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# The Mimetic Discourse in Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*

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Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* is often regarded to be a novel about the return of the native. After studying in England for seven years, the unnamed narrator returns to his native village in Sudan, where he meets and tells the story of Mustafa. The novel is about the return to England of a self-proclaimed native, Mustafa Sa'eed; who is strangely enough not born in England and is visiting England for the first time. Given his English-oriented educational background, arguing that Mustafa has highly sought to live in England and call it home negates the prevalent perception which positions Mustafa as the vindictive colonized subject who travels to England seeking to avenge his colonized country. Many critics view Mustafa's escapades with women in England, which result in the murder of Jean Morris, as representations of the spiteful bent of the colonized subject against the colonizer: "Reaction to *Season* often falls into ... an attempt to re-establish the dominance of the emasculated, colonized male by attacking the women of the colonizers" (Davidson 388). Like other critics, Patricia Geesey observes that it is "difficult not to see in his character a man who exacts vengeance upon British colonizers of the Sudan through his sexual exploits with women in London" (129). Mike Velez, in his article "On Borderline Between Shores: Space and Place in *Season of Migration to the North*," emphasizes the seductive role played by Mustafa in London: "In a form of revenge for the colonial "taking" of his country, Sa'eed devotes himself to seducing English women by posing as the fulfillment of their Orientalist fantasies" (191). Similarly, Danielle Tran asserts the notion that Mustafa launches a "racially centered sexual crusade against Britain" (2). Caminero-Santangelo argues that "While in England, Mustafa wages a kind of imperial campaign against British women by seducing and discarding them. He sees his sexual conquests as a form of reverse colonization and as a means of anticolonial resistance" (75). In sharp contrast to the general critical perception, this paper explores Mustafa's character not as a neurotic avenger in the west as it is generally conceived, but as a colonizer who seeks to go native, that is in this case, to become completely westernized. This self-sought cultural transformation, to Mustafa, does not happen without a complete identity shift from the colonized to the colonizer.

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In his description of the “civilising mission,” Homi K. Bhabha discusses how colonial authority seeks to have its colonial subjects duplicate the colonizer’s manners, language, and mentality. Ashcroft explains that “colonial discourse encourages the colonized subject to ‘mimic’ the colonizer, by adopting the colonizer’s cultural habits, assumptions, institutions and values” (125). Bhabha defines colonial mimicry as “the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite. Which is to say that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference” (86). He identifies a degree of ambivalence that constitutes this colonial discourse, which he names “mimicry.” It is the colonial desire to have the colonized subject only partially similar to the colonizer: “the effect of a flawed colonial mimesis, in which to be Anglicized is emphatically not to be English” (87). Bhabha considers this “flawed mimesis” to be intentional so that the colonized countries continue to be in need of the colonizers’ mission of reforming the Other. In this perspective, Mustafa attempts to violate or transcend this colonial code of becoming similar and yet not quite the same by taking over the complete identity of the western colonizer itself. His objective is not, as often assumed, to violate the west in some form of retaliation but rather it is an assertive accentuation, a desire to become one of them. To Mustafa, the act of migration is inadequate; it is synonymous to “flawed mimesis” because it implies at best a form of incomplete acceptance for someone who aspires to seamless assimilation. Migration is for foreigners and Mustafa believed he was going home to the country whose language, culture, and education he has already mastered.

The notion of mimicry, in terms of similarities and differences between west and east, colonizer and colonized, pervades the novel. At the novel’s opening, the unnamed narrator tries to answer so many questions asked by his inquisitive village people about the ways of the western world: “They were surprised when I told them that Europeans were, with minor differences, exactly like them, marrying and bringing up their children in accordance with principles and traditions, that they had good morals and were in general good people ... just like us” (5). The novel sets to negate the narrator’s assumption of people sharing the same human experience and condition, an affirmation that the Occident and the Other are almost the same. The narrator himself refers to these early days as those of sheer innocence: “I was happy during those days, like a child that sees its face in the mirror for the first time” (5). The implication is that there is more than the eye can see when it comes to east versus west. The binary opposition, throughout the novel, is not necessarily asserted but rather complicated by the introduction of Mustafa’s character who is neither like the other nor like the English.

