

## The Return of the Primal Father: A Comparative Freudian Reading of Two Novels

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**Abstract:** *Against common postcolonial and historical readings, this article argues that the rise of the primitive urge to dominate and exploit others is what drives Kurtz and Mustafa Sa'eed, the two main characters in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902) and Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (1966), respectively, to act as primal fathers and thus commit violence on others. Adopting Freud's theory on the primal-horde and notions like "hypnosis" and "suggestion," this article reveals the universal theme of the primal father as disguised in an imperial mask in the two novels under discussion. The article argues that the recurrence of the primal father is manifest in narcissistic, paranoid, and sexually rapacious yet apparently gifted characters who act as the Nietzschean "superman." It then sheds light on the infectious germ of the primal father as reactivated in the narrators of the novels, i.e. in the form of rival Oedipal sons in Charlie Marlow in *Heart of Darkness* and the anonymous narrator of *Season of Migration to the North*. Each narrator (Oedipal son) identifies with the respective protagonist (primal father), and both are fascinated yet repelled by such an affinity. This study is thus an attempt to justify the prevalent darkness haunting the human psyche by arguing that the germ of primitivism recurs in history and world cultures. Though it can lay dormant, it is ready to resurface anytime among the uncivilized or even "the civilized" who claim the white man's burden. Therefore, this article provides an essential psychoanalytic and comparative intervention to understand the underlying motivations behind imperialism and master/slave power relations.*

**Keywords:** Comparative literature, Conrad, Freud, Oedipal son, primal father, Salih

### 1. Introduction

Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (hereafter referred to as *Heart*)(1902) and Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (hereafter referred to as *Season*) (1966) are two novels disguised in imperial politics and cultural clashes yet exposing a more psychological theme, the return of the primal father. The novels have been dissected by postcolonial and cultural critics due to their treatment of the troubled relationship between the colonized Africa (the Congo and Sudan) and the colonizers (the Belgians and the British), yet the pull of the wilderness and the fascination of the primitive have not been adequately examined. Broadly, both novels tackle the contentious relationship between Europeans and Africans, between western imperialism and (post)colonial Africa. Hence, they have been tackled from cultural perspectives as fictional works on power relations and encounters between a privileged West and the colonial/postcolonial world.

Adopting an alternative approach, this article argues the return of the primal father as an unconscious impulse in the protagonists of Conrad's and Salih's novels (Kurtz and Mustafa Sa'eed) and juxtaposes this return against the arrival of the corresponding Oedipal sons/narrators (Marlow and the anonymous narrator, respectively). Freudian terms like "primal horde," "hypnosis," and "suggestion" are used to inspect the power the primal father exercises to attain the status of the Nietzschean superman. Hence, the article subsumes mainstream postcolonial or historical readings of both novels as well as typical thematic or structural analogies in order to interrogate the underlying foundations of oppression and violence. The novels recount two journeys toward opposite directions, yet leading to the same psychological and moral destination. They depict a voyage of self-discovery portraying the evil and dark side of two narcissistic men, Kurtz and Mustafa Sa'eed. Building on a historical, political setting of imperialism as a vehicle, Conrad and Salih unveil the primitive human nature in the recurrence of its extreme form: the incarnation of the primal father. This allows both novels to ironically comment on the veneer of civilization claimed by the imperialists and the unconscious motivations we repress for the sake of civilization.

The journey to the self or the past conjuring the primal father and identifying with him can be a legitimate interpretation of violence. The novels trace two problematic characters who commit violence against others and end up blighting their souls. The article adopts Sigmund Freud's theory on the primal-horde expounded in *Totem and Taboo*, in which the primal father incites reverence in the sexually jealous descendants who once killed him and with time forgot their vengeance and began to identify with him. For Freud, "The violent primal father had doubtless been the feared and envied model of each one of the company of brothers: and in the act of devouring him they accomplished their identification with him, and each one of them acquired a portion of his strength" (1955: 142). Using the Oedipal myth and two psychological techniques (hypnosis and suggestion), the article illustrates how the main characters, Kurtz and Mustafa Sa'eed, succeed in performing the role of the narcissistic god-like man whom others worship and fear. In each case, a foreign culture fascinated them only to bring out their worst and ultimately bring about their destruction. Both characters fell prey to the return of the suppressed abominable yet tempting primal father. The abominable impulse to kill and manipulate returns due to the fascination it exerts on the veneer of civilization.

Interestingly, the narrator of *Season* finds among the items left in Mustafa Sa'eed's secret room a copy of Freud's *Totem and Taboo* and another by Mustafa Sa'eed himself entitled *The Rape of Africa* (Salih 1966: 164), which suggests sexual violence and rivalry as a source of guilt or even rebellion. On the other hand, Mustafa Sa'eed exploits stereotypes about African primitivism, making himself appear to his female victims as "a primitive naked creature, carrying a spear in one hand, and a crossbow in the other, hunting elephants and lions in the jungles" (Salih 1966: 49). If not a primal father, he depicts himself as a primitive man in a primal-horde and uses primeval cultural images to his advantage. In *Heart*, Marlow says that the African jungle was the epitome of primitivism:

“Going up that river was like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world” (Conrad 1994: 48-49). The natives are depicted as primitive men; they “howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces” (Conrad 1994: 52), which makes them wild members of a primal-horde. As for Kurtz, the heart of Africa’s jungles made him a demon, a greedy primal father feared yet loved and obeyed by the natives, i.e. a fascinating abomination. In Marlow’s rumination, “The wilderness had patted him on the head, and, behold, it was like a ball—an ivory ball ... it had taken him, loved him, embraced him, got into his veins, consumed his flesh, and sealed his soul to its own by the inconceivable ceremonies of some devilish initiation” (Conrad 1994: 71). Marlow’s description of naked natives carrying spears and arrows and with wild looks and movements suddenly disappearing into the forest or coming out of it (Conrad 1994: 89) makes them members of a primal-horde. Both Mustafa Sa’eed and Kurtz act as if they were under a spell of primitive instincts and unlawful passions. Accordingly, *Heart* and *Season* have psychological, socio-cultural and anthropological insights worthy of consideration.

