. Green has always looked contemptuously at Nigerians and thought of them as mindless slaves. To one of the Nigerian employees working under his management, Mr. Green, the British manager, says “You are not paid to think, Mr Omo, but to do what you are told. Is that clear?” Mr. Omo’s reply is, “Yes, sir” (Achebe, 1994a, p. 50).

The following quotation is significantly revealing of how the coloniser looks at the colonised. Mr. Green says:

They are all corrupt,’ repeated Mr Green. ‘I’m all for equality and all that. I for one would hate to live in South Africa. But equality won’t alter facts.’ ‘What facts?’ asked the British Council man, who was relatively new to the country. There was a lull in the general conversation, as many people were now

listening to Mr Green without appearing to do so. ‘The fact that over countless centuries the African has been the victim of the worst climate in the world and of every imaginable disease. Hardly his fault. But he has been sapped mentally and physically. We have brought him Western education. But what use is it to him?’ (Achebe, 1994a, p. 5)

Mr. Green’s words raise many questions about his being honest. He is never for equality and his contempt of the Nigerians is unquestionable. His overgeneral judgement of seeing all Africans as corrupt reveals his racial, erroneous judgment. Even his opinion that they are mentally and physically drained unveils his prejudice against the Nigerians and that he sees them as being incapable of mental or physical activities. He is not true even when he, egoistically, claims that “We” brought “him” western education but it was in vain. Many striking examples of this, to use H. Bhabha’s phrase, “colonial ambivalence” (Selden, 2017, p. 226) can be provided from Achebe’s *No Longer at Ease* (pp. 52, 80, 81). Indeed, educating and civilising the colonised was never one of the coloniser’s aims; in *Things Fall Apart* education was provided only for those who converted Christians.

Obi has always stuck to his view that the public service of Nigeria would remain corrupt until “the old Africans at the top were replaced by young men from the universities”. He wrote this in a paper that he read to the Nigerian Students’ Union in London (Achebe, 1994a, p. 31). Obi knew well that old-generation Nigerian officials have been taught to obey the English colonising masters so blindly that they actually came to lose any further vision regarding the future of Nigeria. In addition, such old Nigerian officials have been accustomed to taking bribes which has ruined Nigeria’s hope of a better future. “What kind of democracy” asks Obi, “can exist side by side with so much corruption and ignorance?” (Achebe, 1994a, p. 25).

In Achebe’s novel, the heavy hand of the coloniser is represented through the British citizens who have the upper hand in Nigeria. They are employers, members of missionaries and owners of restaurants. Above all else, the white man’s dominance and colonial hegemony, i. e. “dominance of one state...over another” (Dobie, 2009, p. 99), are asserted through the lawcourts the coloniser built to try natives. It should be remembered that, after all, it is the “white man’s court” (Achebe, 1994a, p. 176). The white men “had also brought a government. They had built a court where the District Commissioner judged cases in ignorance. He had court messengers who brought men to him for trial” (Achebe, 1994b, p. 182).

Mr. Green manipulates, and humiliates, all Nigerians around him. Throughout the novel, he persists on insulting Nigerians. Remarkably overbearing, he always shouts and curses (Achebe, 1994a, p. 81). He, is considered an archetypal figure of British hegemonic colonialism. He is by no means ready to accept the idea of the independence of Nigeria and threatens to resign (Achebe, 1994a, p. 81) in case this is proposed. The British characters in Achebe’s novel, Mr. Green, Miss Marie Tomlinson, the British Council man, the Old Englishwoman, Nora, Pat, the “white man” (p. 52) and others, are nearly as many as the Nigerian characters themselves. The message inferred is that numerous British citizens live in Nigeria and are in control of the Nigerian’s lives and food as well (Achebe, 1994a, p. 28).

4. Hybridity of Language, Religion and Culture

Language has always been an area of major concern in postcolonial discourse. The coloniser has always tried to impose its language on the colonised. In the colonised countries, the language of the coloniser is always the language of power, i. e. of law writing and court (Achebe, 1994a, p. 60). Hybridity is “the quality of cultures that have characteristics of both the colonizer and the colonized” (Dobie, 2009, p. 217). It connotes lack of purity and suggests contamination of source and mixed origin. It is marked by tension and continual sense of heterogeneity that unveils unease.

Obi’s problem with his own native language started early enough. Obi was a young boy when his father converted to Christianity and told his mother to stop telling Obi any folk tales because this is considered “heathen” in Christianity. It should be remembered that folk tales are considered a major constituent element of the Ibo culture that is essentially an oral one, “among the Ibo the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten” (Achebe, 1994b, p. 15). Obi’s father became a catechist and this made matters worse. His mother remained Ibo but could not tell the boy any folk tales. Obi got at stake when at school he was asked by the teacher to face the students and tell them a folk tale. He could not and the class burst into derisive laughter. Obi felt ashamed and wept. It was then that young Obi realised he was distanced from his own native culture, mother’s tales and proximity from mother, by his father’s new religion, Christianity. The boy went home and told his mother about what happened:

As soon as he got home, he told his mother about it. She told him to be patient until his father went to the evening prayer meeting. Some weeks later Obi was called up again. He faced the class boldly and told one of the new stories his mother had told him. He even added a little touch to the end which made everyone

laugh (Achebe, 1994a, p. 45).