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Mimetically, although the character of the unnamed narrator can be considered as remarkably similar to Mustafa's, he is set to be the foil. The opening of the novel sets the tone of the return of a true native who loves his homeland: "The important thing is that I returned with a great yearning for my people in that small village at the bend of the Nile. For seven years I had longed for them, had dreamed of them, and it was an extraordinary moment when I at last found myself standing among them" (3). In effect, from the very beginning, the narrator is introduced to be like them: "I feel a sense of stability ... that I am continuous and integral. No, I am not a stone thrown into the water but seed sown in a field" (6). In contrast, Mustafa Sa'eed is "a man who kept himself to himself and about whom not much was known" (4). This is a man who, stricken by the colonial discourse of mimicry as it translates itself in the emulative learning and practices, has strenuously striven to assimilate himself with the villagers and yet he remains an outsider: "My grandfather ... was very knowledgeable about genealogy ... shook his head and said that he knew nothing about him ... however, he added ... that Mustafa during his whole stay in the village had never done anything which could cause offence, that he regularly attended the mosque for Friday prayers, and that he was 'always ready to give of his labour and his means in glad times and sad'" (7-8). Nevertheless, the narrator recognizes that Mustafa fails to be completely like the villagers: "His excessive politeness was not lost on me, for the people of our village do not trouble themselves with expressions of courtesy" (8). He even refers to him as a man "of strange combination" (8), and, on another incident, as a man "of a different clay" (12). The Sudanese narrator cannot see Mustafa as one of them, despite Mustafa's sincere attempts to assimilate, which indicates an initial failure on the mimetic level. Mustafa fails precisely because he has Anglicized himself to the point of no return.

Mustafa Sa'eed was the product of colonial education who, after years of exploits in England, chose to live unnoticed in a Sudanese village, until the narrator unravelled the mystery. He started his education at a time when schools in Sudan were considered to be an extension of the British occupation: "the people would hide their sons—they thought of schools as being a great evil that had come to them with the armies of occupation" (19). Ngugi Wa Thiong'o asserts the detrimental effect of colonial education, which

annihilate[s] a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. It makes them see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them want to distance themselves from that wasteland. It makes them want to identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves. (3)

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In his *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha cites how Sir Edward Cust in 1839 takes pride in “the original policy of a conferring on every colony of the British Empire a mimic representation of the British Constitution.” He also cites Lord Rosebery’s infamous statement of the colonial educational mission as that “writ by the finger of the Divine.” Bhabha dwells on Macaulay’s “Minute on Indian Education” to illustrate the colonial agenda of educating the other as a sign of authority: “We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect” (124). Moreover, Kelly and Altbach observe that education is directed towards absorption: “colonial schools ... sought to extend foreign domination and economic exploitation of the colony” (2). Education, in this sense, was thought to elicit colonial mentality and train children in the western ways to become governmental officials or as Macaulay puts it “interpreters.” Being subjected to colonial education, Mustafa had striven since those early days not only to go to school but to become a perfect student:

I was playing with some boys outside our house when along came a man dressed in uniform riding a horse. He came to a stop above us. The other boys ran away and I stayed on.... ‘Do you want to study at a school?’ ‘What’s a school?’ I said to him. ‘A nice stone building in the middle of a large garden on the banks of the Nile’ ... ‘When you grow up,’ the man said, ‘and leave school and become an official in the government, you’ll wear a hat like this.’ ‘I’ll go to school,’ I said to the man.’ (19)