Previous studies have been mainly comparative and postcolonial, thus eclipsing the psychoanalytical import of both novels that can help us fathom the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Numerous critics have focused on influence relations and issues of imitation versus subversion/originality and the way both texts are intertextually related in form and content (Shaheen 1985; Maalouf 2000). Shaheen’s article focused on Conrad’s achievement and his impact on Salih in terms of themes, narrative structure, and characterization (1985: 156). On the other hand, Maalouf reacted to Shaheen’s setting of Conrad as the model Salih could not emulate, arguing that Salih’s subversion of Conrad is intentional, culturally, politically, and artistically (2000: 157-159). R. S. Krishnan has read Salih's novel as a "postcolonial retelling" of Conrad's "colonizing tale" (1996: 7). As Krishnan puts it, Salih's novel ideologically resists and revises "from the perspective of the colonized Other, the epistemology and language of discourse signified in Conrad's novel" (1996: 7). Ibrahim El-Hussari has examined how Salih's narrative mimics and even parodies Conrad's text (2010: 107). Halil Arpa in “Subversion of *Heart’s* Oriental Discourses by *Season*” argues that Salih’s novel writes back to Conrad’s. He reads Salih’s novel as a counter narrative to Conrad’s novel. Arpa contends that his study aspires to “set forth how *Season* responds to colonial discourses of *Heart* which spring out of the rooted perspective against the East” (2017: 760). Hence, Arpa argues that Salih humanizes the dehumanized natives in Conrad’s depiction, making them heard and equally exposing how they struggle with their double identity problems. One recent study argued that whereas Conrad's colonial book others Africans by stereotyping and debasing them against the western Self's "frame of mind and western imperial ideologies," Salih's "postcolonial counter-narrative" successfully reverses the process by “Othering the West” in an effort to "defend Africa and Africans" (Idir 2018: 17).

In “Modernism, myth and *Heart of Darkness*,” Michael Bell gave a mythopoetic reading of Conrad’s novel using opposing Freudian and Nietzschean worldviews on the instinctual origins of culture (2012: 58). Bell argues that Conrad made Kurtz stand for a “collapse into barbarism” and a tragic discovery of “savagery lurking beneath his missionary idealism” (2012: 64). This return of the repressed primitive impulse that Bell interrogates is basically a confirmation of the essential psychoanalytic premise of our article on the underlying Freudian assumptions in Conrad’s text and the horror contingent on “the dark truth of the civilized self” (Bell 2012: 66). However, our article is not limited to Conrad’s work as is Bell’s study. Moreover, we interrogate the myth of the primal father and not the opposition between the Freudian model on civilization and other myths like those given by Friedrich Nietzsche and D. H. Lawrence. Another related article by Jonathan Dollimore entitled “Civilization and its darkness” discusses the trope of degeneration in Conrad’s novel and argues that Kurtz relapses into the barbaric “because of, not in spite of, being so civilized” and that “the over-civilized is seen to have an affinity with the excesses of the primitive” (2012: 68). The barbaric emerges as the other face of a shallow civilization, and Conrad’s vision of primal life seems pessimistically bleak. Again, this Dollimore article discusses Conrad’s novel only. Such studies have not tackled the theme of the return of the primal father and the subsequent rebirth of the Oedipal son, nor have they articulated a nexus among Freudian terms like narcissism, hypnosis, and suggestion.

This Freudian reading of the primal father theme is illegitimately original because it explores the colonizer/colonized divide and bridges the gap between traditional psychoanalysis and postcolonialism. It is necessary to overcome existing thematic analogies for the sake of privileging psychological encounters with the inner self or external manifestations of our buried aggression. While the current article articulates some psychological complexes inherent in all colonizer/colonized relations (like obsession, narcissism, and perversion), it also suggests a Nietzschean “will to power” as Mustafa Sa’eed and Kurtz act as “supermen” transcending their environment (brutally and violently), even reversing odds and defying conventional morality. From one perspective, this article allows for a fresh look at postcolonial and cultural themes through the lens of psychology, in particular Freudian psychoanalysis. While *Season* describes the protagonist’s “seasonal” journey to the North and his return to his native Sudan after a tragic encounter with Western civilization and European culture, *Heart* recounts a “season in hell or descent into the realm of the dead” for its European narrator (Lacoue-Labarthe 2012: 119). Hence, both texts seem to invite significant analogies. Here we explore one relevant myth within this comparative scope that pits European imperial fiction against postcolonial Arabic fiction in order to inspect the theme of the primal father and the corresponding Oedipal son.

