

## Colonial Encounters and Masculine Hegemonies: A Gramscian Analysis of Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (1966)

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### Abstract

The exploration of masculinity within African literature is rich, yet the application of Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony to scrutinize masculinity and power structures in African literature remains underexplored. Despite the pioneering efforts of scholars, such as Ayodabo and Amaefula, the potential of Gramsci's theory to unveil the intricate layers of masculinities in African literature, particularly within post-colonial contexts, remains untapped. This research adopts a qualitative methodology, employing critical textual analysis to delve into the nuances of masculinity within Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*. Extending Ayodabo and Amaefula's methodological approach, the study draws from Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony to uncover the dynamics of power and resistance within the novel, particularly in the portrayal of male characters and the societal norms that shape their identities. The text offers a profound exploration of colonial encounters and masculine hegemonies, revealing the complexities of power dynamics and struggles shaping the lives of its characters. Through the lenses of Mustafa Sa'eed, the unnamed narrator, and resistant women like Hosna Bint Mahmoud, the novel exposes the construction, maintenance, and contestation of dominant power structures. The portrayal of characters as "subaltern" and "traditional intellectuals" highlights the roles of educated elites in perpetuating or challenging hegemonic masculinity, while women's resistance underscores the significance of gender and sexuality in this discourse. The study concludes that *Season of Migration to the North* offers a powerful critique of colonial encounters and masculine hegemonies. By situating the characters within the historical and cultural context of postcolonial Sudan, the novel underscores the ongoing legacy of colonialism and the need for social change. It also acknowledges the complexities and limitations of resistance, leaving space for further exploration of themes like intellectual agency, gender politics, and the ongoing struggles for liberation. This research contributes to the growing body of scholarship on masculinity in African literature and demonstrates the potential of Gramscian theory to illuminate the intricacies of power, identity, and resistance within this domain.

**Keywords:** Colonial Encounters, Masculine Hegemonies, African Literature, Postcolonialism, Gramscian Analysis, Gender Dynamics, Power Relations, Patriarchal Oppression.

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### INTRODUCTION

The study of masculinity in African literature has gained significant attention in recent decades, with scholars examining the complex ways in which masculinity is constructed, negotiated, and challenged in various cultural and historical contexts. Ouzgane and Morrell's influential work, *African Masculinities* (2005), offers a comprehensive overview of the field, exploring themes such as the impact of colonialism on African masculinities, the tension between tradition and modernity, and the role of gender in shaping identity. Other notable contributions include Miescher and Lindsay's *Men and Masculinities in Modern Africa* (2003), which examines the historical and contemporary

experiences of African men, and Mugambi and Allan's *Masculinities in African Literary and Cultural Texts* (2010), which analyses the representation of masculinity in various literary and cultural forms. Works have also explored the relationship between masculinity and African culture (Tobalase, 2014, 2016, 2017; Ayodabo, 2021; 2023, Olaluwoye, & Ogungbemi, 2020; Umezurike, 2021), highlighting the complex interplay between gender, power, and cultural identity in both oral and written African narratives.

Studies have also focused on specific regions and cultural contexts, such as Uchendu's *Masculinity in Contemporary Africa* (2008), which explores the challenges and transformations of masculinity in sub-

Saharan Africa, and Ratele's *Analysing Males in Africa* (2008), which examines the social and psychological dimensions of African masculinities. Additionally, scholars have investigated the intersection of masculinity with other identity categories, such as race, class, and sexuality, as seen in Epprecht's "Heterosexual Africa?" (2008) and Groes-Green's "Hegemonic and Subordinated Masculinities" (2009). From the valorous warrior traditions depicted in ancient folklore to contemporary reflections on gender roles in modern societies, these narratives provide a nuanced understanding of the male experience in Africa. This exploration is crucial, as it uncovers the varied ways in which African societies construct, challenge, and redefine masculinity against the backdrop of changing historical landscapes, including the profound impacts of colonialism and post-colonialism.