Mustafa expressed his passion about learning English, which he considered to be one of the mysteries he encountered: “I discovered other mysteries, amongst which was the English language. My brain continues on, biting and cutting like the teeth of a plough. Words and sentences formed themselves before me as though they were mathematical equations” (21). As Mustafa confided to the narrator, the readers become conscious of the British assertive influence in guiding his early school years: “After three years the headmaster—who was an Englishman—said to me, ‘This country hasn’t got the scope for that brain of yours, so take yourself off. Go to Egypt or Lebanon or England’” (21). In Cairo, impressed by his “astonishing fluency” and “intellect” (22), an English couple, Mr. and Mrs. Robinson together with the new headmaster Mr. Stockwell, exercise continuous influence on his upbringing and education, especially Mrs. Robinson: “From her I learnt to love Bach’s music, Keats’s poetry, and from her I heard for the first time of Mark Twain” (25). A western boy was already in the making.

Said and Bhabha address this process of institutionalized education as part of the colonial discourse. In his essay, “Between Worlds,” Edward Said speaks of how

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colonial education has shaped most of his early life to become a surrogate of the British colonizer: “All my early education had, however, been in elite colonial schools, English public schools designed by the British to bring up a generation of Arabs with natural ties to Britain. The last one I went to ... was Victoria College in Cairo, a school in effect created to educate those ruling-class Arabs and Levantines who were going to take over after the British left” (559). Bhabha, however, speaks of how the colonized trying to mimic the colonizer becomes a menace because this attempt destabilizes the colonizer’s authority and negates the colonized subject’s need for educational reform. In Mustafa’s case, the desired transformation is almost complete. He becomes a menace to his native people as he no longer is like them. A retired civil servant, one of Mustafa’s school mates, speaks of the special education that Mustafa received: “The tone in which the masters addressed him was different from that in which they talked to us, especially the English language teachers; it was as though they were giving the lesson to him alone and excluding the rest of the students” (43). The civil servant continues to explain Mustafa’s complete transformation into the menacing Occident, which Mustafa undoubtedly desired to become:

Mustafa Sa’eed covered his period of education in the Sudan at one bound—as if he were having a race with time. While he remained on at Gordon College, he was sent on a scholarship abroad. He was the spoiled child of the English and we all envied him and expected he would achieve great things. We used to articulate English words as though they were Arabic ... whereas Mustafa Sa’eed would contort his mouth and thrust out his lips and the words would issue forth as though from the mouths of one whose mother tongue it was. This would fill us with annoyance and admiration at one and the same time. With a combination of admiration and spite we nicknamed him ‘the black Englishman.’ (44)

Mustafa is the living proof of the success of the colonial discourse, which “attempts to domesticate colonized subjects and abolish their radical ‘otherness’, bringing them inside Western understanding” (McLeod 53). Other evidence in the novel shows that the English seek people who have this disposition to culturally transform: “Mark these words of mine, my son.... Be sure, though, that they [the English] will direct our affairs from afar ... because they have left behind them people who think as they do. They showed favour to nonentities ... it was the nobodies who had the best jobs in the days of the English” (45). The implication here is that educating Mustafa is not a random act but a colonial strategy to breed their likes. His issuing travels, therefore, are just a means to an end. To Mustafa, the destination is more important than the journey itself.

Travel is a defining factor in Mustafa’s life. His initial travels are not a movement away from home but rather a step closer to it. Drawing on James Clifford’s