## 2. The Return of the Primal Father and the Arrival of the Oedipal Son

According to Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1961), the aggressive prehistoric father was killed by the brothers/sons who "banded together" (1961: 78) yet had a "sense of guilt" that became the foundational source for conscience and the super-ego "to prevent a repetition of the deed" (1961: 79). However, Freud asserts, the brothers/sons had ambivalent feelings toward their father; "His sons hated him, but they loved him, too" (1961: 79). The members of the primal horde killed the patriarchal father because of sexual jealousy as he had exclusive sexual rights to all women in the horde. Oedipal tension as father/son conflict was presented by Freud as the root of sexual prohibition and taboo formation. Commenting on the origin of totemism and its relation to the Oedipus complex, Freud contends: "If the totem animal is the father, then the two principal ordinances of totemism, the two taboo prohibitions which constitute its core—not to kill the totem and not to have sexual relations with a woman of the same totem—coincide in their content with the two crimes of Oedipus, who killed his father and married his mother" (1989: 495). The figure of primal father psychically returns and exerts power over the horde. In *Heart*, Kurtz, who represents this primitive character after cutting his affinity with Europe and his relation with the trading company that sent him to its colonial posts, seeks power and independence as in the primal-horde counter story. After terminating his allegiance to Europe, i.e. killing his relation to his figurative father, he identifies with Europe as an imperial power, and acts as a tyrant guardian. Since his mother was half-English and his father was half-French, "All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz" (Conrad 1994: 73). Yet this gifted eloquent man is "hollow at the core" and lacking "restraint in the gratification of his various lusts" (Conrad 1994: 87) as manifested in the human heads on stakes on his house fence. Moreover, there in the remote spot he proceeds as a god worshiped by the primitives, who in turn seek redemption for an ancient murder. Thus, by offering obedience to this god reminding them of their deceased primal father, they punish themselves and set their repressed past free.

Similarly, in *Season* Mustafa Sa'eed, as a fatherless son deprived of an affectionate mother, is observed to be indifferent, growing up as a lonely orphan. Describing his uprootedness and indifference as a child, Mustafa Sa'eed tells the narrator: "I was like a rubber ball: you throw it in the water and it doesn't get wet, you throw it on the ground and it just bounces back" (Salih 1966: 28). Nonetheless, he cuts his bond with his actual mother and his "mother country" or "fatherland" since he has no father in the literal or metaphorical sense of the word. Born in 1898 (the year of British colonization of Sudan) and receiving colonial education in English schools, Mustafa Sa'eed is "in every sense the child of imperialism" (Caminero-Santangelo 1999: 15). As a reaction to the disappointment he has felt for being deprived of a father, affectionate mother, and a normal family, Mustafa Sa'eed's primal father has been awakened. Heading to Europe and identifying with England, he finds his victims ready for subjugation. In the case of Jean Morris, he says: "I am the invader who came from the south, and this is the ice battlefield that I won't survive. I am the pirate sailor, and Jean

Morris is the shore of destruction” (Salih 1966: 191). Mustafa Sa’eed brings about his moral and psychological self-destruction before he physically disappears due to suicide or drowning. He exploits his own ruthless and instinctual psychic agents (the Freudian id) while capitalizing on the unconscious guilt and repression of his (female) European victims. The complicity of his victims in their sexual and physical conquest is an indication of their unconscious guilt contingent on the killing of the primal father.

Civilization cannot ward off primitivism, and Kurtz and Mustafa Sa’eed are fascinated by the abominable impulse. Man finds emotional investment in being violent as civilization requires the renunciation of our sexuality and aggressive nature. The primal-horde story begins when the primitive ancestors killed their father for depriving them from sexual freedom with women in the horde. Commenting on the cannibal savages in *Totem and Taboo*, Freud postulates: “One day the brothers who had been driven out came together, killed and devoured their father and so made an end of the patriarchal horde” (1955: 141). Before the primal father got killed, and in the horde in which the primitive men lived, “the jealousy of the oldest and strongest male prevented sexual promiscuity” (1955: 125). Mustafa Sa’eed and Kurtz partake in the qualities of the primal father like violence and sexual domination. Though this crime of killing the primal father has been repressed and only guilt is felt, yet the repressed can return when the superego fails to bury it. The primal father awakens in Kurtz and Mustafa Sa’eed in the same way the primal-horde awakens in the primitive Africans and the English women. In *Group Psychology*, Freud contends: “Just as primitive man virtually survives in every individual, so the primal horde may arise once more out of any random crowd; in so far as men are habitually under the sway of group formation we recognise in it the survival of the primal horde” (1949: 92). This latent formation of the primal-horde is also contingent on the survival of the primal father in that horde. Hence, Freud implies our propensity for primitivism due to the heavy price of instinctual renunciation. In the words of Freud in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, “cultural frustration” (1961: 44) as the price for civilization makes us miserable while we would be “much happier if we gave it up and returned to primitive conditions” (1961: 33).

Such an urge for exercising influence cloaked in the primal father’s skin has a deeper psychological dimension. The violence committed in both novels can be justified by a narcissistic inclination exhibited by Kurtz and Mustafa Sa’eed. As Freud (1957) contends in *On Narcissism*, “We have found, especially in persons whose libidinal development has suffered disturbance ... that in the choice of their love-object they have taken as their model not the mother but their own selves. They are plainly seeking themselves as love-object and their type of object-choice maybe termed narcissistic” (*General Selection*: 112). Narcissism is not being able to attach libido to objects or others. Rather, narcissists attach this psychic energy to the ego. The case of love simplifies this mechanism. In Freudian terms, “A strong egoism is a protection against falling ill, but in the last resort we must begin to love in order not to fall ill” (1989: 553). The erotic life of Kurtz and Mustafa Sa’eed exposes their narcissistic personalities. Kurtz did not love the

natives, and Mustafa Sa'eed did not simply love the English culture or the English women he knew. Rather, their victims made Kurtz and Mustafa Sa'eed more self-centered. Neither Kurtz nor Mustafa Sa'eed established families in the foreign cultures they moved to, and their narcissistic sexual life was simply hedonistic and violent. Being loved and possessing love objects heighten self-regard feelings, and being rejected in love lowers self-regard (Freud 1989: 561). Kurtz and Mustafa Sa'eed narcissistically enjoyed having mistresses as love objects. However, such love objects (the African mistress and the English women) augmented their narcissistic self-pride.