While the exploration of masculinity within African literature is rich, the application of Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony (1971) to scrutinize masculinity and power structures in African literature remains notably underexplored. Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, a foundational concept within critical theory and cultural studies, offering profound insights into the nature and maintenance of power within societies, has been adopted in various disciplines and in different societies over the years. Despite its widespread adoption across various disciplines and societal contexts, its potential to illuminate the intricacies of masculinity in African literature has not been fully realized. Apart from the pioneering efforts of scholars like Ayodabo and Amaefula (2021), whose innovative application of Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony to analyze power structures and masculinity in African cinema, few have ventured into applying Gramsci's nuanced understandings of cultural dominance and resistance to the domain of gender studies within African contexts. This oversight presents a rich area for exploration, where Gramsci's ideas could unveil the complex layers through which masculinities are constructed, performed, and contested in African literature. The current research aims to extend Ayodabo and Amaefula (2021)'s seminal work by delving into contestations of masculinities and power structures in African literature, thereby contributing to a broader understanding of gender dynamics and power relations in post-colonial societies. Specifically, it focuses on Tayeb Salih's novel, *Season of Migration to the North* (1966), as a case study for examining the construction of masculinities within a post-colonial Sudanese context.

### ***Season of Migration to the North* (1966): Synopsis and Review**

*Season of Migration to the North*, penned by the esteemed Sudanese writer Tayeb Salih, stands as a groundbreaking work in post-colonial African literature. First published in 1966, the novel is an intricate exploration of the complexities and ramifications of

colonial encounters, framed through the lives of its characters navigating the tumultuous waters between Sudanese and British cultures. At its core, the narrative revolves around two central figures: the unnamed narrator, who returns to his village in Sudan after studying in Europe, and Mustafa Sa'eed, a brilliant but enigmatic figure whose past in England shadows his present life in Sudan.

The story unfolds as the narrator gradually uncovers the layers of Mustafa Sa'eed's life, a journey that takes the reader from the tranquil banks of the Nile to the intellectual and sensual tumult of London. Mustafa Sa'eed, as the embodiment of the colonized intellectual, utilizes his mastery of the colonizer's language and culture as both a weapon and a shield, navigating the metropole with a complex mixture of admiration and disdain. His relationships with English women, characterized by intense passion and eventual tragedy, serve as metaphors for the broader cultural and political dynamics of colonial domination and resistance.

Through this narrative, Salih delves into themes of identity, alienation, and the longing for home, while also critiquing the romanticized notions of the 'noble savage' and the 'civilizing mission' of colonialism. The novel's nuanced portrayal of the psychological impacts of colonialism on both individual and collective identities in Sudanese society is a profound commentary on the enduring legacies of colonial rule.

The novel is also a meditation on the concept of return; the narrator's return to Sudan after years in Europe mirrors the broader theme of Africa's post-colonial return to itself, seeking to reclaim and redefine its identity in the aftermath of colonial rule. The tension between tradition and modernity, and the search for a meaningful existence within these dual heritages, resonates throughout the novel, highlighting the complexities of post-colonial societies grappling with the remnants of colonial ideologies and the challenges of forging new paths.

Moreover, Salih's work is remarkable for its rich, poetic language and its deep engagement with the Sudanese landscape, both physical and cultural, offering a vivid portrayal of Sudanese life that transcends the binary oppositions often found in discussions of East and West. The novel challenges simplistic narratives about colonialism and independence, presenting instead a layered, ambiguous vision of the post-colonial condition.

Thematically, *Season of Migration to the North* is a potent exploration of power dynamics, not only between colonizer and colonized but also within the intricacies of gender relations. The portrayal of masculinities, through characters like Mustafa Sa'eed and the narrator, reveals the multifaceted impacts of colonial encounters on male identity and power. Salih's narrative interrogates the constructions of masculinity in

both Sudanese and British contexts, revealing how colonial legacies complicate and inform these constructions.

In essence, Tayeb Salih's novel is a masterpiece of African literature, offering insightful commentary on the intersections of culture, power, and identity in post-colonial contexts. Its exploration of colonial encounters and their impact on Sudanese society remains as relevant today as it was at the time of its publication, providing fertile ground for examining the ongoing dialogues around culture, identity, and power in post-colonial studies.

Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* has been widely studied in the context of postcolonial literature, with scholars examining the novel's themes of identity, cultural hybridity, and the legacy of colonialism. Hassan's *Tayeb Salih: Ideology and the Craft of Fiction* (2003) offers a comprehensive analysis of Salih's literary techniques and the ideological underpinnings of his work, while Geesey (1997) explores the novel's representation of cultural encounters and the challenges of postcolonial identity formation. Other studies have focused on specific aspects of the novel, such as the role of storytelling and narrative structure (Elad, 1999), the representation of women (Accad, 1985), and the use of irony and satire (Krishnan, 2012). However, while these studies have made significant contributions to the understanding of Salih's novel, there has been limited attention given to the specific role of masculinity in shaping the characters' identities and experiences.