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conceptualization of travel, Mustafa's journey to England is not a supplement, a portion of a collective life, but rather the story of homecoming and eventually that of dwelling. Clifford conceptualizes travel as "an increasingly complex range of experiences: practices of crossing and interaction that troubled the localism of many common assumption about culture.... Dwelling was understood to be the local ground of collective life, travel a supplement; roots always precede routes" (3). Mustafa's story juxtaposes the common assumption about travel as Mustafa's journey to England can be viewed as how routes precede roots. His journey to England is a route that leads to his unvisited roots. His departure from his hometown was emotionless and significantly detached: "I packed my belongings in a small suitcase and took the train. No one waived to me and I spilled no tears at parting from anyone" (22). Similarly, when he left Cairo travelling to England, Mustafa's attitude of rootlessness continues: "However, I was not sad. My sole concern was to reach London" (24). Later, a feeling of familiarity and identification surfaces as he approaches England: "I immediately felt an overwhelming intimacy with the sea ... calling me, calling me" (24). In this sense, his unvisited and colonially constructed roots had initiated his travel routes. In his discussion with James Clifford about travels, Bhabha speaks of problems of "this economy of displacement and travel." He identifies a problem with travellers who "hold on to certain symbols of the elsewhere, of travel and elaborate around it a text which has to do not with movement and displacement but with a kind of fetishization of other cultures, of the elsewhere, or of the image or figure of travel" (Clifford 42-43). This sort of fetishization is quite pertinent to Mustafa's situation since he recognizes the possibility of making a fetish of travel as he associates it with "wanderlust." The narrator says that Mustafa advised him to help his children by sparing them "the pangs of wanderlust. I would do nothing of the sort; when they grew up, if they wanted to travel, they should be allowed to" (74). In Mustafa's case, this wanderlust becomes unassailable as his early life seems nothing more than a preparation to travel to England. The refrain that permeates the novel is significant in this context: "And the train carried me to Victoria Station and the world of Jean Morris" (26). It signifies that Mustafa's attempt to find his roots is contingent on his route to the north. The author of the novel employs that principle of repetition by using this refrain in order to assert the notion that Mustafa is one of those figures of fixing who, as Bhabha puts it, "are caught in that margin of nonmovement within an economy of movement" (Clifford 43). In this sense of being trapped in this train that carried him to the north, Mustafa becomes another Conrad who desired Englishness although it entails a sense of entrapment: "the fixation on certain symbols of Englishness because he needed to stay put, there was nowhere else for

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him. And paradoxically ... Conrad's extraordinary experience of travel ... finds expression only when it is limited, tied down to a language, a place, an audience—however, arbitrary and violent the process” (43). Similarly, Mustafa is tied down to a language that determines his future dwelling since the notion of dwelling itself “implies real communicative competence” (Clifford 22). Likewise Iain Chambers observes that language is not merely a means of communication but “a means of cultural construction in which our very selves and sense are constituted” (22). In the repeated refrain, therefore, the “train” becomes a metonymy of his homecoming travel to the “world of Jean Morris,” which allegorizes Englishness in terms of language and culture. Wail S. Hassan asserts that, to Mustafa, the figure of the English woman evoked a generalizing effect “because the British Empire expanded under the rule of a mighty woman” (312). Accordingly, Mustafa's story yields itself as that of a well-sought crossing to a country that, by merit of its imported language, culture, and education, dramatically constituted his identity and significantly marked his journey to be a form of homecoming travel and not migrancy, which entails “a dwelling in language, in histories, in identities that are constantly subject to mutation” (Chambers 5): the notion that travel in Mustafa's life is tied up to fetishization, language, and eventually homecoming troubles, as Clifford asserts, the general assumption about culture and localism. In this perspective, Mustafa's early life in Sudan becomes a supplement whereas his travel becomes a fixation and a dwelling.

Mustafa's constructed character is set from the beginning to be associated with the colonizer rather than with his native soil. His mechanic, uncompassionate relation to his mother implies a similar relation to his motherland. In their Freudian perspective of Mustafa's childhood, Tarawneh and John describe a departure from the child as native to that associated with a colonizer by constructing the oedipal complex in relation to Mrs. Robinson:

Mustafa was born in 1898, the year in which Kitchener reconquered the Sudan and subjugated it to British rule. Consequently, the surrogate mother is closely associated with the surrogate culture of the invaders, a culture that he seeks to revenge himself upon through sexual conquests. It is this substitute culture that, like a mother, adopts him from his early childhood.... It is this surrogate culture that not only seeks to teach him to say “yes” in its own language but breeds people who appoint themselves as substitute “gods” of the conquered land and its people. More importantly, it is this culture that transmits to him the germ of violence and destructiveness. (Tarawneh and John 332)

However, Mustafa's acceptance of Mrs. Robinson as “a surrogate mother,” with its entire assumed heritage, does not necessarily trigger retaliation against the adopted

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new culture as critics often assume: “Shaped by this heritage, his destiny evolves in the form of a sexual ‘counter-invasion’” (Tarawneh and John 332). Mustafa perceives a germ of violence to be part of the colonial education and identity, which he practises because he wants total assimilation with the newly adopted culture: “I am South that yearns for the North and the ice” (27).