Narcissistic fixation would result in two paradoxical contexts, yet manifests a similar tendency to aggression. After cutting relations to his origin and traveling far to exploit others in the African Congo, Kurtz in *Heart* heads south toward a "prehistoric" setting. There, he quenches his primitive thirst for exercising the role of the primal father on a primal horde. This man has no real blood relations back in England except a fiancée, which makes it easier for him to unleash his primitive urges in the African wilderness. When Marlow, the narrator, returns home, he simply visits Kurtz's "intended", as no other relatives are mentioned. This lack of blood connections would have been the reason for the journey toward violence and exploitation in Africa, since he has been rejected from his "tribal" affiliations in his motherland, England. Even there in Africa, Kurtz experiences another rejection from Europe; once Kurtz got sick, the Russian objected to the narrator, "he was shamefully abandoned" (Conrad 1994: 88). Whereas he gives up his attachment to Europe, he receives praise and high regard from the primitives, which enhances his aggressive attitude. As a self-defensive reaction to preserve his threatened ego, his narcissistic psyche takes him toward violence and the supreme use of power, in the form of exercising the role of the primal father. Thus, his self-esteem becomes so inflated, and he freely exerts violence on others; the Russian tells Marlow that with Kurtz "there was nothing on earth to prevent him killing whom he jolly well pleased" (Conrad 1994: 84), especially when ivory is involved. Marlow remembers how the narcissistic Kurtz would say "My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my—" (Conrad 1994: 72). This egotism is equally self-destructive as Kurtz's self-absorption leaves him morally and physically sick.

As a fatherless son deprived from an affectionate mother, Mustafa Sa'eed is observed to be indifferent. However, he possesses a narcissistic, antisocial personality: "I was cold like an ice field" (Salih 1966: 30). With the potent will of cutting his bond to his mother and country to seek a personal dream of success, he is able to discharge some of this repressed energy. Unlike Kurtz, Mustafa Sa'eed chooses the opposite direction to his physical journey. He sets sail to an advanced civilization fitting his cold, smart mind that functions like "a sharp knife" (Salih 1966: 30); however, there he meets the very history of his glorious past. In Europe (feeling secure and equipped with ready lies), his primitive needs are awakened. Describing his violent sexual relationship with Jean Morris, Mustafa Sa'eed says: "My bedroom became a battlefield. My bed was a piece of hell" (Salih 1966: 44). Ironically, supporting our hypothesis on the failure of civilization to uproot

primitivism, Mustafa Sa'eed starts his journey feeling rejected by his mother as well as by the only English woman he truly feels love for, Jean Morris. His brutal reactions are caused by this rejection and also by the appreciation he enjoys in England. Mustafa Sa'eed's inflated ego, sexual exploitation, lies, and violence can be attributed to his narcissistic fixation. His egocentrism makes him a ruthless seeker of power. In his perverse relations with English women, he establishes a travesty of the Freudian patriarchal primal-horde. Unleashing both his sexual instincts and violent urges, Mustafa Sa'eed becomes the prototypical primitive man as civilization imposes "such great sacrifices not only on man's sexuality but on his aggressivity" (Freud 1961: 62). Both Africa and England bring out the worst in the misplaced primal fathers.

The past, i.e. the ghost of the primal father, haunts both novels and plagues the civilized man. In *Heart*, London is alluded to as a dark colonial place that acts as a primal father on other less civilized peoples, especially those who exist in Africa. The same allusion refers to the cycle of history and the recurrence of the universal theme of the primal father. Marlow thinks of the old days of empires, "when the Romans first came here, nineteen hundred years ago... But darkness was here yesterday" (Conrad 1994: 5). In view of this analogy, though "civilized" and living in an enlightened country, Kurtz seeks to go to the farthest primordial place on earth to search for ivory and dominate others. He is unconsciously driven to unrestrained violence. Actually, suffering from moral, political, and legal restrictions set in the civilized world has loaded him with narcissistic energy. Kurtz, who is described by Marlow as hollow, has a potential for abandoning his country and showing reluctance to return back. However, he is haunted by the colonial project for his own interests. Only the urge for being primitive would help discharge all the repressed residue in him, which is prohibited in the name of civilization. Aggression and exploitation are to satisfy his ache for power; although "this man suffered too much," the Russian explains, "somehow he couldn't get away... he would remain; go off on another ivory hunt" (Conrad 1994: 85). Kurtz compulsively repeats his authoritative position of power over the natives and their land. His greed for ivory is but a manifestation of his will to power among the African hordes.

In *Season*, England awakens in Mustafa Sa'eed the same urge for exercising violence just as Africa has done with Kurtz. Again, though England is considered a civilized modern place in comparison to Africa, yet the germ of primitivism blights cities as it does men. In the case of Mustafa Sa'eed, it is clear that western civilization has failed to discipline him or quench his thirst for hunting his female victims. He describes his encounter with Jean Morris in primitive terms fitting jungle life: "I had no choice. I have been a hunter, but I became the prey. I was in pain, but unwittingly I took pleasure from my wretchedness" (Salih 1966: 190). Hence, the primitive man would live in civilized cities just as he would in primitive jungles, and civilization is nothing but a mere superficial materialistic facet of being primitive. By contrast, the apparently civilized woman partakes in such primitive rites of murdering or exploiting others. In *Heart*, for instance, Marlow's aunt is complicit with colonialism and approves it as the white man's



burden. She tries to use her influence to get Marlow the post of a ship captain for a colonial company.