The application of theoretical frameworks such as Gramsci's concept of hegemony (1971) could offer new insights into the power dynamics between the colonizer and the colonized, as well as the internal struggles within Sudanese society. By examining the characters of Mustafa Sa'eed and the unnamed narrator through this lens, future research could contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex ways in which masculinity, colonialism, and identity intersect in Salih's novel and, more broadly, in African literature.

### Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This research employs a qualitative methodology, drawing upon textual analysis to explore the nuances of masculinity within Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*. This approach involves a close reading of the text, paying particular attention to its portrayal of male characters, their interactions, and the societal norms and expectations that shape their identities. Through this methodology, the research aims to uncover the layers of meaning within Salih's narrative, revealing the complexities of hegemonic and subaltern masculinities in post-colonial Sudan.

Central to this analysis is Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, which provides a crucial

theoretical framework for understanding the dynamics of power and resistance within the novel. Gramsci posited that the ruling class maintains its dominance not just through political and economic control but also by influencing cultural and ideological spheres. This hegemony is perpetuated through the creation and propagation of cultural norms and values that reinforce the status quo, marginalizing alternative viewpoints and identities. In the context of post-colonial literature, Gramsci's theory offers insights into how colonial legacies continue to shape societal norms, including constructions of masculinity.

Drawing from Ayodabo' and Amaefula's methodological approach, which combines Gramsci's theory of hegemony and masculinity theory in Africa, this research will employ similar approach to examine masculinity and power structures in *Season of Migration to the North*. Ayodabo and Amaefula's pioneering research demonstrates the efficacy of Gramsci's theory in uncovering the nuanced dynamics of power and masculine identities within African films, revealing the intricate ways in which masculinities are portrayed, contested, and reimagined. According to them:

Although Gramsci's views about the revolutionary potential of the subaltern/peasantry have gained considerable sympathy among social theorists and historians, the utility of this theory remains unknown in Africa... This research uses the film medium to reflect on the past and present Nigerian political and social landscapes, exploring in the process how Gramsci's thoughts on hegemony by domination and consent can be used to illuminate the issue of power relations in post-colonial Nigeria (7).

By drawing on similar methodological approach and theoretical insights, this article endeavors to contribute to the scholarly dialogue on masculinity in African literature. It seeks to underscore the importance of cultural hegemony in understanding the complexities of male identities and power structures.

Applying Gramsci's theory to the study of masculinities involves examining how certain forms of masculinity are elevated to a hegemonic status, becoming the norm against which other masculinities are defined and often subordinated. This analysis will explore how Salih's novel depicts hegemonic masculinities as those aligned with colonial power structures, while subaltern masculinities resist or negotiate these imposed identities. Key aspects of the novel, such as Mustafa Sa'eed's complex relationship with British society and the narrator's reflections on his own identity, will be analyzed to understand how the novel articulates and interrogates masculinities within a post-colonial context.

### **Analysis: Mustafa Sa'eed: The Subaltern Intellectual**

Mustafa Sa'eed, the enigmatic central character in Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*, embodies the complex interplay of colonial hegemony, masculinity, and resistance. Through Sa'eed's journey from Sudan to England and his subsequent actions, Salih explores the concept of the subaltern intellectual and the limitations of individual resistance against the overwhelming power of colonial systems.

Sa'eed's journey from Sudan to England is a pivotal moment in his life, setting the stage for his later attempts to subvert colonial hegemony. As a brilliant student, Sa'eed is sent to Cairo and then to London to pursue his education. In England, he excels academically and becomes a prominent economist, seemingly embodying the ideal of the "civilized" and educated African man. However, beneath this veneer of success, Sa'eed harbors a deep resentment towards the colonial system that has uprooted him from his homeland and forced him to adopt a foreign culture. As he reflects on his time in England, Sa'eed reveals the psychological toll of his assimilation: "I was like something rounded, made of rubber: you throw it in the water and it doesn't get wet, you throw it on the ground and it bounces back" (Salih, 20).

Driven by this inner turmoil, Sa'eed engages in a series of sexual conquests, seducing and manipulating British women as a means of subverting colonial power dynamics. He describes his encounters as a form of revenge against the colonizers: "I'll liberate Africa with my penis" (Salih, 120). By asserting his sexual dominance over white women, Sa'eed attempts to invert the hierarchies of race and power that underpin colonial hegemony. His seductions become a metaphor for the larger struggle against colonialism, as he seeks to penetrate and destabilize the very foundations of the imperial order.