It is worthy noticing here that the verb “yearn” is denotatively ambivalent as it could mean either to have a melancholy desire or to feel pity. The verb that Tayeb Salih uses in the original Arabic text is ‘yahin’ which also means ‘to crave.’ In effect, a more literal translation would be “I am South that craves for the North and the ice,” which stresses Mustafa’s desire to assertively belong to the western culture.

Mustafa’s acts of violence, formulated by his western constructed identity, are informed by his acute awareness of imperialistic aggressions as a legitimate component of western modernity: “In modernity, war was subordinated to international law and thus legalized or, rather, made a legal instrument” (Hardt and Negri 22). These acts of violence are often internalized by critics as a politicized form of nationalistic resistance. However, Salih’s technique of delayed character realization, when Mustafa characterizes his life as a self-lie, reveals a deep sense of identity crisis rather than self-reproach for a mission unaccomplished. At the trial, his lawyer tries to present Mustafa as the victim of the clash of two cultures, and yet Mustafa denies this assumption by asserting that his existence is just a lie: “I should stand up and shout at the court: ‘This Mustafa Sa’eed does not exist. He is an illusion, a lie’” (28). On another occasion, he also refers to his life as a living lie: “Everything which happened before my meeting her was a premonition; everything I did after I killed her was an apology, not for killing her, but for the lie that was my life” (26). The lie that he assumes to have a defining power is that of trying to become more western than westerners. All the women that he dated and killed had failed to see him as one of them: “Mustafa Sa’eed, gentlemen of the jury, is a noble person whose mind was able to absorb Western civilization but it broke his heart” (29). Mustafa has realized that no matter how long or how hard he tries to become like them, he will always be conceived as the Other, the esoteric and the mysterious. When his Professor tells the court that Mustafa is the victim of the clash of civilizations, Mustafa again feels like saying: “This is untrue, a fabrication. It was I who killed them. I am the desert thirst. I am no Othello. I am a lie” (29). His refusal to be seen as another Othello signifies that he is not a noble assimilation of east and west but a contrived version that failed to reinforce itself in the western hemisphere through mimesis. His violence is, therefore, not driven by a politicized form of resistance but is a retaliation against all those who failed to see him as the reformed Other, to accept him as one like them.

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To become completely westernized, Mustafa needs to see himself as a conqueror, an attribute that he finds consistent with western, cultural identity: “the rise of the West’ depended upon the exercise of force, upon the fact that the military balance between the Europeans and their adversaries overseas was steadily tilting in favour of the former; ... the key to the Westerners’ success in creating the first truly global empires between 1500 and 1750 depended upon precisely those improvements in the ability to wage war which have been terms ‘the military revolution’” (Parker 4). In this sense, Mustafa finds the warring imagery that he uses to describe his clandestine affairs to be associated with the English Anglo-Saxon identity as invaders and not with himself as an avenger: “My bedroom became a theatre of war; my bed a patch of hell.... I would stay awake all night warring with bow and sword and spear and arrows, and in the morning I would see the smile unchanged and would know that once again I had lost the combat.... I saw the troops returning, filled with terror, from the war of trenches, of lice and epidemics” (29-30). Mustafa uses the metaphor of disease to express his yearnings to become like the English. He allocates the germ of war and invasion as a sign of infection in these women: “The infection has stricken these women a thousand years ago, but I had stirred up the latent depths of the disease until it had got out of control and had killed” (30). This image of infection is asserted in the trial part of the novel by Professor Maxwell Foster-Keen who associates the murdered women with a historic germ: “These girls were not killed by Mustafa Sa’eed but by the germ of a deadly disease that assailed them a thousand years ago” (29). The historical allusion refers to the western history of violence: “The west won the world not by the superiority of its ideas or values or religion but rather by its superiority in applying organized violence. Westerners often forget this fact, non-Westerners never do” (Huntington 51). The professor slyly utilizes this history of violence to turn “the trial into a conflict between two worlds,” which Mustafa rejected because it reduces him to the status of the other “a struggle of which I was one of the victims” (29). Mustafa wants to be identified as a carrier of this germ, a killer, an invader and ultimately a westerner even if it results in conviction. The violence he commits is not vindictive in nature, neither is it a form of resistance; rather, it stems from his desire to be seen politically and ideologically committed to the western ways as one of them and not as another Othello.