The germ which afflicts both Kurtz and Mustafa as a thirst for power and instinctual desires works differently in the primitive people and the civilized English women. Adversely, the germ awakens the primal horde in those who are in the subordinate position. Taking the form of a peculiar disease, it elicits desires to be controlled and exploited by a superior godlike man. Driven by pleasure to taste pain, the horde band would offer their submissive bodies and wills to an omnipotent master, i.e. the primal father. Indeed, the image of the docile primitives in *Heart* carrying Kurtz while he is sick, recalled by Marlow, shows how much they enjoy being subjugated; “The vision seemed to enter the house with me—the stretcher, the phantom-bearers, the wild crowd of obedient worshippers” (Conrad 1994: 111). We are also told that Kurtz got the native tribe to follow him because they “adored him” (Conrad 1994: 84). When listening to Mustafa Sa’eed’s interpretation of English women’s suicidal behavior, one would tell why they are unconsciously driven to death: “the germ of a fatal disease. The infection had 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” (Salih 1966: 45). Mustafa returns as a new patron/colonizer for such women after the death of their early colonialist or patriarchal masters.

In addition, the return of the primal father paves the way for the birth of the Nietzschean “superman” as in Freud’s description of leaders. The returning primal father partakes in the characteristics of the superman. Commenting on the narcissistic father of the primal-horde in *Group Psychology*, Freud argues that “his ego had few libidinal ties; he loved no one but himself, or other people only in so far as they served his needs” (1949: 93). Freud continues, adding that this primal father at the beginning of human history “was the Superman whom Nietzsche only expected from the future. Even to-day the members of a group stand in need of the illusion that they are equally and justly loved by their leader; but the leader himself need love no one else, he may be of a masterly nature, absolutely narcissistic, but self-confident and independent” (1949: 93). This “superman” can be juxtaposed against the primitive primal father; both are godlike, merciless, and narcissistic. Kurtz’s and Mustafa Sa’eed’s superman-like nature equips them with appropriate psychological and physical qualities like intelligence, eloquence, and charisma while enabling them to defy conventional morality. The enchanting potential Kurtz and Mustafa Sa’eed maintain is what enables them to be admired and to dominate the minds and bodies of others. They have the will to wield power over others as well as the necessary acceptance/fear of those around them. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche argues that this will to power the superman possesses allows for overcoming resistance and countering nihilism. Since all drives aim at power, Nietzsche contends that psychology is “the doctrine of the development of the will to power” (1966: 23). Hence, our actions, for Nietzsche, are triggered by a desire to heighten this feeling of power, which is in turn a form of psychological egoism. In Nietzsche’s thought, the arrival of the superman comes as a result of the death of religion and ethics.

Therefore, the death of God yields the birth of the superman who forges his own morality and values. This account parallels Freud's theory on the primal-horde as the death of the primal father (Mustafa Sa'eed and Kurtz in this case) necessitates the birth of the Oedipal son (the narrators of the novels). Because Mustafa Sa'eed and Kurtz are ambivalently viewed with fascination and repulsion, they embody those forbidden desires we have to renounce for the sake of civilization yet find ourselves compelled to as irresistible. Antithetically, they epitomize the fascinations of culture and the abominations of primitivism.

In *Heart*, Kurtz is deemed to be a god, and he is worshiped and served by the primitives. Fascinated by his personality and toughness, the natives cannot but adore him. Similarly, Mustafa Sa'eed in *Season* is also viewed as a god, and thus followed by Isabella Seymour, Sheila Greenwood, Ann Hammond, and many other unnamed women. For the same reason, he maintains an intelligent and sexually attractive character which enables him to act as a charming, primitive god. Isabella Seymour tells Mustafa, "O pagan god of mine. You are my god and there is no god but you" (Salih 1966: 132) and "Take me you African ghoul. Burn me in the fire of your temple, you black god. Make me writhe in the rituals of your wild, orgiastic prayers" (Salih 1966: 131), thus confirming his prevailing presence and simultaneously augmenting his narcissistic desires. In *On Narcissism*, Freud illustrates the role of love in paranoia and the resulting inflation of the ego:

Loving in itself, in so far as it involves longing and deprivation, lowers self-regard; whereas to be loved, to have love returned, and to possess the loved object, exalts it again. When the libido is repressed, the erotic cathexis is felt as a severe depletion of the ego, the satisfaction of love is impossible, and the re-enrichment of the ego can be effected only by a withdrawal of libido from its objects. (1957: 121)

However, this magnetic personality belongs to special people who, according to Freud in *Group Psychology*, "become leaders by means of it, and it has the effect of making everything obey them as though by the operation of some magnetic magic" (1949: 159). Kurtz and Mustafa Sa'eed become primal leaders with heightened self-regard because they do not genuinely reciprocate the love they receive, yet they become problematically entangled with those whom they oppress. Again, this ambivalence characterizes the primal-horde theory as feelings of hatred are neutralized by feelings of guilt in Freud's account.

Significantly, the eloquence Kurtz and Mustafa Sa'eed possess (as the gift and power of speech) has the psychological effect of "hypnosis." Such artistic sublimation makes its possessor unique and able to impress others since by having it he is superior to the horde. While in magic supernatural things happen by soliciting some enigmatic words, eloquence brings about a hypnotic effect on people's hearts and minds. Freudian psychology can help us show how the power of words that Kurtz and Mustafa Sa'eed have helps them dominate others. In *Group Psychology*, Freud draws an analogy between the power of words and hypnosis:

A group, further, is subject to the truly magical power of words; they can evoke the most formidable tempests in the group mind, and are also capable of stilling them. Reason and arguments are incapable of combating certain words and formulas. They are uttered with solemnity in the presence of groups, and as soon as they have been pronounced an expression of respect is visible on every countenance, and all heads are bowed. By many they are considered as natural forces, as supernatural powers. (1949: 190) Eloquence enables Kurtz and Mustafa Sa'eed, the two intellectual prodigies, to control the mentality of the civilized and the uncivilized alike. As magic elicits fear and reverence in the minds of its spectators toward the practitioner, the power of words exhibits the practitioners as supernatural beings deserving to be glorified. The hypnotic effect of their words allows the returning primal fathers to exercise their tyranny and subjugation (sexual or emotional) over the women around them.