However, despite his efforts to resist colonial hegemony, Sa'eed ultimately finds himself trapped within the very system he seeks to overthrow. His sexual conquests, while symbolically significant, do little to challenge the material realities of colonial domination. Instead, Sa'eed becomes consumed by his own destructive impulses, leading to the tragic deaths of several women and his own imprisonment. As the narrator reflects, "Mustafa Sa'eed was a lie, a lie that had been made to appear true for a while and now had gone back to being a lie" (Salih, 62). Sa'eed's resistance, though initially subversive, is ultimately revealed as a futile and self-destructive endeavor.

Gramsci's concept of the "organic intellectual" provides a useful framework for understanding Sa'eed's role and the limitations of his resistance. According to Gramsci, organic intellectuals are individuals who emerge from subordinate social groups and articulate the interests and worldviews of their class (Gramsci, 1971).

Sa'eed, as a brilliant Sudanese student and economist, could be seen as an organic intellectual, using his knowledge and position to challenge colonial hegemony. However, Gramsci also emphasizes the need for organic intellectuals to forge alliances with the masses and create a counter-hegemonic bloc capable of overthrowing the dominant order. Sa'eed, in contrast, remains isolated and disconnected from the broader struggle against colonialism, focusing instead on his individual acts of sexual conquest.

Moreover, Sa'eed's education and success within the colonial system complicate his status as an organic intellectual. As the narrator observes, "He was the best pupil of the English and the most affected by them" (Salih, 53). Sa'eed's assimilation into British culture and his adoption of colonial values suggest that he has, to some extent, internalized the very hegemony he seeks to resist. This contradiction underscores the difficulty of challenging colonial power from within its own institutions and the risk of becoming complicit in the very systems of oppression one hopes to overthrow.

In conclusion, Mustafa Sa'eed's journey and his attempts to subvert colonial hegemony through sexual conquest offer a complex portrait of the subaltern intellectual and the limitations of individual resistance. While Sa'eed's actions are symbolically potent, they ultimately fail to challenge the material foundations of colonial power and leave him trapped within the very system he seeks to destroy. Through Sa'eed's story, Salih exposes the contradictions and challenges faced by colonized intellectuals, highlighting the need for collective action and the forging of alliances with the masses to effectively resist colonial hegemony.

### **The Narrator: Navigating Competing Hegemonies**

The unnamed narrator in Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* serves as a crucial counterpoint to Mustafa Sa'eed, embodying the complex tensions between traditional Sudanese values and modern, Western-influenced ideals. As a Western-educated Sudanese man, the narrator finds himself caught between competing hegemonies, struggling to reconcile his cultural heritage with the knowledge and values acquired through his education abroad. His journey throughout the novel illuminates the challenges of navigating multiple masculine identities and the role of the intellectual in both perpetuating and challenging dominant power structures.

The narrator's position as a Western-educated Sudanese man is central to his character and the novel's exploration of competing hegemonies. Having spent seven years studying in England, the narrator returns to his village in Sudan, filled with a sense of alienation and disconnection from his roots. As he reflects on his homecoming, the narrator reveals the extent of his cultural dislocation: "I felt as though a piece of ice were melting inside of me, as though I were some frozen

substance on which the sun had shone—that life warmth of the tribe which I had lost for a time in a land 'whose fishes die of the cold'" (Salih, 1). This passage highlights the narrator's liminal status, caught between the warmth of his Sudanese heritage and the coldness of his Western education.

Throughout the novel, the narrator grapples with the challenge of reconciling traditional Sudanese values with the modern ideals he has absorbed during his time abroad. This struggle is particularly evident in his interactions with the village community, as he navigates the expectations and norms of traditional masculine roles. For instance, when the narrator's grandfather arranges a marriage for him, he is torn between his desire for personal autonomy and the pressure to conform to social conventions. "I cannot marry a woman I have never seen in my life," he protests, only to be met with his grandfather's stern rebuke: "What education have you had that you should refuse to marry a woman before seeing her?" (Salih, 71). This exchange underscores the tensions between traditional gender roles and the narrator's Western-influenced notions of individual choice and romantic love.