The notion that “Mustafa is a metaphor for colonial violence,” as suggested by Wail S. Hassan and other critics, dictate “a grim revenge on colonialism marked by sexism and misogyny.... For him, seducing women is a reclamation of masculinity, a metonymic equivalent of conquering territory, and a symbolic revenge on Europe for the crime” (Hassan 311). Most of those critics base their

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views on a line that was reported to be said by Mustafa that he would “liberate Africa with [his] Penis” and that he was acting as the president of the Society for the Struggle for African Freedom (100). These two pieces of textual evidence, however, should not be understood in isolation but rather within the context in which they appear. In this particular section of the novel, the unnamed narrator, working for the Ministry of Education, speaks to Mahjoub about an educational conference that he had attended in Khartoum: “The Ministry of Education ... organized a conference to which it invited delegates from twenty African countries to discuss ways of unifying educational methods throughout the whole continent” (97). Mahjoub replies dismissively: “Let them build schools first.... How do these people’s minds work? They waste time in conferences and poppycock and here are our children having to travel several miles to school.... And you, what are you doing in Khartoum? What’s the use in our having one of us in the government when you’re not doing anything?” (97). The disparaging position towards people in authoritative positions continues as the unnamed narrator himself lambastes all the government puppets:

He [Mahjoub] 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 ... that for nine days they studied every aspect of progress of education in Africa in the Independence Hall ... costing more than a million pounds.... The platform on which the Ministers of Education in Africa took it in turns to stand for nine whole days was of red marble like that of Napoleon’s tomb at Les Invalides. (98-99)

The narrator continues to speak about the dishonest pack who attended the conference and moves to address the Minister himself who spoke against contradictions in education in Africa while “this very man escapes during the summer months from Africa to his villa on Lake Lucerne and that his wife does her shopping at Harrods in London ... and that members of his delegation themselves openly say that he is corrupt and takes bribes.” The narrator concludes that such people in power “are concerned only with their stomachs and their sensual pleasures” (99). Having set this largely sceptical attitude towards authority, the narrator surprisingly makes the link with Mustafa Sa’eed dismissing him as just another authoritative figure: “Had he returned in the natural way of things he would have joined up with this pack of wolves: they all resemble him” (99). The narrator even identifies one of those Ministers as Mustafa’s student: “He used to be my teacher. In 1928 he was President of the Society for the Struggle for African Freedom of which I was a committee member” (100). It is in this extremely unfavourable context that Mustafa is reported to be an active member of this committee. His

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situation is largely similar to those disagreeable Ministers whose actions and words are not to be taken seriously. Mustafa's position here as seemingly a man who is interested in the African cause invokes Mahjoub's statement: "What's the use in our having one of us in the government when you're not doing anything?" (97). The Minister continues his account about Mustafa and mentions that the latter joked laughingly about liberating Africa with his penis, which in this inauspicious stance lumps him with those Ministers who the narrator had just described as "concerned only with their stomachs and their sensual pleasures" (99). The perception that Mustafa was one of those false figures is emphasised in the image where he "disappeared in the throng of Presidents and Ministers" (100). In this deprecating context, the notion that Mustafa is a postcolonial figure who avenges his colonized country dissipates and what emerges instead is a new reconstructed image of Mustafa who is part of the ongoing colonial pretension.