Kurtz and Mustafa Sa'eed excel at delivering speech, which is an act psychologically related to hypnosis. As a matter of fact, they possess a talent of reciting and composing poetry. For example, Marlow is told that Kurtz recites and writes poetry. This gift was the power of eloquent words, "the gift of expression" (Conrad 1994: 69) which gave him the strength "to hide in the magnificent folds of eloquence the barren darkness of his heart" (Conrad 1994: 103). Likewise, the unnamed narrator in *Season* informs us about Mustafa Sa'eed's capacity to recite English poetry: "then suddenly, I heard him recite English poetry, clearly with sound articulation" (Salih 1966: 20); and after his mysterious disappearance the narrator discovers "a poem in his handwriting, so he has got a head for poetry" (Salih 1966: 182). This eloquence was used by Mustafa Sa'eed to seduce English women. He confesses his stratagems: "I would read poetry, talk about religion and philosophy, criticize art, talk about eastern mysticism, I would do everything possible to entice a woman to my bed" (Salih 1966: 39). Mustafa Sa'eed also mentions how Sheila Greenwood has loved him before she committed suicide, and how he enticed her using presents and the power of language: "I seduced her with gifts and honeyed words" (Salih 1966: 45). Such eloquence made Kurtz and Mustafa Sa'eed sublime figures capable of effecting hypnosis in those around them and making them responsive to their "suggestion."

Hence, the second technique both characters use to influence others is related to hypnosis, namely "suggestion." When one is part of a group, Freud contends in *Group Psychology*, one finds oneself "having entirely lost his conscious personality, he obeys all the suggestions of the operator who has deprived him of it, and commits acts in utter contradiction with his character and habits" (1949: 11-12). Simply, this suggestion is "an irreducible, primitive phenomenon, a fundamental fact in the mental life of man" (Freud 1949: 11). "Suggestion" or "suggestibility" occurs in consequence of exercising hypnosis. After casting a spell on the horde's members, they become malleable enough to act as they are dictated. Kurtz is considered by the natives an idol they cannot but obey. His assistant, the Russian, is also under the influence of "suggestibility" as he does not conceive what he is doing, yet he could not but obey Kurtz and defend him; "I am a simple man. I have no great thoughts... 'I don't understand,' he

groaned. ‘I’ve been doing my best to keep him alive... I had no hand in all this. I have no abilities’ (Conrad 1994: 88). Interestingly, the natives follow a man whose color, manners, and character are utterly different from theirs, and even fight for his cause, due to this power of suggestion. The Russian explains that Kurtz came “down to the river, bringing along with him all the fighting men of that lake tribe. He had been absent for several months— getting himself adored” (Conrad 1994: 85). It is this power of suggestion that drives the horde to unwittingly yield to the primal father. Similarly, in the last scene in *Seasonone* feels puzzled imagining Jean Morris yielding to Mustafa Sa’eed’s will without him uttering a word: “as if having been robbed of her own will, she was moving through my will. I looked at her belly and she followed my gaze. As my gaze lingered, so did hers; when I hurried she hurried” (Salih 1966: 195). In *Group Psychology*, Freud explains that a master has to have a formidable will: “in order to awaken the group’s faith he must possess a strong and imposing will, which the group, which has no will of its own, can accept from him” (1949: 21). As opposed to eloquence, suggestion implies communicating an idea or directing people’s actions without stating things. It is a form of covert coercion and manipulation that both Mustafa Sa’eed and Kurtz use in their domination of the imperial center and the African heart.

Indeed, “hypnosis” and “suggestion” are unconsciously adopted by Kurtz and Mustafa Sa’eed. The protagonists are eloquent, mastering language and possessing a charismatic character, which leads to hypnosis. Then, as the performer does with his marionettes, Kurtz and Mustafa Sa’eed manipulate their victims using this technique of suggestion. Kurtz is depicted by Marlow as “a gifted creature” with a power of affecting others due to “his ability to talk, his words—the gift of expression” (Conrad 1994: 69). Similarly, we listen to Mustafa Sa’eed assert: “My mind was like a keen knife. But the language is not my language; I had learnt to be eloquent through practice” (Salih 1966: 38). Mustafa Sa’eed describes how a lecture he delivered at Oxford about Abbasid Arabic poetry made him seduce Ann Hammond: “I was inspired that evening and found the lies tripping off my tongue like sublime truths. Feeling that my elation was communicating itself to my audience ... After the lecture, they all crowded around me” (Salih 1966: 170). This power of hypnosis denies the subject his/her will and grants the practitioner the ability to dominate those hypnotized. Essentially a soft tool compared with actual violence, language can yet wield a brutal emotional and psychological impact on the hearer, as in sexist and racist discourse.