As the narrator navigates these competing hegemonies, he finds himself both perpetuating and challenging dominant forms of masculinity. On the one hand, his education and status as a government official grant him a degree of power and influence within the village community. He is looked upon as a leader and a source of guidance, particularly in his role as the guardian of Mustafa Sa'eed's sons. In this capacity, the narrator actively shapes the younger generation's understanding of masculinity and their place in society. However, the narrator also demonstrates moments of resistance against hegemonic masculinity, particularly in his relationships with women. Unlike Mustafa Sa'eed, who seeks to dominate and control women through sexual conquest, the narrator strives for a more equitable and respectful approach. This is evident in his admiration for Hosna Bint Mahmoud, Mustafa Sa'eed's widow, whom he describes as "a woman of noble carriage and of a foreign type of beauty" (Salih, 89). The narrator's attraction to Hosna is rooted in a sense of companionship and shared understanding, rather than a desire for conquest or possession.

Gramsci's concept of the "traditional intellectual" provides a useful framework for understanding the narrator's role and his potential for challenging hegemonic power structures. According to Gramsci, traditional intellectuals are those who "are already in existence and seem to represent an historical continuity uninterrupted even by the most complicated and radical changes in political and social forms" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 7). The narrator, as a highly educated member of the Sudanese elite, embodies this concept of the traditional intellectual. However, Gramsci also argues that traditional intellectuals must choose between

aligning themselves with the dominant power structure or using their knowledge and influence to challenge hegemony and support the subaltern classes. The narrator's journey throughout the novel can be seen as a gradual awakening to this choice, as he becomes increasingly aware of the injustices and inequalities that pervade both Sudanese society and the broader colonial system. By the end of the novel, the narrator's decision to embrace life and his responsibilities to his community suggests a potential for using his position as an intellectual to work towards social change and resist dominant forms of oppression.

In conclusion, the narrator's navigation of competing hegemonies in the novel serves as a powerful commentary on the challenges faced by Western-educated Sudanese intellectuals in the postcolonial era. Through his struggles to reconcile traditional values with modern ideals and his complex relationship with hegemonic masculinity, the narrator embodies the potential for resistance and transformation within the framework of Gramsci's traditional intellectual. His journey highlights the importance of critical self-reflection and the need for intellectuals to actively engage in the struggle against oppressive power structures, both within their own communities and in the broader context of colonial domination.

### **Hegemonic Masculinities in the Novel**

In the novel, the construction and maintenance of hegemonic masculinities play a central role in shaping the power dynamics between characters and the larger societal structures they inhabit. Through the interplay of colonial and traditional Sudanese masculinities, Salih explores the ways in which dominant masculine norms are perpetuated and challenged, as well as their impact on women and subordinate men.

The construction and maintenance of dominant masculine norms are evident throughout the novel, particularly in the characters of Mustafa Sa'eed and the village elders. Sa'eed, as a highly educated and successful Sudanese man, embodies a form of masculinity that is deeply influenced by colonial ideals of power, control, and sexual conquest. His relationships with British women are characterized by a desire for domination and a need to assert his masculinity in the face of colonial oppression. As he reflects on his past, Sa'eed reveals the extent to which his masculine identity is tied to his sexual prowess: "I was the invader who had come from the South, and this was the icy battlefield from which I would not make a safe return" (Salih, 42). This passage highlights the ways in which Sa'eed's masculinity is constructed in opposition to the colonial order, even as it relies on the same tools of domination and control.

Similarly, the village elders in the novel represent a traditional form of Sudanese masculinity that is rooted in patriarchal authority and the maintenance of

social norms. This is evident in their attempts to control the lives of women and younger men, such as arranging marriages and enforcing strict gender roles. As the narrator's grandfather declares, "Women belong to men, and a man's a man even if he's decrepit" (Salih, 69). This statement underscores the ways in which traditional masculine norms are used to justify the subordination of women and the perpetuation of male dominance.

The interplay between colonial and traditional Sudanese masculinities is a key theme throughout the novel, as characters navigate the competing demands of these two hegemonic systems. Mustafa Sa'eed, for instance, embodies a hybrid form of masculinity that draws on both colonial and Sudanese ideals. While his education and success in England are a source of pride and status within the village, his sexual conquests and ultimate downfall also serve as a cautionary tale about the dangers of abandoning traditional values. The narrator, too, finds himself caught between these competing masculinities, as he struggles to reconcile his Western education with the expectations of his community. This tension is encapsulated in the narrator's observation that "the world has turned suddenly upside down. Here, in my own village, I feel a stranger" (Salih, 49). The clash between colonial and traditional masculinities thus serves to highlight the complex and often contradictory nature of hegemonic male identities.