Language and folk tales telling here meant self-confidence and a sense of belonging to a culture and a nation and that asserted Obi's Nigerian identity and his bond with his culture. Later on, to his shock, Obi discovered that his mother as well was distanced from family reading sessions:

She could read, but she never took part in the family reading. She merely listened to her husband and children. It had always been like that as far as the children could remember. She was a very devout woman, but Obi used to wonder whether, left to herself, she would not have preferred telling her children the folk-stories that her mother had told her. In fact, she used to tell her eldest daughters stories. But that was before Obi was born.

She stopped because her husband forbade her to do so.

'We are not heathens,' he had said. 'Stories like that are not for the people of the Church.' (Achebe, 1994a, pp. 44–45)

Obi has, thus, realised what the coloniser's culture has incurred on him and his family members, and how, as a family, they differed and became different from one another. It is, thus, said that, "Christianity had made [Obi's father] blind" (Achebe, 1994a, p. 37). Even Obi's father himself was distanced from his family when he converted Christian. He suffered from a hereditary curse, as he tells his son, "I left my father's house, and he placed a curse on me. I went through fire to become a Christian" (Achebe, 1994a, p. 105). Later in the novel, with the novel's cyclic nature being in mind, it is Obi's father himself who mixes (hybridises) what he believes to be the blasphemous Ibo ritual of kola eating with what is Christian, "Bless this kola nut so that when we eat it it will be good in our body in the name of Jesus Kristi. As it was in the beginning it will be at the end. Amen" (Achebe, 1994a, p. 31).

Later on, when studying in England, Obi had a great sense of nostalgia. He wrote a poem in which he expressed his great love of Nigeria and Nigerians. It is striking, however, that he wrote the poem in English not in Ibo (Achebe, 1994a, p. 78). Even when back in Nigeria, Obi noticed that people's daily conversations were remarkably influenced by the language of the coloniser. The result of that influence was pidgin that has permeated everyday talk as Achebe's novel unveils. This is indicative of how the Ibo tongue and culture have been hybridised. Obi tells us about a number of situations in which his fellow natives spoke pidgin. One example of this is the dialogue between the two ward servants whom Obi heard speaking in hospital when he was visiting Clara:

'Wetin de sick dat nursing sister?'

'Me I no know-o,' the other answered as if he had been charge with complicity.

'Dis kind well today sick tomorrow pass me.'

'Dey say dey don givam belle' (Achebe, 1994a, p. 119).

Another example of pidgin is that of Sam Okoli's talk to Obi, "'White man don go far. We just de shout for nothing,' he said. Then he seemed to realise his position. 'All the same they must go. This no be them country.' He helped himself to another whisky, switched on the radio and sat down" (Achebe, 1994a, p. 52).

Obi's realising of his alienation reached its climax when he could not understand a song sung by Nigerian fellow citizens and he needed to translate it into English to understand what it meant. Alienation can be defined as a state in which a person realises his/her being "incompatible with his[her] milieu" (Gupta, 2008, p. 10); it is a state of cultural "detachment", "exile" a person experiences (Gupta, 2008, p. 11). "The traders burst into song again...he tried to translate it into English, and for the first time its real meaning dawned on him" (p. 36). To his astonishment, the song meant "the world turned upside down" (Achebe, 1994a, p. 37). This marks a radical change on Obi's part. Obi, it should be remembered, esteemed his native language and culture greatly. He felt ashamed he studied English and would often think of it as "humiliating to have to speak to one's countryman in a foreign language, especially in the presence of the proud owners of that language (Achebe, 1994a, p. 40). He realised, then, that he is in an in-between state in which he is, so to speak, stuck between two cultures. In postcolonial discourse, this is dubbed "double consciousness". Meena Alexander defines the term as "two souls, two thoughts...in one dark body" (literariness.org). Obi uses the language of the coloniser to understand his native language and culture.

In Salih's *Season*, as well, hybridity has importantly left its traces on Mustafa Sa'eed. It is interesting here to note that in *Season*, Mustafa Sa'eed as well was seen as being in an in-between status between two cultures and that he was victimised by this. Professor Foster-Keen turned the trial into "a conflict between two worlds, a

struggle of which I was one of the victims” (Salih, 1969, p. 19). The permanent tug towards the north (England) was always irresistible. He was always vulnerable to the idea of resorting to the north and wished to die there. In the court, the lawyer spoke of Mustafa Sa’eed as being a man who “whose mind was able to absorb Western civilization but it broke his heart” (p. 19). Mostafa Sa’eed is a two-halved man. He is “the black Englishman” (Salih, 1969, p. 30) who has experienced a cultural rift that left him in a state of permanent unease. The two halves that make him up never make one whole. He is divided as he realises well that the two cultures, the British and the Sudanese ones, are poles apart; while one is the superior, the other is the inferior and while one represents the powerful coloniser, the other is that of the submissive colonised. He is the conqueror and the conquered; he is the One and the Other at the same time. It should be remembered that Mustafa Sa’eed was the first Sudanese to travel to England and he was also the first Sudanese to marry an English woman and get the British citizenship (Salih, 1969, p. 31).