However, violence in both novels is multidimensional, wavering between the symbolically suggestive and the overt. For anthropologist Marvin Harris, warfare and sexism are interrelated: “Male supremacist institutions rose as a by-product of warfare” (1977: 81). Hence, this supremacy complex is not natural, and colonialism itself emerges as a violent patriarchal institution exploiting women, the colonized, and nature. The African jungles get aimlessly shelled in Conrad’s novel. In Salih’s novel, Mustafa Sa’eed views himself as an invader aiming to liberate Africa through sexually conquering English women in retaliation for

centuries of European colonialism in Africa. Mustafa Sa'eed and Kurtz both "colonize" the bodies of women they sexually possess. Harris concludes that males work out the Oedipus complex by expressing their hostility and aggression against others, not the father: "The Oedipus complex was not the cause of war; war was the cause of the Oedipus complex" (1977: 96). Aggression toward others (as in the violence Kurtz practices by hanging human skulls of natives on his fence or Mustafa Sa'eed killing or causing English women to commit suicide) is caused by Oedipal anxiety. Both Kurtz and Mustafa Sa'eed can be read as the Oedipal sons of colonialist and patriarchal structures. However, the sons of imperialism and colonial education become primal fathers who bequeath their legacy to their Oedipal sons. One young Sudanese man in Khartoum who was with the narrator in England during their study years anxiously asks the narrator while talking about Mustafa Sa'eed: "Are you his son?" (Salih 1966: 71). While Maalouf has thought of the relationship between the narrators and the protagonists in psychological terms as "alter egos" or "doubles" (2000: 162, 164), and Shaheen has presented the interplay between narrators and major characters in light of Conradian "secret-sharing" (1985: 156), we can problematically explain it in Oedipal terms as that of fathers and sons. This Oedipal reading helps support our initial premise on the primal-horde theory of sexual rivalry and guilt.

Moreover, the relationship between the narrator in each novel and the wife once belonging to the primal father (the intended of Kurtz and Hasna bint Mahmoud) can equally be understood in Oedipal terms of sexual jealousy and subsequent guilt. As Freud postulates, "We cannot get away from the assumption that man's sense of guilt springs from the Oedipus complex and was acquired at the killing of the father by the brothers banded together" (1989: 761). The act of aggression, once committed against the (primal) father, resulted in feelings of remorse in the rebellious sons. Such guilt is manifested in the reactions of the narrator of *Season* to Mustafa Sa'eed's widow and children and Marlow's obligation to Kurtz and his fiancée. In the case of *Season*, the incestuous desire of the narrator for Mustafa Sa'eed's widow is more evident. When the narrator goes to talk to her about a marriage proposal to Wad al Rayyes, he is captivated by the smell of her perfume and her attractive manners. The darkness around them and her perfume awaken in him this Oedipal desire for her (Salih 1966: 128), yet he is under social and ethical prohibitions as the guardian of her children. Thoughts about the young widow Hasna getting married to old Wad Rayyes and sleeping with him make the narrator feel angry (Salih 1966: 108). On the other hand, his friend Mahjoub suggests that he marry Hasna (since he is the children's guardian) and become the father of her children by Mustafa Sa'eed (Salih 1966: 127). The narrator concedes to his difficult Oedipal situation and says: "I am the guardian, the lover, and the rival" (Salih 1966: 161). In his anxious mind, he had killed the father (Mustafa Sa'eed) and married his wife (Hasna). Unwillingly, the narrator finds himself entangled in an Oedipal triangle involving him, Mustafa Sa'eed, and Mustafa Sa'eed's widow.

As an Oedipal son of the primal fathers, the narrators in both novels come to assume the role of this deceased or disappearing father. Marlow in *Heartland*

the unnamed narrator of *Season* seem to survive the germ of primal father, yet they implicitly nurse the dormant germ in their unconscious, and it just awaits being reactivated. Since violence committed on the self or others would take pathological, psychological, or even political dimensions, the primal father is a stark example of such violence. Both novels end in indicative scenes in which the two narrators seem to survive the infectious contiguity with the primal father, Kurtz and Mustafa Sa'eed. Although they just appear to win the first round, they nevertheless stand in a position of resistance which needs more toil. The novels end with the death/disappearance of the primal father and the rise of his somewhat Oedipal heir, i.e. the narrator in each novel. This time, the germ takes the form of the Oedipal son as an alleged successor of the deceased father. It is no wonder that in each novel the main narrator also establishes an ambiguous relationship with the wife/intended of the primal father. The narrator in *Season* is weighed by undeclared desires for Mustafa Sa'eed's widow, and he becomes the guardian of her children too at the request of their father before his disappearance. In *Heart*, Marlow assumes a difficult encounter with the intended of Kurtz after the latter's death, and is trusted with returning Kurtz's letters, pictures, and papers to her. Although no incestuous desire is declared in each case, the narrators remain haunted by the memory of the dead primal fathers in their dealings with such women. Moreover, Marlow carries the burden of the "horror" uttered by Kurtz just before his death. His guilt ensuing from his complicity in this horror of imperial stratagems adds to his complicated position as one of the "sons" of an empire in patriarchal trappings.

In psychoanalysis, the early conflict between the id and the ego begins with Oedipus complex in which the male child gets thwarted by his father's sexual relation with the mother. The male child's wishes of taking the role of his father are repressed with the anxiety/threat of castration. However, after getting jealous and feeling animosity toward the father, this child starts to identify with him. The narrators in both novels feel jealousy and hatred toward this figurative and primal father yet with time they sympathize and identify with him, which suggests the arrival of the Oedipal son. To begin with Marlow, one observes that the journey to meet Kurtz seems to be such an absurd mission for him. At the first encounter, Marlow conceives of Kurtz as being an embodiment of evil: "everything belonged to him... He had taken a high seat amongst the devils of the land" (Conrad 1994: 72). Nonetheless, he later discovers in himself an enigmatic urge to follow, justify, and even admire Kurtz: "But it was a victory! That is why I have remained loyal to Kurtz to the last, and even beyond, when a long time after I heard once more, not his own voice, but the echo of his magnificent eloquence thrown to me from a soul as translucently pure as a cliff of crystal" (Conrad 1994: 107-108). Marlow rationalizes his "filial" devotion to Kurtz as an impulse of unconscious loyalty. Thus, in identifying with the primal father, especially after his death, Marlow feels discharged. He also lies to Kurtz's fiancée to keep the image of Kurtz intact. When Kurtz's intended inquires about Kurtz's last words, Marlow responds: "The last word he pronounced was—your name" (Conrad 1994: 117). Marlow lies in order not to spoil this legend of Kurtz because the last words were

not her name but rather the despairing cries of ignoble death: “The horror! the horror!” (Conrad 1994: 117). Unconsciously, Marlow fosters the patriarchal myth Kurtz weaved around himself while treating women as gullible figures detached from the atrocities of imperialism.