The impact of hegemonic masculinity on women and subordinate men is a central concern of the novel, as characters suffer under the weight of dominant masculine norms. Women are often reduced to objects of male desire and control, as evidenced by Mustafa Sa'eed's treatment of his lovers and the village elders' attempts to dictate the lives of their female relatives. The tragic fate of Hosna Bint Mahmoud, who is forced into an unwanted marriage and ultimately takes her own life, serves as a powerful indictment of the oppressive nature of hegemonic masculinity. As the narrator reflects, "Hosna wasn't mad. She was the sanest woman in the village—and the most beautiful" (Salih, 97). This statement highlights the ways in which women's resistance to dominant masculine norms is often dismissed or pathologized, even as it represents a powerful challenge to the status quo.

Subordinate men, too, suffer under the weight of hegemonic masculinity, as they are forced to conform to narrow and often unattainable ideals of male behavior. This is evident in the character of Wad Rayyes, an aging village elder who seeks to marry Hosna Bint Mahmoud despite her objections. Wad Rayyes's desperate attempts to assert his masculinity through marriage and sexual conquest ultimately lead to his own destruction, as he is killed by Hosna in an act of defiance. As the narrator observes, "Wad Rayyes, Wad Rayyes, you're a man who hankers after things. You're like one of those people who are crazy about owning donkeys—you only admire a donkey when you see someone else riding it" (Salih, 79).

This passage underscores the ways in which hegemonic masculinity creates a culture of competition and possession, in which men seek to assert their dominance over others to validate their own sense of self-worth.

### Counter-Hegemonic Resistance and Its Limitations

Despite the pervasive influence of hegemonic masculinity, the novel also presents challenges and moments of resistance to dominant masculine norms. In the novel, the theme of counter-hegemonic resistance is explored through various instances of characters challenging the dominant power structures of colonial and masculine hegemonies. While these acts of resistance offer glimpses of hope and the potential for change, the novel also highlights the limitations and contradictions inherent in such struggles, ultimately presenting an open-ended narrative that reflects the ongoing nature of power struggles in postcolonial contexts.

Throughout the novel, there are several instances of resistance against colonial and masculine hegemonies, enacted by both male and female characters. Mustafa Sa'eed's attempts to subvert colonial power through his sexual conquests of British women can be seen as a form of counter-hegemonic resistance, as he seeks to invert the racial and gender hierarchies that underpin colonial domination. As he declares, "I'll liberate Africa with my penis" (Salih, 120), Sa'eed positions himself as a revolutionary figure, using his sexuality as a weapon against the colonizers. Similarly, the narrator's decision to return to his village and embrace his responsibilities to his community can be interpreted as a rejection of the individualistic and materialistic values of Western modernity, and a reassertion of traditional Sudanese culture and identity. As he declares, "I shall live by force and cunning... I moved my feet and arms, violently and with difficulty, until I freed myself from the clinging mud and swam on" (Salih, 139). This final passage encapsulates the novel's ultimate message of hope and resistance, as characters struggle to break free from the confines of dominant masculine norms and forge their own paths in the world.

However, it is the role of women in challenging dominant power structures that emerges as one of the most significant forms of counter-hegemonic resistance in the novel. The character of Hosna Bint Mahmoud represents a powerful challenge to the patriarchal order of Sudanese society, as she defies the expectations of her gender and ultimately takes her own life in an act of rebellion against forced marriage. As the narrator reflects, "Hosna was not mad. She was the sanest woman in the village, and the most beautiful. She was the only woman I ever loved" (Salih, 134). Hosna's tragic fate serves as a stark reminder of the brutal consequences of masculine hegemony, and the urgent need for resistance and change.

Other female characters, such as Bint Majzoub, also play important roles in challenging dominant power structures through their words and actions. Bint Majzoub, a widow who has outlived several husbands, is known for her outspoken nature and her refusal to conform to traditional gender roles. As she declares, "I swear I wouldn't refuse it if anybody asked me to marry, even if he were as old as the palm tree" (Salih, 88). Bint Majzoub's unapologetic embrace of her sexuality and her rejection of societal norms regarding marriage and widowhood represent a form of counter-hegemonic resistance that subverts the expectations of femininity in Sudanese culture.