The paper has examined three of the important aspects of colonialism: masked colonisation, stereotyping and hybridity in both T. Salih’s *Season of Migration to the North* and C. Achebe’s *No Longer at Ease*. It has discussed the different aspects of each of the three. In so doing, the paper unveiled the evil effects colonialism had on colonised nations and how the cultures of colonised nations have undergone negative changes in language, religion and culture due to such colonisations.

References

- Achebe, C. (1994a). *No Longer at Ease*. New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell.
- Achebe, C. (1994b). *Things Fall Apart*. New York, Anchor Books.
- Aljenfawi, K. (2021). *Daniel Defoe, Moral Relativism and The Science of Human nature in Robinson Crusoe*. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/348480178_Daniel_Defoe_Moral_Relativism_and_The_Science_of_Human_nature_in_Robinson_Crusoe/link/60008c5e299bf14088945ab8/download
- Barry, P. (2002). *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. Retrieved from <https://beruhmte-zitate.de/zitate/1278208-frantz-fanon-they-realize-at-last-that-change-does-not-mean-ref/books.google.com.sa/books?id=ef-Pcc3mkBUC&pg=PR18&lpg=PR18&dq=imperialism+leaves+behind+germs+of+rot+which+we+must+clinically+detect+and+remove+from+our+own+land+but+from+our+minds+as+well&source=bl&ots=9sx7Z>
- Conrad, J. (n.d.) *Heart of Darkness*. Retrieved from <https://www.planetebook.com/free-ebooks/heart-of-darkness.pdf>
- Dobie, A. B. (2009). *Theory into Practice: An Introduction to Literary Criticism*. Boston: Wadsworth.
- Fanon, F. (1961). *The Wretched of the Earth*. Retrieved from https://monoskop.org/images/6/6b/Fanon_Frantz_The_Wretched_of_the_Earth_1963.pdf
- Ghosh, A. (2011). *The Glass Palace*. India: HarperCollins.
- [google.com/search?q=%22achebe%2Blonger%2Bease%2Bsalih%2Bseason%2Bmigration%2Bpdf%22&rlz=1C1CHZN_arSA938SA938&oq=%22achebe%2Blonger%2Bease%2Bsalih%2Bseason%2Bmigration%2Bpdf%22&aqs=chrome..69i57.46470j0j15&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8](https://www.google.com/search?q=%22achebe%2Blonger%2Bease%2Bsalih%2Bseason%2Bmigration%2Bpdf%22&rlz=1C1CHZN_arSA938SA938&oq=%22achebe%2Blonger%2Bease%2Bsalih%2Bseason%2Bmigration%2Bpdf%22&aqs=chrome..69i57.46470j0j15&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8)
- Gupta, M. (ed.). (2008). *Women Writers in the Twentieth Century*. New Delhi: Atlantic. Retrieved from [https://literariness.org/2016/04/06/postcolonialism/#:~:text=Othering%3A%20Othering%20involves%20two%20concepts,inferior%2C%20negative%2C%20savage%20and%20evil](https://literariness.org/2016/04/06/postcolonialism/#:~:text=Othering%3A%20Othering%20involves%20two%20concepts,inferior%2C%20negative%2C%20savage%20and%20evilwww.literariness.org/2016/04/06/postcolonialism/)
- [literariness.org/2016/04/06/postcolonialism/#:~:text=Othering%3A%20Othering%20involves%20two%20concepts,inferior%2C%20negative%2C%20savage%20and%20evil](https://www.literariness.org/2016/04/06/postcolonialism/#:~:text=Othering%3A%20Othering%20involves%20two%20concepts,inferior%2C%20negative%2C%20savage%20and%20evil)
- papersowl.com/examples/the-heart-of-human-nature-by-joseph-conrad/
- Pickering, M. (2015). *Stereotyping and Stereotypes*. Retrieved from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/9781118663202.wberen046>
- Salih, T. (1969). *Season of Migration to the North* (Translated by Denys Johnson-Davies). Oxford: Heineman.
- Selden, R. (2017). *A Reader’s Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315688992>

Stephen, M. (2000). *English Literature: A Student Guide*. Essex: Pearson.

The Cask of Amontillado. (2020). "The Heart of Human" by Joseph Conrad. Retrieved from <https://papersowl.com/examples/the-heart-of-human-nature-by-joseph-conrad/>

Watson, N., & Shafquat, T. (ed.). (2012). *Romantics and Victorians*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author, with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).