Those last words of Kurtz confirm Marlow’s understanding of the character of Kurtz as only an insubstantial voice in the African wilderness among the “the savage, undifferentiated clamour” of native voices (Lacoue-Labarthe 2012: 116). To draw again on the words of Lacoue-Labarthe by way of describing the void Kurtz embodies, “[b]eing nothing, he is, indeed everything. His *voice* is all-powerful” (2012:116; emphasis original). The savagery and terror he stands for and inflicts on the natives render Kurtz an empty voice of a brittle civilization. A poet, a musician, a painter, and an aspiring politician, Kurtz is not only an epitome of European culture but also this culture’s very foil. Kurtz subverts language, and his last words echo the resounding “horror” of his own moral and spiritual emptiness.

Upon meeting Mustafa Sa’eed, finding about his sexual adventures, and falling in love with his wife, the narrator of *Season* begins to hate him and envisage him as an enemy. However, after the mysterious departure of Mustafa Sa’eed, the memory of this man returns, against the will of the narrator, “to haunt my world, as a thought in my brain, a ghost that does not want to leave” (Salih 1966: 64). The narrator casts himself in the role of the Oedipal son to the castrating father: “This is hatred. Here I am, in Mustafa Sa’eed’s house in front of ‘the iron door’ ... the key in my pocket and my foe inside” (Salih 1966: 161). Gradually, this estrangement between Mustafa Sa’eed, the primal father, and the narrator begins to dissolve paving the way for identification and bridging of psychical distance. After being filled with vengeance, and heading to enter Mustafa Sa’eed’s secret room to burn it and thus kill his haunting ghost, the narrator mistakes his rival Mustafa Sa’eed for himself in a symbolic scene of psychological mirroring: “Then I caught myself standing face to face with myself. This is not Mustafa Sa’eed — it’s a reflection of me pouting about myself in a mirror” (Salih 1966: 161). Still afflicted by his Oedipal residues, the narrator thought of visiting Hasna’s grave and throwing away the key where nobody could find it, yet his latent fear of Mustafa Sa’eed stops him. Finally, he succeeds in somewhat identifying with Mustafa Sa’eed, resolving to live as he did before his disappearance: “I shall live by force and cunning” (Salih 1966: 200). The narrator successfully works through his Oedipal anxiety toward the dead Mustafa Sa’eed (the primal father), choosing life over death by drowning in the river and thus calling for help. This ending is problematic because it can equally entail a return to a stage of pre-Oedipal oceanic being preceding the repressed unconscious.

Like Mustafa Sa’eed, Marlow finds in storytelling a healing act after a traumatic encounter with imperialism. Just as Mustafa Sa’eed opens his heart to the narrator and tells him a story about a traumatic past he lived in England before he came back to Sudan, Marlow tells the seamen on board a yacht, the *Nellie*, a story about his harrowing experiences in the heart of Africa. Both novels share elements of postcolonial trauma fiction concerned with the healing process of

working through trauma via engaging in memory (Raslan2017: 183). The characters sharing their difficult memories within a fictional framework is not necessarily identical with the narrative memory of the postcolonial writer autobiographically addressing the perils of imperialism. The trauma vented in *Season* and *Heart* is one contingent on the experiences of characters, mainly Oedipal sons recounting their encounters with primal fathers.

### 3. Conclusion

This article has argued the return of the primal father as an unconscious impulse in the protagonists of Conrad's and Salih's novels and juxtaposed this against the arrival of the corresponding Oedipal sons/narrators. Freudian terms like "narcissism," "hypnosis," and "suggestion" were used to heighten the power the primal father exercises over others. Hence, the article contributes to postcolonial or historical readings of both novels in favor of interrogating the underlying foundations of tyranny and violence. We argued that primitivism inevitably recurs in the human soul regardless of the guises of civilization. The primal-horde theory helps us understand the complexities of not only the colonizer/colonized divide but also gender relations and psychological repercussions prevalent in power relations. In their depiction of the figure of the primal father, Conrad and Salih succeed in invoking the unconscious primitive impulse lurking behind the façade of civilization and in depicting related feelings of guilt, envy, and sexual desire. Primitive violence and exploitation take the form of a primal father exercising power on a submissive primal horde. The two main characters in both novels, driven by their narcissistic repressed natures, violently dominate others, thus embodying the return of the primal father. Primitive violence seems to be a psychological force resorted to by Kurtz and Mustafa Sa'eed who are not disciplined by western civilization. Thus, their primal father is awakened to save them from their repressed, narcissistic psyches. For the narrators, by contrast, the Oedipal son of the primal father awakens in them, allowing for an attachment to a deceased or pre-historic father figure. Marlow in *Heart* and the unnamed narrator in *Season* survive the curse of primal father yet implicitly nourish its germ in their unconscious. The natives and the English women enact the primal-horde members of Freud's theory as they willingly accept being dominated in an unconscious compensation for killing the primal father.

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