Despite these instances of resistance, the novel also highlights the limitations and contradictions of counter-hegemonic struggles, particularly in the context of postcolonial Africa. Mustafa Sa'eed's attempts to subvert colonial power through his sexual conquests ultimately lead to his own downfall, as he becomes consumed by his own destructive impulses and is unable to escape the psychological and emotional toll of his actions. Similarly, the narrator's decision to return to his village and embrace traditional Sudanese values is complicated by his own Western education and the ongoing influence of colonial modernity on his worldview.

Moreover, the novel's portrayal of women's resistance is not without its own contradictions and limitations. While Hosna Bint Mahmoud's defiance of the patriarchal order is ultimately successful in asserting her autonomy, it comes at the cost of her own life, suggesting the brutal consequences of challenging hegemonic power structures. Similarly, Bint Majzoub's outspoken nature and rejection of traditional gender roles are tempered by her own complicity in perpetuating masculine hegemony, as evidenced by her participation in arranging marriages and upholding social norms.

The open-ended nature of the narrative in *Season of Migration to the North* reflects the ongoing and unresolved nature of power struggles in postcolonial contexts. The novel's ambiguous ending, with the narrator swimming in the Nile and calling out for help, suggests the difficulties and uncertainties of navigating competing hegemonies and forging a path towards liberation and self-determination. As the narrator reflects, "The river was turbulent with its old familiar sound, moving yet seeming motionless. Was I asleep or awake? Was I alive or dead?" (Salih, 139). This passage encapsulates the novel's ultimate message about the complexity and ambiguity of counter-hegemonic resistance, and the ongoing struggle for meaning and identity in the face of dominant power structures.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* offers a powerful and nuanced exploration of the complexities of colonial encounters

and masculine hegemonies, drawing on Gramsci's concept of hegemony to illuminate the power dynamics and struggles that shape the lives of its characters. Through the experiences of Mustafa Sa'eed, the unnamed narrator, and the women who resist patriarchal oppression, the novel exposes the ways in which dominant power structures are constructed, maintained, and challenged, highlighting both the possibilities and limitations of counter-hegemonic resistance.

Salih's engagement with Gramsci's concept of hegemony is evident throughout the novel, as characters navigate the competing demands of colonial and traditional Sudanese masculinities, and struggle to assert their own identities and desires in the face of overwhelming social and cultural pressures. The novel's portrayal of Mustafa Sa'eed as a "subaltern intellectual" and the narrator as a "traditional intellectual" highlights the complex roles that educated elites play in both perpetuating and challenging hegemonic power structures, while the resistance of women like Hosna Bint Mahmoud and Bint Majzoub underscores the importance of gender and sexuality in shaping the contours of hegemonic masculinity.

The significance of Salih's work lies in its ability to expose the complexities and contradictions of colonial encounters and masculine hegemonies, and to offer a nuanced and multifaceted portrayal of resistance and struggle. By situating its characters within the larger historical and cultural contexts of postcolonial Sudan and the broader African continent, the novel highlights the ongoing legacy of colonialism and the urgent need for social and political change. At the same time, the novel's open-ended narrative and ambiguous resolution reflect the difficulties and uncertainties of challenging dominant power structures, and the ongoing nature of the struggle for liberation and self-determination.

The potential for further exploration of *Season of Migration to the North* through a Gramscian lens is vast and exciting. Future scholars might examine the novel's portrayal of intellectuals and their role in shaping counter-hegemonic movements or delve deeper into the gender and sexual politics of the novel, exploring the ways in which women's resistance to patriarchal oppression both challenges and complicates the novel's critique of colonial and masculine hegemonies. Additionally, the novel's engagement with questions of identity, cultural hybridity, and the legacy of colonialism offers fertile ground for further analysis, particularly in relation to contemporary debates around globalization, migration, and the politics of belonging.

Ultimately, *Season of Migration to the North* stands as a testament to the power of literature to illuminate the complexities and contradictions of human experience, and to offer a space for critical reflection and imaginative transformation. By engaging with Gramsci's concept of hegemony and situating its characters within

the larger historical and cultural contexts of postcolonial Africa, Salih's novel invites readers to grapple with the ongoing struggles for liberation and self-determination, and to imagine new forms of resistance and solidarity in the face of dominant power structures. As such, the novel remains a vital and enduring contribution to the canon of African literature, and a powerful reminder of the importance of critical engagement and political struggle in the pursuit of social justice and human dignity.

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