Salih uses eyewitnesses who have seen and known Mustafa to speak of him as politically dubious, which is very much in the spirit of colonial discourse. One Englishman speaks of Mustafa as unreliable within the context of Mustafa's writings on the economics of colonization. Like the colonial discourse itself, Mustafa's writing, the Englishman asserts, is not to be trusted: "The overriding characteristics of his writings were that his statistics were not to be trusted ... he's an instrument, a machine that has no value without facts, figures and statistics.... No, this Mustafa Sa'eed of yours was not an economist to be trusted" (48). The transformation is now complete. Mustafa has become this machine that mimics western numbers and political manoeuvres often implemented by colonizers who are entrusted by the public to accomplish whatever noble mission to reform and liberate the Other. In fact, the colonial discourse of exploiting the Other to the colonizer's advantage continues even beyond the British policy of Anglicizing the Other in their own countries. The machination continues when Mustafa lives in England for thirty years. The Englishman that the narrator meets in the house of a young Sudanese and who works in the Ministry of Finance maintains his sceptic attitude towards Mustafa's life and position in England: "It is said he was a friend of Lord-this and Lord-that. He was one of the darlings of the English left.... Even his academic post.... I had the impression he got for reasons of this kind" (49). He explains that Leftists have used Mustafa to falsely propagate themselves as accepting and tolerant: "It was as though they wanted to say: look how tolerant and liberal we are! This African is just like one of us" (49). The Englishman's comment on Mustafa reduces his status from a supreme mimetic, reformed subject into a puppet mastered by his English puppeteers. This narrated reality is one reason as to why Mustafa considers his life to be a sad history of lies and apologies simply

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because it is a failure in mimicry. He falls short of his supreme aim to be perceived as one like them.

Being too Sudanese for the English and too English for the Sudanese, Salih's Mustafa is a man who is caught between two worlds and yet he pursues the act of mimicry aiming for a perfect assimilation. Unlike Joseph Conrad's hero's journey into the unknown in *The Heart of Darkness*, Mustafa's travel to England is that of homecoming. However, like Conrad, Salih's novel is an unequivocal denunciation of the colonial legacy in postcolonial countries: "Both Conrad and Salih expose the perils of colonialism, but while Conrad reserves his strongest condemnation for the greed and theft that attended imperial expansion, Salih questions the entire enterprise. Colonialism is repeatedly described in language that evokes violent infection" (Lalami xiii). Unlike Mustafa whose name pops up every time there is a conversation about the English, the narrator professes how detachment from the English ways has helped him to preserve his native character and, therefore, assumingly becomes immune to the western infection. The unnamed narrator defines himself in negation to Mustafa's too Anglicized image: "I too had lived with them. But I had lived with them superficially, neither loving nor hating them. I used to treasure within me the image of this little village, seeing it wherever I went with the eye of my imagination" (41). In sharp contrast, Mustafa had become more English than the English by being exposed to the politicized part of their Englishness, which is often concealed. One is reminded of S.S. Sisodia's famous stuttered squib, one Rushdie's characters in *The Satanic Verses*, saying "the trouble with the Engenglish is that their hiss hiss history happened overseas, so they dodo don't know what it means" (343). Mustafa knows what it means; Salih inscribes it as an imperialistic predisposition which tends to be infectious and inherently part of the constitutional nature of western identity that Mustafa absorbs in order to become one of those that Macaulay describes to be "a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect" (Bhabha 124). Mustafa makes every effort to sacrifice everything in favour of possessing this intellect: "Mrs. Robinson used to say to me ... 'Can't you ever forget your intellect?'" (23). He has striven to become like them; accomplishing that end entails being infected with the germ of violence as an inherent attribute that constitutes the colonizer's identity. Dislocated from his country of birth, Mustafa's western education has fed his newly acquired identity, which he enacted in England. In effect, he travels to England to celebrate what he perceives to be his right to Englishness and not to take vengeance on what he himself spent a lifetime trying to flawlessly emulate.

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